



IMPACT REPORT

2020 - MID 2021



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EMERGING STRONGER

A MESSAGE FROM SHERIFF



Sheriff Quek
Managing Director

The passionate spirit of volunteerism forms the core of our work in Cahaya Community as our volunteers not only provide academic guidance and mentoring, but they also inspire the next generation of leaders and changemakers for our nation.

OUR VISION:
A WORLD WHERE EVERYONE FEELS LOVED AND EMPOWERED TO BE THERE FOR ANOTHER PERSON

In 2018, Cahaya Community was only a small tutoring initiative providing homework support to 10 children.

Fast forward to today, Cahaya Community has established itself as a charity organisation that supports over 50 families and 100 children across four communities in Singapore.

As we approach our 3-year milestone, it serves as a moment of reflection for us, to cherish the progress we made and look forward to the many more we have yet to achieve. We are a young and growing organisation, but our work is evident that we are heading the right direction, and we will continue to grow together with our volunteers and beneficiaries.

A small step is all it takes, Let us come together to make a change for our communities.





communities reached

BY THE NUMBERS



101

children befriended

69

parents engaged

62

volunteers welcomed



OUR PARTNERS



AT A GLANCE



To help them realise their aspirations, we work to **Inspire** children.



Recognising the important of holistic development, we organise family programs under the **Empower** pillar.



We **Develop** volunteers as key agents of change.

We expanded our programmes significantly, growing from **28** kids at the start of 2020 to **101** kids across our programmes, as through our intimate conversations with families and community partners, we learnt that many have fallen behind amidst the pandemic.

DOING MORE

WE HAVE GROWN!

It is heartening to see a rising interest in volunteerism in Singapore, and we are happy to welcome 46 new volunteers, **bringing our total active volunteer count to 62**. This means each child receives more attention and care. This mentor-mentee relationship is very important, as mentors are then able to identify unique needs and strengths of each child, and tailor their curriculum to suit them.

We also welcomed 4 new members into our core team of volunteers, who are responsible for conceptualising and organising programs! With more manpower and fresh ideas, we are able to create more targeted programs that achieve the greatest impact.



Jerome
NUS

"I aim to connect with the kids and understand them and let them know that no matter what happens, Cahaya will always be there for them."



Ace
NTU

"At the end of the sessions he came up to me and asked, "What is your favourite mentos?". I replied with "Grape". And he pointed at me and said "You're my favourite Mentor (Mentos)."



Charmaine
Yale-NUS

"I joined Cahaya because I love interacting with children and listening to them tell all kinds of stories! Our kids are so incredibly talented in their own ways."



Si Yun
NUS

"Being able to journey with them and share moments of joy (and the not so happy parts) together are what keeps me going."

WHAT'S NEW

EMERGING FROM COVID-19

During Covid-19, we quickly adapted our programs to a virtual medium, conducting our activities through Zoom. We constantly sought creative means to engage children online, using the virtual whiteboard to teach math problems, and turning to games like Skribbl.io as warm up activities. We also partnered with Engineering Good and a fellow do-gooder, Enqi, to help distribute laptops to children who needed them for home-based learning.

As Covid-19 regulations slowly relaxed, and more activities began to resume, Cahaya was no different - we resumed our face-to-face teaching and other programs (albeit in a different, socially-distanced manner). The resumption of face-to-face interaction has resulted in higher attendance rates, improved attention span, and a much better experience overall for the children.

RETHINKING ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Before resuming our programs, we took the opportunity to reflect on our work, and how we could better target the needs of our children.

This has led us to revamp the academic component of our flagship mentorship programme, one of our most-established programs where we offer tutoring support to children from underserved communities. Prior to Covid-19, the academic function of mentorship was to assist students with their daily homework, and provide supplementary learning if necessary.

Recognizing that working on homework does not address their fundamental issues in academics, we shifted our focus towards structured lessons planned around the student's current foundation and latest MOE syllabus. To support the volunteers, we track child progress through a customised app, advise volunteers in lesson planning, as well as provide students with assessment books and supplementary materials to hone their conceptual understanding.

We also introduced our **Lead Mentors initiative**. For experienced volunteers, they can provide mentorship outside of our default mentorship timings to work closely with individual students while offering the flexibility to work around their personal schedules. Currently, mentorship sessions happen on 6 different days a week across our communities.



Mr Ong Ye Kung, when he was Minister of Education, dropped by our mentorship session in Canberra!

REVITALISING COMMUNITY SPACES

COMMUNITY BUILDING & PLACEMAKING

During circuit-breaker, we noted that children lacked good study spaces within their own homes, and that got us thinking: **Can we make better use of under-utilised spaces (such as the void deck) to meet the needs of these children - and turn the void deck into a useful study space?** Even better, can we transform the currently empty space into a vibrant community hub where intergenerational activities can take place? Here, we focused on blocks 244 and 245 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3, which are two adjacent blocks of rental flats where many of our beneficiaries live.

We embarked on a few community engagement sessions where we spoke to fifty members of the community, young and old. We tried to understand the needs of the elderly in the area, and partnered with the Thye Hua Kwan Senior Activity Centre to go on house visits to their beneficiaries as well. For the children, we conducted a series of 'Build Your World' activities where they used their creative juices to envision the future of the space.

At the end of 2020, we are grateful to have acquired funding from Kebun Baru CC to purchase some tables and chairs, which are stored in garden sheds at Block 245 and Block 117. These flexible and modular seating arrangements can be re-configured to support different community activities, not just for us but also for our community partners like the Thye Hua Kwan SAC as well.

These improvements in community space may seem small, but we believe that such community initiatives are little steps to fostering a tightly knitted community. They also enhance the ability of organisations such as Cahaya to deliver accessible and effective programs for beneficiaries. Ultimately, we see this to just be the first step in an ongoing effort to adopt a more community-based approach in our work.



PROGRAM FEATURE - INSPIRE

BUILDING SKILLS

Our core belief is that academics is only one component of the holistic development of a child.

Many of the children we serve are incredibly talented in their own ways. Speak with them, and they'll show you anything from magic tricks to their latest Among Us drawings. However, more often than not, they lose interest and many lack the opportunity to explore their interest further.

Inspired by the four stage model of interest development, and understanding the need to trigger as well as sustain interest, we saw the potential to intervene. We seek to **encourage each child to continually re-engage with something they are already interested in**, and to incubate their interests through providing appropriate challenges and opportunities to deepen their learning.

We hope that through sustaining and deepening their level of engagement and interest in a field, we help the children gain greater confidence in themselves and perhaps even pursue these projects more seriously.

BAKEY BAKEY!

One of our youths really loves baking - and over December she got a little taste of what it means to start your own baking business! We helped her to set up Bakey Bakey, a pilot Instagram store project where we organised a Christmas bake sale. It was very important to us to co-create this project together with her, and it was an opportunity to pass on knowledge and inculcate skills related to entrepreneurship, budgeting, social media marketing, product photography and design. Not to mention, she was also involved in recipe testing, baking, and wrapping the products. Another of our younger kids was also eagerly writing the cards that went along with the brownies.

Within the first three weeks of our launch, we managed to sell 85 brownies! We are currently in the midst of sourcing for locations where she can bake at a low cost to sustain this effort. Regardless, we hope that this small entrepreneurial pursuit has opened the world of possibilities in her mind.





DANCE WITH CAHAYA!

We conducted a 4-week long dance program with two of our kids, with the support of Beng Hwee aka Bboy Wavy who was involved in many community-building projects that used dance as a tool for social change when he was previously studying in US.

Having identified the kids' passion for dance within these two kids, we decided to kickstart this dance program. Our kids embarked on an experiential journey where they learned more about Hip Hop and dance footwork - although most of the time, our kids were the teachers, enthusiastically showing us dance moves they've learned on TikTok!

In these workshops, dance was used as a medium for connection and self-expression. They were able to learn things on the spot, and then show us how to do it their way. We believe unleashing their energy and creativity through dance helps to build their confidence and sense of identity, and more importantly, inspire them to take a step towards pursuing their passions.



CAHAY-ART!

Originally just an 8-week art program in collaboration with some students from Yale-NUS, Cahay-art! is now a fortnightly art jam conducted at the void deck. This allowed us to reach out to not just the children we identified for this program, but also to welcome anyone who was playing around the area to join us! This was an opportunity to build community, inject life into the place, and engage children in creating site-specific artwork. Each session lasts two hours, and was attended by around ten children.

Through art, our mentors engaged them in storytelling and got them to reflect upon their emotions, memories, dreams, and fears. But storytelling aside, children simply enjoyed the opportunity to access a variety of art tools and mediums, and to create anything that they wanted, freely. These projects covered a range of different topics - from one child creating a store selling cheese balls to another mastering the art of drawing eyes.

Cahay-art! enjoys high attendance rates and rave reviews from the children, who grew in their confidence as young budding creatives.



CODING



Digital skills are only going to get more important in the future, so after identifying a few children who are interested in coding and game development, we reached out to the NUS Students' Computing Club to co-develop a curriculum introducing coding skills in a fun and engaging manner. We recently concluded a six-session long programme where our kids picked up concepts like machine learning and programming, and even got to try out coding for themselves using online tool Scratch. Volunteers from NUS Students' Computing Club facilitated these sessions and also guided participants to complete their very own little coding projects!

CAHAYA CHANGEMAKERS

The Cahaya Changemakers programme provides children with service-learning opportunities to recognize their innate gift to care and love, and it strives to build a nurturing community of compassionate and responsible individuals. It was inspired by a team of volunteers who believed that the children have much to contribute to the community. Engaging the children in acts of service recognises them not in terms of their problems and circumstances, but in their strengths and capacity to give.

As a pilot run, we collaborated with Ground Up Initiative (GUI) to involve a group of 8 children in a sustainability service-learning project. Children reconnect to nature and practiced environmental stewardship. We are happy to see the children step out of their comfort zone and grow over the process! As we speak, they are putting their muscles to good use as they partake in farm duties, including weeding and harvesting. Just this month, they took part in a beach clean under the scorching sun, all in the name of love for Mother Earth. Now, we are looking forward to these green ambassadors sharing their journey with their friends and advocating for a cleaner and greener planet earth!



PROGRAM FEATURE - EMPOWER

EXPANDING SUPPORT

Since the end of circuit-breaker, we have been fortunate to have the opportunity to check in with our families through our quarterly house visits.

Through our intimate conversations with the parents, we are heartened to hear about their selfless love for children that manifests in their own amazing ways. Our conversations are often filled with concerns they have about their children in their academic and personal development, and how they struggle to balance work and looking after their children. Yet, despite their worries, they never fail to recognize the little things that their children do - from how they help in house chores to how they take care of their siblings.

Not only did we learn to see the children beyond their problems, but we are also thankful to witness parents' strength and desire to improve themselves for their children. They would share their innovative parenting techniques, and are always open to working with us to better engage their children. This has helped to tailor our programmes to fit their children, and more importantly, inspired us to continue improving ourselves.



YA, IT'S CAHAYA!

Ya, It's Cahaya! is centred around building stronger parent-child relationships.

Through the programme, families get to participate in exciting family-friendly activities on a monthly basis. Beyond spending the day together, the activities are also designed to highlight important family strengths, such as communication and appreciation, that will help foster a stronger family unit. Trained volunteers will facilitate healthy, meaningful discussions within the families as we play and grow together.

In our pilot run, we engaged the parents and children in a 'Plaint-a-Pot' activity where the families had to paint their pots and sow the seeds together. It was amazing to see them having so much fun and interacting in the process.

KIDS LUV IT BREAKFAST SET

We are grateful to have the opportunity to collaborate with Free Food For All (FFFA) to provide breakfast sets to our families. This collaboration arose as we realised that many of the children lack proper nutrition, which not only affects their physical development but also their performance in the school as they struggle to focus in school. With the support of FFFA, families receive breakfast rations for their children each month, which contains nourishing food like fruit bars and cereal (an all-time favourite) that the children can consume before school.

Since the start of the programme, we have heard positive feedback about the programme from the parents who are happy that their children are able to have a wholesome and easy-to-prepare breakfast. Some of them shared that preparing healthy breakfast for their children used to be difficult for them as it was time-consuming and costly. Beyond nourishment, one mother spoke fondly about how the breakfast sets put smiles on her children's faces as they look forward to the delivery each month to uncover the surprise food items in the packs.



ENGLISH FOR ADULTS

English for Adults is a basic English writing and reading program spearheaded by our amazing volunteer, Valerie! It strives to build the confidence and English competency of non-English speaking parents to integrate into Singapore. Over the 12 weeks, the adult learners learn and connect with each other in a safe, non-judgmental environment, building a community network through learning.

Each lesson covers a mix of Phonics (basic sounds to blending) and Sentence Structure (eg. introducing yourself, possessive adjectives, telling the time etc.). We are proud to have 9 learners on board so far! They are not shy during lessons, often clarifying their doubts with sensei Valerie. For parents who require more support, she has a volunteer sidekick in Chester who provides extra help to them. We heartened to see the dedication that the parents put into each session, and we are confident that they will graduate with flying colours in due time (just a few more dreaded tests to go)!

3 key objectives for the programme:

1. Give them the confidence and necessary language skills to navigate Singapore and society. This could improve the type of jobs they could obtain and help them access a wider support network.
2. Create opportunities for our adult learners to bond with their children
3. Connect our adult learners with one another. By building a community of trust, we hope to more cohesively work with our adult learners to improve the overall family life of our Inspire kids.



PROGRAM FEATURE - DEVELOP

A JOURNEY OF LEARNING

Volunteer Development is very important to Cahaya, and we hope to be a safe space where volunteers can learn and grow. Sometimes, it can be challenging and intimidating to be paired 1-on-1 with a mentee, especially for first-time volunteers. Through our Cahaya+ 'app', volunteers submit Session Reports after each mentorship session, flagging issues and seeking assistance if necessary, which is an efficient way for our Head Mentors to quickly step in and offer guidance.

We also organise monthly Mentorship Debriefs, where volunteers come together (through Zoom) to reflect, share their learnings, and give each other advice on how to tackle common challenges.

This year, we were also fortunate to organise a sharing session with our advisor, Prof. Ng Kok Hoe, a sociologist who has studied rental housing policy and the social service sector extensively. Many of the families we serve live in rental flats, and after Prof. Ng's sharing on rental housing policy in Singapore, our volunteers came away with a better understanding of the social context that Cahaya operates in, and how we can try to create meaningful impact.



KOPI CHAT WITH EUGENIA KOH

Eugenia is a co-founder of the Ground-Up Movement, Playvocates In Action, and has extensive experience working with children, youths, parents and teachers as a lecturer, play advocate and parent. Her published work focuses on play-based learning, parental involvement in young children's education and tiger parenting.

During an almost two-hour long kopi chat, Eugenia shared with our volunteers on the importance of play for development, and how volunteers can adopt a play-centric lens in guiding their own mentees. It was a great conversation with many questions from our volunteers.

Eugenia also joined us this year officially as an Advisor for Cahaya Community! She continually inspires us with her passion, and has helped to inform much of our program development and teaching pedagogy.



2021 AND BEYOND

WHAT'S IN THE WORKS



READY SET GO!

Studies have proven that the critical periods of literacy and numeracy acquisition occurs during the early years of the child's development. We observed a growing prevalence of students displaying poor literacy and numeracy foundations, that hindered their later years of learning.

Recognizing the need to start early, we are designing a preparatory program which is informed by childhood development and socioemotional theories. It comprises activities ranging from interactive story telling to educational board games, aimed to introduce multi sensory learning and positive reinforcement.

Our program will be designed using psychoanalytic and socioemotional frameworks to introduce activities ranging from interactive storytelling to educational board games, to introduce multi sensory learning and positive reinforcement.

GET SMART

Learning ability is not confined to the knowledge they absorb in class or books. Cultivating a positive mindset to learning elevates a student's potential to retain information and recognizing different learning opportunities. In addition, there are merits to developing good learning habits and different types of intelligence such as creativity in problem-solving. By redefining the way students learn and reinforcing good study techniques, we hope to build a positive attitude, cultivating a growth mindset which imbues children with the resilience to flourish in every situation.

NEW COMMUNITIES

In **Casa Clementi**, we have been working with a volunteer interest group who have consulted us to partner them in their program as they were keen to reach out to more kids in the area. Currently, we are conducting a needs assessment of the area and consulting the stakeholders on the ground to design a more targeted program.

For **Geylang Serai**, we are designing a strength-based mentoring programme which is founded on the belief that each child is different and has their own unique stories. Informed by socioemotional learning theory and positive psychology, the children will undergo a series of activities - ranging from arts to service learning - designed to identify their interests and strengths, as well as to facilitate their holistic development. Through their growth journey, they will be guided by dedicated mentors who will ensure they are able to grow at their own pace to achieve their aspirations. Complementing their personal development, we will work closely with their families and community stakeholders to provide them with a safe and nurturing environment.

**THANK YOU FOR
BEING PART OF OUR
CHANGEMAKING
JOURNEY.**

