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COOPERATION PROGRAMME

## Global Aim

Singapore's efforts in getting World Toilet Day recognised by the UN shows that sanitation for all is no laughing matter



**Youth Power**  
Singapore sets up  
Volunteer Youth  
Corps



**A Partner  
In Trade**  
Sharing our  
development issues



# Ed's Note



**ON THE COVER:** "Evolution of Man: Poo Pee Happy" is a quirky sculpture commissioned by the World Toilet Organisation, which has been raising awareness about the importance of proper sanitation since 2001. November 19 was officially designated World Toilet Day by the United Nations in July 2013.

Dear readers,

**T**he past year — 2013 — saw a particularly noteworthy achievement for Singapore. The country's efforts to get World Toilet Day recognised by the United Nations paid off, when on 24 July 2013, Singapore's resolution at the 67<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York was passed by all 193 member-states.

The recognition had its humble start in November 2001 when Singaporean Jack Sim started the Singapore-based World Toilet Organisation, a non-governmental organisation committed to improving toilet and sanitation conditions worldwide. Read about Singapore's efforts and how the inaugural UN World Toilet Day was celebrated at the UN headquarters and across Singapore in **No Laughing Matter**.

Having reaped the benefits of international trade and with nearly 50 years of experience in trade promotion, Singapore continued to share its development lessons and experiences through its Singapore Cooperation Programme.

**A Partner In Trade** spotlights the collaboration between the World Trade Organisation and the Singapore Centre for International Law that resulted in the second WTO-Singapore Policy Dialogue. The two-day dialogue was attended by senior government officials from the region.

In **A Year Of Helping**, read how Singapore lent a helping hand to victims of the November Super Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines

and those affected by the earthquake in Sichuan province in Southwestern China in April. **The Power Of Youth** relates how young Singaporeans too, have been pitching in both at home and abroad. And with the formation of Volunteer Youth Corps (YVC), their involvement in community projects looks set to be even larger. The YVC will be launched with a pilot batch of members in mid-2014 to carry out projects both locally and regionally in five focus areas — education; health; sports and heritage; special needs and the environment.

On the friendship and cooperation front, all is shaping up to be a fruitful year for 2014!

**Director**  
Public Affairs Directorate  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore

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↑ **A Year of Helping**, pg10

**Keep in touch!**

Share with us your memories, photos and experiences in Singapore under the Singapore Cooperation Programme. Email us at [mfa@mfa.gov.sg](mailto:mfa@mfa.gov.sg).



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
SINGAPORE

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*Focus*

SANITATION CONCERNS

# No Laughing Matter

Singapore's efforts to get World Toilet Day formally recognised by the United Nations have paid off, with recent commemorative events highlighting the crucial topic of sanitation.

WORDS BY WANDA TAN

"This Sculpture commemorates the United Nations General Assembly's declaration of 19th November every year as UN World Toilet Day."





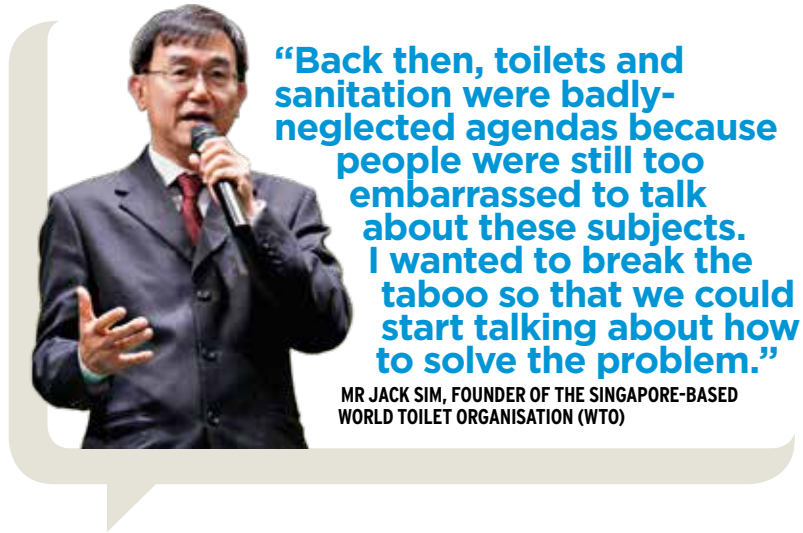
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**OILET HUMOUR** is often an easy way to earn cheap laughs. But jokes and punchlines aside, a more serious concern exists — adequate sanitation is still hard to come by in many developing countries.

According to a joint report by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), more than one-third of the global population — some 2.5 billion people — lack access to proper toilet facilities, and about 760,000 children under the age of five die each year from diarrhoea, which can be prevented with access to clean water and basic sanitation.

To draw greater attention to the global sanitation problem, Singapore tabled a resolution at the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 24 July 2013, calling for 19 November to be designated World Toilet Day. Titled ‘Sanitation for All’, the UN resolution was co-sponsored by 121 countries and was passed within minutes by all 193 member-states.

↓ A hanging latrine toilet in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which poses a serious health hazard for users.



“Back then, toilets and sanitation were badly-neglected agendas because people were still too embarrassed to talk about these subjects. I wanted to break the taboo so that we could start talking about how to solve the problem.”

MR JACK SIM, FOUNDER OF THE SINGAPORE-BASED WORLD TOILET ORGANISATION (WTO)

**MR TOILET**

Most of us might balk at being nicknamed ‘Mr Toilet’, but Mr Jack Sim, founder of the Singapore-based World Toilet Organisation (WTO), wears this moniker with pride. Since 19 November 2001, when he founded WTO — a non-governmental organisation (NGO) committed to improving toilet and sanitation conditions worldwide through education, training and creation of business opportunities for toilet-related companies in developing nations — he has been on a personal crusade to champion better sanitation. And on that day,

Mr Sim declared 19 November World Toilet Day.

“Back then, toilets and sanitation were badly-neglected agendas because people were still too embarrassed to talk about [these subjects],” he tells *Experience Singapore*. “I wanted to break the taboo so that we could start talking about how to solve the problem.”

In 2011, Mr Sim approached Mr George Yeo, Singapore’s former Foreign Affairs Minister, with the idea of making World Toilet Day an official UN day. Bowled over by his passion, Mr Yeo quickly roped



in Mr Vanu Gopala Menon, Deputy Secretary at Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Over the next year and a half, MFA — together with WTO and the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (MEWR) — lobbied intensely for the UN resolution, garnering 121 co-sponsors including the United Kingdom, Bangladesh and Vietnam.

When the resolution was eventually passed by the UN General Assembly in July 2013, Mr Sim, a businessman, recalls, "It felt like a milestone of a lifetime's work had finally been reached, like I had won the Nobel Prize for Sanitation."



### COMMEMORATING A MILESTONE

To celebrate the inaugural UN World Toilet Day, activities were held all over the world, including at the UN headquarters in New York and across Singapore.

At the UN headquarters, a commemorative event was organised by Singapore's Permanent Mission to the UN on 19 November. Speaking to the UN News Centre, UN Deputy Secretary-General Mr Jan Eliasson praised the initiative and stressed the importance of improving sanitation and hygiene. Other high-ranking UN officials and Ambassadors also addressed the event including Ms Therese Dooley, UNICEF's Senior Advisor for Sanitation and Hygiene; Ambassador Peter Thomson, Permanent Representative of Fiji and Chair of G77 & China; Ambassador Csaba Karosi, Permanent Representative of Hungary and Member, Steering Committee of Group of Friends on Water and Sanitation; and Ambassador Karen Tan, Singapore's Permanent Representative to the UN.

## SANITATION — A GLOBAL CONCERN

**BESIDES BEING A LEADING CAUSE OF DISEASE AND CHILD DEATHS, POOR SANITATION ALSO HAS OTHER NEGATIVE SPILLOVER EFFECTS:**

- The *We Can't Wait* report states that one in three women and girls worldwide risk shame, harassment and even assault because they do not have a safe place to relieve themselves. This in turn hampers their attendance at schools and at work.
- Studies conducted by the World Bank found that countries can lose up to seven per cent of their annual gross domestic product because of poor sanitation, which is associated with high healthcare costs, a downturn in tourism, and an unhealthy and unproductive workforce.

• Likewise, the UN estimates that poor sanitation and water supply result in economic losses worth US\$260 billion annually in developing countries.

↑ A schoolboy in the municipality of Aguacatan, in Guatemala, going to the school latrine. Efforts are in place by UNICEF to ensure that children, teachers and community leaders practice proper sanitation habits.

Commenting on Singapore's sanitation history, Ms. Tan said, "When Singapore became independent in 1965, only 45 per cent of the population had access to proper sanitation. It was only some three decades later that all Singaporeans had access to proper sanitation. This required the Singapore Government to clean up rivers, relocate businesses and industries, resettle squatters and create new infrastructure." Ms Tan also talked about how Singapore is sharing its developmental experiences, including in the field of sanitation, with other developing countries under MFA's Singapore Cooperation Programme. "Under this programme, some 80,000 officials from over 170 countries have received training in areas such as water management, sanitation and human resource development," she said.

The event also featured a panel discussion which covered the different aspects of sanitation. Panelists from government bodies, international organisations, medical institutions and the private sector expressed a range of views and perspectives. Nonetheless, all of them recognised the urgency of increasing access to better toilet facilities.

Coinciding with this special event was the release of a report titled *We Can't Wait: A Report on Sanitation and Hygiene for Women and Girls*. Co-authored by the NGO

WaterAid, the UN-hosted Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, and the multinational company Unilever, the report presents the troubling consequences of the lack of access to clean toilets for women and girls, and emphasises the need to act urgently and decisively.

### ON HOME GROUND

Singapore was also a hub of activity, as WTO and the Restroom Association of Singapore (RAS) — also founded by Mr Sim in 1998 — organised events to mark World Toilet Day.

Kicking things off was RAS's annual LOO (Let's Observe Ourselves) Carnival from 21 October to 24 November 2013. The key message of this year's carnival was to 'Ignite a SPARK — Share, Promote and Adopt Restroom Kindness'. Previously held at a single venue, this year's carnival was expanded to five shopping malls with exhibitions, games and activities held each week at a different venue. RAS also organised events on 19 November, including the Hawker Centre Happy Toilet Cleanup, in which 51 hawker centres participated in an island-wide cleanup of their public toilets. Another event was the inaugural Singapore Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Conference. Targeted at building owners and professionals such as architects and engineers, the conference provided information about WASH regulations, guidelines, planning, practices and promotion.

To mark the Singapore Government and WTO's successful tabling of the 'Sanitation for All' UN resolution, a monument depicting the WTO logo was unveiled on 16 November 2013 at the Marina Barrage. Titled 'Evolution of Man: Poo Pee Happy', the sculpture represents the evolution from cave-man to civilised man, one who enjoys adequate sanitation.

Meanwhile, WTO held a week-long exhibition called 'Celebrate the Toilet' from 19 to 28 November, calling attention to the need to improve sanitation in developing countries. There was even a showbiz aspect to the proceedings, as WTO also hosted a charity premiere of a locally-produced movie *Everybody's Business* on 28 November.





# The Power of Youth

With the establishment of the Volunteer Youth Corps, Singapore is set to tap into the energy of the young for social good.

WORDS BY WANDA TAN



**V**OLUNTEERISM WEARS A youthful face in Singapore. Out of 1,512 individuals interviewed for the country's National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre's biennial Individual Giving Survey 2012, a record 32.3 per cent reported that they had volunteered in the last 12 months. Of these, most were youths — to be exact, 43 per cent and 28 per cent were from the 15–24 and 25–34 year-old age groups, respectively.

Indeed, Singapore's student population actively contributes to local society. At the National University of Singapore, for instance, computing students have developed IT systems for voluntary welfare organisations to increase their efficiency and reduce administrative workload. Meanwhile, engineering students from the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) College East have designed an EZ Mobility Device, an assistive technology that — with a simple push of a button — helps the elderly get back on their feet after a fall.

It is community projects such as these that Singapore's National Youth Council (NYC) — the Government's national coordinating body for youth affairs — is seeking to promote through the Volunteer Youth Corps (VYC). Backed by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, this programme — to be piloted in mid-2014 — will expand opportunities for young Singaporeans to volunteer and make a difference to the community.

### A NATIONAL DAY PROMISE

The VYC was first mentioned on 18 August 2013, in Singapore Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong's National Day Rally speech. He announced that the VYC would be set up in 2014, noting that "we want to encourage more young people to build a better world and a better Singapore".

The VYC is open to those aged 15–35 — mainly students in the ITEs, polytechnics and universities, but also working adults — who will take part in both local and overseas

community projects. If the volunteers are students, the programme will match them with critical local community needs based on their passions, interests or causes, and then help them develop their own projects to have a sustained and meaningful impact on society.

The overseas component of the VYC will initially be carried out via NYC's existing Youth Expedition Project (YEP), a programme that encourages youths to embark on community service-learning projects all over Asia. Over time, however, YEP will be restructured and incorporated by the VYC to better link volunteers' overseas outreach projects with local ones.

With the S\$100 million National Youth Fund, the VYC will provide resources and support to volunteers. Youth and community organisations will help to train and mentor participants, while allowances will be given to those who wish to



◀ Student volunteers work with voluntary welfare organisations to co-create IT-based solutions.



take time off from their studies to volunteer full-time. Upon completion of their projects, youths will also receive 'pay-it-forward' grants to help junior members fund their own projects. In addition, networking opportunities will allow volunteers to connect with other like-minded youths as well as leaders in the public and private sectors.

Mr Lawrence Wong, Singapore's Acting Minister for Culture, Community and Youth and Chairman of NYC, spoke at greater length about the VYC during a dialogue session with the Prime Minister in August 2013 at the country's LASALLE College of the Arts. He cited the results of the Individual Giving Survey 2012, which recorded an overall shift towards ad hoc volunteering. The survey had reported that seven in 10 Singaporeans prefer to volunteer occasionally instead of doing longer-term community service.

"But we are hoping that with

**"We want to expand the opportunities for young people to serve."**

**MR LAWRENCE WONG, SINGAPORE'S ACTING MINISTER FOR CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH AND CHAIRMAN OF NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL**

some framework, through the Youth Corps, we can ensure that the volunteering experience will be fulfilling for the individual and impactful for the community," said Mr Wong. "We want to expand the opportunities for young people to serve, and to make that service a vehicle to meet critical community needs as well as national goals."

#### **THE STORY SO FAR**

On 10 December 2013, NYC launched an open call for community partners to submit proposals to

jointly develop projects for the VYC. These community groups will have to work closely with VYC members to develop meaningful and beneficial service-learning projects, either locally or in the region, over a duration of three to six months. The projects should focus on one of five areas — education; health; arts, sports and heritage; special needs; and the environment.

The call for partners lasted until 30 January 2014, following which NYC will evaluate and select the proposals based on several criteria. These include delivering a positive volunteering experience, meeting critical local and/or overseas community needs in the five focus areas, and ensuring a sustainable solution utilising local assets.

NYC aims to launch the VYC by mid-2014 with a pilot batch of a few hundred members, eventually supporting 6,000 youth corps volunteers annually.





# A Partner in Trade

**Singapore is well-positioned as a global shipping hub to facilitate discussions on multilateral trade.**

# B

**BETWEEN 2008 AND 2011,**

Singapore's ratio of trade relative to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was the highest in the world at 400 per cent. Singapore's port is also among the busiest in the world, with some 200 shipping lines connecting us to 600 ports in 123 countries.

While the island is scarce in natural resources, Singapore is fortunate to be located along important global shipping routes. This explains the role that trade plays in contributing to Singapore's economic growth. Over the years, Singapore has grown into a major transshipment hub in Asia, with the necessary infrastructure, manpower, and effective regulation to support this role. This reliance on trade underpins Singapore's strong and consistent emphasis on a strong multilateral trade system and the promotion of trade linkages between economies.

The Republic has a network of about 20 free trade agreements, and is constantly looking for opportunities to expand cooperation in trade with other countries. For instance, it is currently involved in negotiations for major regional trade agreements, such as the Trans Pacific Partnership and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. It is also



↑ **Participants of the Singapore-US Third Country Training Programme joint training course on Investment and Trade Facilitation, held in August 2013**

actively engaged in training other countries and promoting international discussions on the topic of trade facilitation.

## **THE SINGAPORE COOPERATION PROGRAMME**

Having reaped the benefits of international trade and having nearly 50 years of experience in trade promotion, Singapore is keen to share its expertise in trade policy formulation with other countries through the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP).

The SCP has been working with other countries and international organisations to share Singapore's development lessons and experiences since 1992. To date, it has

trained more than 90,000 government officials from 170 countries in the Asia-Pacific, Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean, with a particular focus on Singapore's immediate neighbours in ASEAN. Each year, SCP conducts some 300 courses and trains nearly 7,000 government officials.

Courses under the SCP's calendar include "International Trade Facilitation" and "Economic Planning and Development". In early 2013, Singapore's Civil Service College and the United States Department of Commerce also jointly conducted a training programme on "Investment and Trade Facilitation" under the Singapore-US





← Participants of the Singapore-WTO Dialogue 2013, organised by the Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore.



↑ WTO Deputy Director-General, Mr Xi Xiaozhun, giving the opening address at the Policy Dialogue.



↑ Singapore's Senior Minister of State, Trade and Industry, and National Development, Mr Lee Yi Shyan, was the Guest-of-Honour and keynote speaker at the Policy Dialogue.

Third Country Training Programme, offering participants the chance to learn from the experiences and trade models of both Singapore and the United States.

### WTO-SINGAPORE POLICY DIALOGUE

The SCP collaborated with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the National University of Singapore Centre for International Law to jointly organise the second WTO-Singapore Policy Dialogue held in October 2013. Singapore and the WTO have strong ties. We first signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 1996, which was renewed in 2000, to establish a Third Country Training

Programme partnership formalising our cooperation.

As part of the SCP's partnership with the WTO Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation, the two-day dialogue included discussions and briefings on the WTO, the global trading environment, trade policy decisions, regional trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and foreign direct investment.

The WTO-Singapore Policy Dialogue provided a platform for senior government officials from the region to exchange views on the world trading system and discuss contemporary trade issues that posed challenges to free trade.

Thirty senior government officials from the Asia-Pacific region involved in trade policy and planning attended the dialogue. Mr Xi Xiaozhun, Deputy Director-General of the WTO gave the opening address, while Singapore's Senior Minister of State, Trade and Industry, and National Development, Mr Lee Yi Shyan, was the Guest

of Honour and keynote speaker at the opening session.

Other prominent speakers at the dialogue included Mr Evan Rogerson, Director of the Agriculture and Commodities Division of the WTO, and Dr Patrick Low, Vice-President of Research and former WTO Chief Economist.

Citing problems faced by governments in facilitating trade, such as shifting patterns of production and consumption and increasingly demanding stakeholders, Mr Lee encouraged participants to "embrace these challenges and respond to them positively", with the mindset of being open enough to "explore new ideas and keep pace with current business realities, so that multilateral rules and initiatives remain relevant."

### AN ONGOING DISCUSSION

As the bedrock of Singapore's trade policy, multilateral free trade remains an important priority for Singapore's economic planners. To this end, Singapore continues to prioritise working closely with international partners and friends, whether by sharing our experiences or encouraging dialogue, to jointly overcome problems and improve global trading relations.



# A year of helping



A friend in need is a friend indeed. *Experience Singapore* looks back at some instances of how the Republic extended a helping hand in 2013.

## THE GIFT OF CLEAN WATER

April 2013 marked the start of a three-year project to provide more than 7,000 villagers in the townships of Kaw Hmu and Kungyangon — in Myanmar's Yangon Region — with better access to clean drinking water. The project will see the Singapore International Foundation (SIF) together with non-profit

organisation Mingalar Myanmar, funders Keppel Land Limited and Singapore Red Cross, install 36 wells, refurbish five rural health centres and two district hospitals, as well as conduct community education programmes on basic hygiene and nutrition for the villagers.

The project is part of SIF's Water for Life programme, first launched in Cambodia in 2010. In Lomangan in East Java, Indonesia, the programme has provided 15,000 school children and adults with access to clean drinking water since its launch in June 2013.



← SIF Chairman Ms Euleen Goh (left) unveiling the plaque with Deputy Commissioner of the Yangon Regional Government Dr Than Aung, to mark the start of the Water For Life programme in Yangon, Myanmar.

Photo: AP, other photos courtesy of Singapore International Foundation, Katherine Toh, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).



# Reaching Out in 2013







↓ Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Culture, Community and Youth Mr Sam Tan with children from the Shichigahama Toyama Nursery School during his visit to the school located in Shichigahama Town, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan.



### IN SUPPORT OF SICHUAN

A 7.0-magnitude earthquake rocked Sichuan province in southwestern China on 20 April 2013, toppling buildings, triggering landslides and disrupting power connections in the mountainous Lushan County. At least 196 people were killed and more than 13,400 were injured by the quake.

In support of China's disaster relief efforts, Singapore donated S\$50,000 through the Singapore Red Cross. In a letter of condolence to Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong assured Premier Li that the Republic was ready to assist those affected by the tragedy.

↑ Relief aid, which includes food, drinking water and medications, being distributed to those affected by the Sichuan Earthquake in China.

### THIS ONE'S FOR THE CHILDREN

In May 2013, two years after the March 11, 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami (also called Great Sendai Earthquake or Great Tōhoku Earthquake), the Shichigahama Toyama Nursery School, located in Shichigahama Town, Miyagi Prefecture was officially reopened. Funded by donations collected by the Singapore Red Cross, the rebuilt nursery school cost some S\$5 million to construct.

Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Culture, Community and Youth and Mayor of the Central Singapore District Mr Sam Tan, who was accompanied

by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and representatives from the Singapore Red Cross, attended the opening ceremony.

### ASSISTANCE IN THE AFTERMATH

Super Typhoon Haiyan's massive devastation to the central Philippines in November 2013 left 8,000 people dead and missing, and more than four million homeless. Key infrastructure was destroyed and communities were flattened, and untold numbers were left without immediate access to food and medical care.

On 19 November, Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr K Shanmugam presented aid in kind such as medical supplies and drinking water to the Philippines Ambassador to Singapore, Minda Cruz. Earlier, the Singapore Government had contributed S\$200,000 in seed money to kick-start the Singapore Red Cross fundraising efforts, as well as S\$120,000 worth of relief supplies including tents and blankets. The Singapore Civil Defence Force also sent a team to Tacloban, the worst-hit city, to aid rescue efforts by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

← Survivors of Super Typhoon Haiyan boarding a Singapore Armed Forces C-130 military plane to be evacuated from Tacloban to Cebu, in November 2013.

