

AKTIVITI ACS

For Private Circulation Only

April 2015

My Promise to Children

- I promise to protect the rights of every child regardless of race, gender, class, disability or religion and to honour each of them as individuals.
- I promise to protect them from abuse, neglect and harm and to raise them in a loving and nurturing home.
- I promise to nourish their bodies, respect their feelings, educate and encourage them to learn and grow to realise their potential.
- I recognise that all children are citizens of the communities they live in, and their voices should be heard and their opinions listened to.
- I promise to teach them to respect all in their thoughts, words and deeds as this is the definite way to build a peaceful world.

(www.mypromisetochildren.org)

UNICEF who recently celebrated 60 years in Malaysia launched the above “My Promise to Children” Campaign together with several civil rights societies.

It is a promise to adhere to the UN-Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC) and a reminder that children have rights and it is the duty of society to protect and uphold these rights.

So as Malaysia struggles with current issues such as educational options for children with special needs; access to play and recreation; use of the cane in schools; child marriages, religious conversion of minors, etc. we must promise to take these affairs seriously.

We must make wise decisions solely based on the best interests of all children in this day and age.

We often think of child abuse and child neglect in its worst forms, like severe beatings or abandonment. But what do you think of some of the following situations?

It is not uncommon in Malaysia

- to hear cases of abandoned newborn babies.
- to see children sandwiched between their parents on a motorcycle; and usually without helmets.
- for teachers to hold up a cane (or a ruler) to “threaten” or intimidate students.
- to keep children occupied after school hours with tuition, tuition, and more tuition.
- for minors to be legally converted into another religion unilaterally by one parent.
- to send “sissy” boys to corrective boot camps to toughen them up.
- to permit girls below 16 years to marry as long as they have reached puberty.
- to find that some children are stateless because they live in the rural interiors or because their parents’ citizenship or marriage cannot be verified.

And with regards to children with special needs,

- those who have multiple disabilities do not have any access to schools.
- those who are “educable” attend schools run by Ministry of Education while some who have more difficulties attend centres run by Welfare Department.
- those who are blind get their braille textbooks much later than others at the start of the school year.
- those with special needs are unable to go to the same neighbourhood schools as their siblings.
- those with physical disabilities cannot go to schools if their classrooms are not accessible.
- those with cognitive impairment spend their time doing coloring and watching television in school.
- many are not allowed to grow up to be adults (they are perpetually treated like children!).

First Step Centre

The year-end 2014 graduation party was a grand affair held in Sunway Hotel in Seberang Jaya, thanks to all the parents who organised it. Eleven children each from the First Step Gelugor and Seberang Jaya centres 'graduated' when they turned five years old.

This is a function we always enjoy but we leave with mixed feelings.

*Children having fun
at the graduation
party*



A Focus on OT

Through the kind auspices of USM Penang, we were glad to have Prof Dr Takako Yamada from Bukkyo University Japan spend 9 months of her sabbatical leave with us in First Step Centre, Penang.

As an Occupational Therapist with special interests in early intervention and children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Prof Takako was a real asset to our programme. She constantly reminded us of the importance of posture, body position and Activities of Daily Living (ADL) which are basic to a child's development for progress to higher skills.



*Small group discussion during a
workshop*

Prof Takako was also kept busy visiting various centres and giving talks to parents, OTs, early educators, medical doctors and academics.

We are also envious to learn that there are 70,000 registered OTs in Japan compared to a meagre 1,400 in Malaysia. This works out to be only 1:20,000 which is extremely far short of the ideal ratio of 1:2,000 per population.

Stepping Stone Work Centre

We are honoured to work in partnership with the Penang State Health Department in developing a practical module in their Food Handling Course.

This initiative by the Health Department is commendable as the pictorial instruction manual offers an important mode and alternative method of learning for migrant workers as well as workers who have some form of cognitive impairment.

We look forward to the eventual publication of these visual supports and strategies so that this useful resource can be made available on a wider scale to other States for the benefit of people with intellectual disabilities.



Bakery Galore

Over the last few months of festivities, our bakery section has been kept extremely busy and we are so thankful the ovens did not let us down!!



The members at the Stepping Stone displayed much diligence and on a number of occasions, were even willing to camp overnight at the centre to fill the enormous orders.

Where may I ask can we ever find such dedicated workers?

We hope you will continue to patronise us not just during the festive seasons, but throughout the year too. Feel free to call us at 04-8665349 or email us at acssteppingstone@gmail.com to place your orders.

Collaborative Projects with Academics

As a grass roots service provider, we do look forward to collaboration with higher learning institutions. So besides receiving student interns for practical placements or obliging with surveys and research, we are currently engaged in two eco-friendly partnership projects with USM. One is the **Batik Waste Water Treatment** project with the School of Biological Sciences and the other is with the School of Materials and Mineral Resources Engineering in the production of **Eco-Clay** from river sludge.

We look forward to positive outcomes that are sustainable and can bring long term benefits to the community and the environment.

Despite some additional responsibility, we will continue to host students and interns (local and overseas) whenever possible as we believe that such placements and exposure bring mutual benefits. This ranges from one-day visits, to 3-month internships to weekly two-hour community service by secondary students from POWIIS (Prince of Wales Island International School).

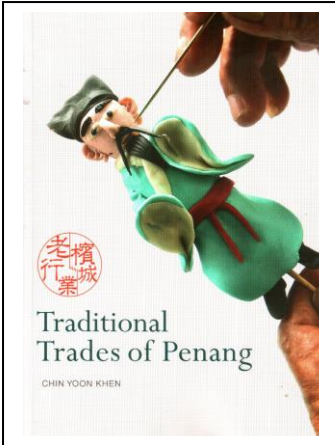
Workshops

We are glad to host several workshops and talks

- ❖ **Naoko Taniguchi** and her team from Palette International who shared with us about their activities and employment support for people with intellectual disabilities on Jan 10.
- ❖ **John Forster**, the CEO of Noah's Ark Victoria shared about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) which has taken Australia by storm since 2013. NDIS is a new way of service which empowers families to acquire individualised support.
- ❖ **Asei Hanamure**, a JICA designer conducted a practical paper emboss workshop on Jan 30.



Publication



A 248-page book entitled “Traditional Trades of Penang” by Chin Yoon Khen was recently launched by the Chief Minister of Penang.

The book with over 500 photographs, highlighted a total of 54 artisans’ crafts and skills found in Penang; ACS Stepping Stone Centre is proud to occupy 8 pages which feature three trades i.e. paper making, hand weaving and soap making.

The book is available in all leading bookshops. ISBN 9789675719172

Newton Challenge 2015

Early this year, we arranged for 70 of our friends with disabilities to participate in the Newton Challenge Run 2015 held at Straits Quay. We appreciated the opportunity to participate in the 3.5km run and the challenge to supply buns to 2,000 runners!

On top of that, the organisers adopted us as a beneficiary for the event and raised RM10,000! We wish to record a word of thanks to the organisers.



All enthusiastic before the run.



YB Zairil Khir Johari racing with Afiq

Thank You

We need to raise about RM30,000 each month to cover our expenses. There have been some tight months but thanks to faithful supporters, we have been able to scrape through. We are deeply grateful to all our donors who have kept our work going all these years.

We are so pleased to receive a pledge from a supporter to help us replace one of our ageing vans. We are still looking for kind souls who would like to sponsor some new computers for our various centres.

Our staff team of 14 dedicated members are committed to the 200 clients that we serve through our various centres and programs. But they would not be able to do so without all our faithful volunteers such as Sheet Lin and her sewing ladies; Dari Penang t-shirt painting ladies; handy supermen KC and Thomas, Grace Wong, Lynette, Alison Williams, Velica Williem, W.K.Tham, artist Nina Rupena; job coaches Shirley and Beng Hong; Wuan Xin, Yong Yee, Wada and many others.

A special mention goes to Thit Bjerre Hjortborg and Carolan Hancock from Denmark and Australia respectively, both of whom made an impact on the lives of two special individuals at the centre during their time with us.

Warm Regards,

Khor Ai-Na
CEO

“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”

- Nelson Mandela –

“When you put faith, hope and love together, you can raise positive kids in a negative world.”

- Zig Ziglar -

RESPONSE SLIP

- I would like to be a volunteer.
- I would like to make a general donation of RM _____ towards the activities and running expenses of ACS.
- I would like to donate via credit card auto billing transaction. Please send me details.

Postal Order/Cheque No: _____ Date: _____
(Please make all cheques payable to Asia Community Service or direct bank transfer to Maybank Account No 507040213362; CIMB Account No 07390000784053 or log into www.cimbclicks.com.my. All cash donations are tax-exempted).

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel No: _____ (H) _____ (O)



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“Jom!” Mobile Toy Library: Mobile Phone 016 – 4487006

A Non-Profit Organisation Providing Services to People with Special Needs, in particular reference to those with Disabilities

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