



# SIWEC INSIGHT

MARCH 2019



Five SIWEC clients from the various institutional homes were brought to Naam Ras 2018 at the Singapore Expo to attend Kirtan Darbar. They were ushered around by event volunteers. The seniors had a memorable time being present to experience one of the largest Sikh community gatherings in Southeast Asia. They expressed their appreciation of the efforts put in by SIWEC and Naam Ras volunteers.

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The SIWEC staff team (L to R: Nelvinder, Gursharan, Ranjit (Manager), Baldev, Jaspreet and Kartar)

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# Academic Excellence for our Children

It was around 2012 that the Sikh community felt the performance of Sikh students in national examinations for mainstream subjects (English, Mathematics, Mother Tongue, and Science) was falling behind national averages, and we needed to do something to address this problem. A task force was set up to propose what could be done.

This task force recommended that we embark on a programme providing special assistance to students who were weak in their studies. It also recommended that SIWEC and the Singapore Sikh Education Foundation (SSEF) run this programme. Students suitable for this programme would be identified through SSEF, and SIWEC would help by providing financial assistance if required. This marked the birth of the Academic Excellence Programme (AEP). To further ensure that adequate resources were provided for this programme, SIWEC decided to hire a full-time Education Programme Officer (EPO).

The programme was launched in 2014, along with the recruitment of an EPO. To ensure that we were not overwhelmed, as we had limited resources, we started small. We focused on students in Primary 1 and Primary 2 only. Since then, we have been adding one additional level each year, and currently have 38 students, ranging from Primary 1 to 6, in the programme. Our first cohort of students has now progressed to Primary 6.

In 2017, we extended the programme to include secondary school students, as parents' response to the programme has been positive. The programme currently supports 18 students from Secondary 1 to Secondary 4.

## Programme Management and Results

The EPO works closely with tutors engaged by SIWEC to ensure that gaps in learning are identified early, and necessary intervention is undertaken. Where the family can afford to pay the tutor, tuition fees are paid by the parents. However, if the family has financial constraints, the tutor's fees are absorbed by SIWEC, under its Financial Assistance Scheme.

The EPO, together with Punjabi school principals, has been actively identifying students that need help, and following up with the students, their parents, and their tutors to ensure that the desired progress is being made. She also works with the students' own school teachers, counsellors, and other educators. The EPO makes monthly house visits to keep up with the students' development. As a result of this dedicated service, the students are more enthusiastic about their subjects after having gained greater confidence and motivation.

Over the past five years, we have helped more than 50 students through this programme. Their improved academic performance over the years is testimony to the programme's initial success. We take pride that our AEP was selected by the President's Challenge to receive funding support in 2019, with one of our students being featured in "Success Story of AEP", an article written for the President's Challenge.

## Programme Costs

The two main cost components of this programme are hiring a full-time staff to administer and steer the programme, as well as the cost of tuition fees. Our current expenses are about \$120,000 per year. Programme funds thus far have been sustained largely by fund-raising efforts by SIWEC, Harmony on Wheels, and Ride for Charity, along with donations from well-wishers.

## Future Plans

We plan to enhance the programme by recruiting more specialised tutors who can:

- provide additional learning and teaching support to Primary 6, 'O'-level, and 'A'-level classes;
- support children with special educational needs, such as autism, dyslexia, physical disabilities, etc.; and
- conduct enrichment classes and specialised workshops such as those by Mind Stretcher, Learning Lab, etc.

With the expansion of the AEP programme, we expect our costs — especially of the extra tuition fees for secondary school students and the special programmes — to increase and possibly exceed \$150,000 per year. SIWEC is nevertheless committed to continue funding this programme as we believe in its potential impact in boosting students' motivation and confidence levels to do better in their subjects.

Delighted parents have expressed their gratitude for helping their children go further academically and holistically. This catalyses us to strive for even bigger achievements. We would like to thank SSEF, all Sikh institutions, parents, students, well-wishers, fund-raising partners, volunteer tutors, SSEF teachers, and everyone who has helped to make this programme a success. We look forward to your continued support in future.

## Educating Seniors to Prevent Falling for Scams

While on the subject of education, we would like to encourage our seniors to be wary of strangers promising a windfall. Scams such as transferring funds via Automated



Teller Machines, investing in "lucrative" deals, and winning lucky draws are some schemes professional scammers adopt to get victims to hand over money. Many of such cases have been reported to the police. Unfortunately, innocent seniors are the most vulnerable to such scams. Always remember: if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

A senior lady from our community recently lost all her savings because she invested a significant amount of money into an investment promising fantastic returns. The investment did bring returns in the beginning, which prompted her to invest even more. However, she eventually lost all her life savings.

Be very cautious whenever you are approached for any such deals. Always talk to your children, or someone knowledgeable in the matter, before transferring any money. One mistake can ruin you, and making such a mistake is the last thing you want in the final years of your life.

In Guru Ji's Seva

**Gurdip Singh Usma**

Chairman, Sikh Welfare Council

# Academic Excellence Programme

The Academic Excellence Programme had a modest start in 2014, with just seven students from Primary 1 and 2. However, it grew steadily in the last five years.

Together with the help of SSEF, AEP today helps close to 60 students from primary and secondary schools.

SIWEC's EPO Ms Gursharan Kaur manages the programme, with close guidance and support from Mdm Gurmeet Kaur, Vice-Chairman of SSEF, and Mr Jasbir Singh, Principal of SSEF. This collaboration has been vital to achieving the aims we had set in 2014.



The AEP support team (from left): Ms Gursharan Kaur (EPO), Mdm Gurmeet Kaur (Vice-Chairman, SSEF), and Mr Jasbir Singh (Principal, SSEF)

The programme focuses on enhancing students' performance in four subjects: English, Mathematics, Science, and Mother Tongue.

SIWEC manager Mr Ranjit Singh Wahla said: "The EPO, together with the Punjabi school principals, has been actively identifying the students who need help, and following up with the students, and their parents and tutors, to ensure the desired progress is being made. She also works with their school teachers, counsellors, and other significant educators. Our EPO makes monthly house visits to keep up with their development. The students are all very enthusiastic about the help they are getting and have gained confidence and motivation from this programme."

SIWEC, with the help of SSEF, is put in touch with students attending Punjabi language classes to identify those who are weak in these subjects. The EPO visits the classes weekly, sitting in for all primary-level classes.

Mr Sharanjit shared: "To ensure a student's needs are holistically assessed, we try to understand his/her family background, before providing resources such as a tutor, a counsellor, or administering financial assistance, where such assistance is required."

"The students' progress is monitored monthly through feedback from tutors, parents, and Punjabi school

teachers. The end-goal is to ensure that all students pass their year-end examinations, and perform better in their studies compared to the previous year."

"For a few students attending mainstream schools who had been diagnosed with mild special needs, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, and dyslexia, we work with their parents, schools, tutors, and counsellors, in order to help them better cope with school and to assist with other support they may require."

Mr Ranjit added: "The value of experienced counsellors, tutors, and volunteers who dedicate their time and effort to help our students achieve good grades has proven to be priceless."

For the past seven years, Mr Kawaljeet Singh and Mrs Suvinder Kaur have been conducting Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) Math and Science group tuition weekly at the Central Sikh Temple. All their students have shown significant improvement to perform very well for the PSLE in 2018, with 90% of students passing the exams and advancing to secondary school.



The PSLE tuition group at Central Sikh Temple with volunteer tutors Mr Kawaljeet Singh and Mrs Suvinder Kaur



Student Harveenpal Singh with tutor Ms Kayyathiri S. who were featured in the President's Challenge 2018 as a success story of AEP!

As the programme is expanding, SIWEC and SSEF are exploring other approaches — such as enrichment classes and workshops — to help boost students' knowledge and confidence levels.

Mr Ranjit noted: "Over the past five years, we have helped more than 50 students through the AEP. We have received feedback that the students feel more motivated with the help they have been getting. Their improved academic performance over the years is testimony to AEP's early achievements after we had overcome early setbacks."

"Significantly, one of our students progress received special mention in the 2018 President's Challenge in 2018."

This endorsement has motivated the SIWEC-SSEF team to strengthen the programme in the years ahead and strive ever forward in the true spirit of Charhdi Kalaa, which expresses the Sikhi philosophy of striving high with optimism to overcome all challenges and achieve better outcomes always!

To find out more about AEP, please call Gursharan at +65 96189301.

# Genesis of SIWEC's Hospital Visits & Healthcare Ambassador Programme

Mr Manmohan Singh, Vice-Chairman of SIWEC, recalled: "We [SIWEC] started initially with a primary focus on hospital visits. This was initiated by a group of Sikh volunteer nurses who laid a very strong foundation for the subsequent work."

"Thereafter, we widened our outreach in an effort to identify all Sikh individuals residing in intermediate and long-term care at local institutions and residential homes for the destitute, the mentally-incapacitated, and those with disability."

"We also recognised the need to provide sustained emotional support to individuals who are home-bound, and thereby isolated from the community due to illness, disability, or frailty in their old age."

Mr Manmohan added: "Presently, SIWEC supports 56 individuals. Of these, 45 reside in various institutional homes across Singapore. Sixteen seniors aged between 54 and 90 live in their own homes, and are ageing-in-place within the wider community."

"In 2018 alone, SIWEC's staff and volunteers had conducted a total of 660 visits to individuals in hospitals, residential homes, and to seniors with various medical conditions who continue to live in their own residences."

SIWEC office manager Mr Ranjit Singh Wahla explained: "The main objective of the Hospital Visits & Healthcare Ambassador Programme is to enhance the social & psychological well-being of these individuals through regular befriending visits, and by regularly providing meals more suited to them, which are often unavailable in the institutions where they reside."



SIWEC staff Mdm Kartar Kaur (right) with our clients from Jamiyah



Mr Ranjit Singh (right) and Mr Baljit Singh (middle). President of the Central Sikh Gurdwara Board, visiting our client Mr Ishwarlal Singh (left) in Sree Narayana Mission

"Most of the visits are undertaken by our full-time staff Mdm Kartar Kaur, 69, who functions as SIWEC's ambassador. Her work is augmented by the rest of the SIWEC staff team pitching in to assist, and also by volunteer befrienders who help out with the visits from time to time. We also periodically bring those who can attend special occasions at our Gurdwaras, to occasions such as Vesakhi, Gurpurab, or Naam Ras."



A SIWEC client (left) visiting Naam Ras 2018 at Singapore Expo in December



Mdm Kartar (right) brought sweets for a client

"Lately, we started the practice of celebrating birthdays with our clients. This really uplifts their spirits. Since 2018, we started to include recitation of Mool Mantar and Gurmantar with the clients during our visits. These spiritual practices have all been very well-received so far."

When asked about the measures taken to strengthen the programme, Mr Ranjit emphasised: "Over the years, my colleagues and I have established contact with almost all nursing and residential homes for the elderly, the disabled and the destitute, as well as our general and community hospitals, to inform them of SIWEC's existence, and of this programme."

"Through this network, we stay updated about all Sikhs in hospitals, nursing homes, or other residential facilities for the destitute, and people with disability or special needs."

"In order to serve more members of our community on a sustained basis, we depend on timely updates from our community partners in the intermediate and long-term care sector, as well as our network of Gurdwaras and members of the Sikh community."

"Working together as a closely-knit community network, we can and must continue to support our isolated, often lonely, brothers and sisters who have limited sources of emotional support, to motivate them and add meaning to their lives. Come join us as a volunteer in this worthwhile seva."

Mr Ranjit added: "Mdm Kartar literally brings divine blessings in the form of parshad and Punjabi vegetarian dishes, cooked and packed from the Gurdwara, for these individuals who seldom have the opportunity to consume Punjabi food or visit the Gurdwara due to their condition."

On how SIWEC volunteers and staff have gradually added value to the programme, Mdm Kartar said: "We are very fortunate to have a dedicated volunteer who personally undertakes the delivery of Punjabi food once a week. On my part, I always bring parshad for our clients on every visit. It is very heart-warming to witness and share their joy at receiving parshad with such reverence."



Mdm Kartar (right) with our client Mr Karam Singh

# Eldercare Programme

The Eldercare Programme, which commenced in 2014 with 80 seniors, has grown rather rapidly over the last four years due to its popularity. In 2018, the programme achieved its highest enrolment ever, with 174 participants in total!

At the beginning of the year, the programme consisted of two groups — the 110-member Sunehri Saheliaan group, which meets at Central Sikh Gurdwara, and the 90-member Sunehray Pal group at Silat Road Gurdwara.

## Yishun Sunehray Pal's first session



As we go forward, the volunteers have prepared a variety of fun-filled activities to engage and our active seniors throughout the year.

In December, we initiated a third group, Yishun Sunehray Pal, at Yishun Gurdwara where three sessions were conducted. A total of 48 members had registered with Yishun Sunehray Pal.



## Keeping body & mind active



## Arts and crafts & flower arrangement workshop



Besides the usual light exercises which last for about an hour, another round of engaging talks by inspiring speakers who are experts in their field, as well as exciting hands-on activities were in store for all members. Our volunteer team continues to stretch their creativity to deliver fresh experiences, including going for the typical arts and crafts, games, and healthy cooking sessions.

The team also aims to organise one major outing every term although activities such as overnight visit to Port Dickson require more coordination and planning. These outings have proven to be a hit among our members, as most of them would otherwise not be able to experience visiting these places with fellow seniors.

## Trip to Malacca & Port Dickson from 30th October to 1st November 2018!



Term Dates	Day & Venue	Fees \$
Sunehri Saheliaan: 30 Jan – 16 Apr 2019	Tuesdays Central Sikh Gurdwara	<b>\$24</b> 65 years old and above (Ladies only)
Sunehray Pal: 30 Jan – 17 Apr 2019	Wednesdays Silat Road Gurdwara (Sikh Centre)	<b>\$10</b> 50 years old and above
Sunehray Pal (Yishun): 30 Jan – 7 Jun 2019	Fridays (fortnightly) Yishun Gurdwara	<b>\$10</b> 50 years old and above

Kindly contact Mdm Charanjeet Kaur at 9739 0446 for more details and register with us soon, as slots are quickly filling up!



## The Late Mr Harawant Singh

The Management Committee and staff of SIWEC wish to recognise the devoted seva of the late Mr Harawant Singh, one of our Prisons counsellors who passed away on 6 January 2019 at the age of 65.

"In our hearts, Harawant will always remain a cherished member of our dedicated team of volunteer counsellors. We regularly perform seva mostly on weekends at Prisons using Sikhi values to guide inmates through their journey of reform and re-integration," said Mr Baldev Singh, counsellor and staff-in-charge of Prisons matters at SIWEC.

Mr Preetjit Singh, Harawant's son, reflected: "We were all quite surprised when my father started counselling at Prisons. It was as if he was responding to a divine call. Once he got started, his whole-hearted devotion to the inmates' welfare became evident to us. He prepared for each session with great zeal as Daddy-ji would hog our home computer for a few days before each session. Though he was disappointed when some inmates he counselled ended up back in prison after their release, he remained positive that Sikhi would help the inmates from darkness into the light someday. Daddy-ji told us that all his 10 years of counselling would be worthwhile if he could impact even one inmate's life positively."

Mr Manmohan Singh, Vice-Chairman of SIWEC, shared: "Most Sikh inmates were shocked to learn of Harawant's recent passing. One of them said he would always remember his last conversation with Harawant, at the last Gurburab observance in November 2018 at Prisons, especially the firm handshake and hearty-embrace they shared at the end of the session."

"We suggested that one way to honour and dignify Harawant's seva along with all the other volunteer counsellors was for these former offenders to actively support SIWEC's recent launch of our Aftercare programme (the "Charhdi Kala" monthly Friday evening chats), a peer-support network among released offenders. Harawant was an ardent supporter and staunch advocate for this programme. He was at a meeting with another counsellor and myself when we met up with an ex-offender on 4 January evening at Central Sikh Gurdwara. This was just two days before he passed away. Little did the three of us realise that would be our final meeting. His good work will not be in vain as we re-dedicate ourselves to completing the mission that inspired his full commitment to the end," Mr Manmohan added.

# Challenge Yourself, Serve the community



## MALACCA TO SINGAPORE

16 - 17 MARCH 2019

IN AID OF



**JAN KI SEWA UTAM KAAMA**  
SERVICE TO HUMANITY IS THE HIGHEST DEED



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play your part in  
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**Ramesh** (Training) 8468 4596  
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# OUR SERVICES

Academic Excellence  
& Education Support  
Programme

Bereavement  
Services

Community Mediation &  
Counselling Programme

Eldercare  
Programme

Financial Assistance &  
Food on the  
Table Programme

Home Visit & Family  
Support Programme

Hospital Visits &  
Healthcare Ambassador  
Programme

Outreach Activities

Prisons Counselling &  
Aftercare Programme

## YOU CAN HELP AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE

### Donations

A small contribution from you translates into huge benefits for the less fortunate. You can donate by:

- A one-time Donation – in Cash, by Cheque or Bank draft.
- GIRO - Making a GIRO application to provide monthly (recurring) donations.
- A Bequest (Will) - Leave a legacy in support of SIWEC's clients.
- A Memorial Donation - A thoughtful way to remember a loved one while giving support to others.

**Donors will be able to claim tax deduction, 2.5 times of the amount donated to SIWEC.**

### Volunteers

Your efforts as a SIWEC volunteer enable us to successfully run programmes and hence, make a difference to the community. We are looking for volunteers to strengthen our services and contribute to the community at large. To find out more, kindly contact us at [info@siwec.org](mailto:info@siwec.org) today!

## WHOM WE SERVE

SIWEC is here to help; we serve everyone! If you or someone you know requires assistance or is interested in our services, please call, email or come down to meet us at:

### Sikh Welfare Council

2 Towner Road, #06-02, Singapore 327804

Opening Hours: Monday - Friday, 9am - 6pm

Email: [info@siwec.org](mailto:info@siwec.org) / 24-hour helpline @ 6299 9234

Website: <http://www.siwec.org>



**Sikh Welfare Council**