



ILC Singapore
International Longevity Centre

A Tsao Foundation Initiative

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12 July 2017

Tsao Foundation Initiatives

Hua Mei Centre for
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Hua Mei Training Academy

International Longevity
Centre Singapore

**Report of ILC Singapore
From October 2015- June 2017
Submitted by
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Ms Susana Concorde Harding, Director**

I. Research

I.1 Ethnographic study of Whampoa community

This is a study of the Whampoa community by our research team partner from the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health (SSH PH) at the National University of Singapore (NUS) aimed to inform our project team implementing a community development programme in Whampoa as part of our Community for Successful Ageing (ComSA) project .

As a background, Tsao Foundation has been asked by the Ministry of Health to pilot test our programme model developed in 2009, ComSA. Whampoa as a community has 18% of its resident population age 60 and over, higher than the national average of about 12%.

For this study, three objectives were agreed: (i) to describe profiles of social participation among older adults, and community resources or vulnerabilities that influence social participation (ii) to map appropriate intervention strategies for improving self-care and social capital and (iii) to explore communication strategies to shape older adults' perceptions of successful ageing, and increase participation in the program.

Methods

A multi-method ethnographic study (n=109) was conducted by a four-member team from NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health (2 PhD, 1 MA, 1 BA). Seven community volunteers and 102 community members from varying Resident Committee (RC) zones in Whampoa, institutions, language and ethnic background were interviewed. The data was organized by topics and analysed in a team using thematic analysis, and synthesizing across the different methods for triangulation of findings.

Findings

The following are the key results of the ethnographic study. A paper has been submitted for publication and awaiting acceptance and approval.

Typology of social participation and isolation

- Among the active participators, are the older adults who seek out organized activities again and again, as well as older adults who volunteer through leadership roles. Among the occasional participators are ethnic minorities, as well as older adults who seek 'safe' routines and hobbies within an inner circle of friends and family members.
- Isolated older adults typically do not settle well, living on the margins, mistrustful, while relying on 'comfort-zoning' alone. One important subtheme qualifying the marginalised was the problem with subsidies – these are reliant on a set of out-dated cultural norms that made it hard for people to claim without first showing that their families would not provide for them adequately, or because they stayed in large multi-generational households. Modern day Singapore has experienced rapid economic growth, and now an aligned cultural shift, that has left some elders to fall through the cracks, facing very hard times.

Voices on self-care

- Older adults greatly preferred health knowledge topics (e.g. health eating, exercise etc.) for a community health program to topics about emotional-social aspects of health (e.g. talking about stress). Exercise consistently topped the list of fun things to do. However, it was apparent that health knowledge might not always translate to behaviour. The theme of 'I know my health best' describes older adults' reluctance in communicating with one's doctor. We observed an uncomfortable tension between empowerment from teaching self-monitoring and this translation to less need for check-up, screening, and talking to doctors.

Voices on social capital

- Efforts to initially pull in older adults focus on easy, non-skill based bonding activities given that these activities are most popular and require least resources to run. Emotional safety in the group is crucial in sustaining participation, '...they had at least 50 people. Now, only a few, a lot of gossiping, then grouping, then they all dropped out.' - aiming for meaningful interactions, and longer term offering hobby-specific activities.
- For those with reduced mobility befriending groups might help those without carers, as this type of group was cited as the second most popular activity of interest among residents.

Sketching out 'successful ageing'

- Successful ageing was largely seen as continuing to grow despite getting older, transpired from the abundance of trees, plants and flowers that were drawn in association with the term. Connectedness and walking together was also important. With respect to vulnerability, a strong emergent theme centred on having the ability to protect oneself in old age, and fears of losing control due to age-related declines, resulting in loss of autonomy. Negative perceptions of ageing with functional limitations were pervasive.

1.2 The Financial Security of Older Women from a Life Course Perspective

ILC Singapore since 2015 has set up a regional learning network comprising about 8 countries from East and Southeast Asian region to lead the advocacy on the issue of financial security in old age of older women. To support the network's advocacy agenda, a research project has been identified and is underway from seven countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) to identify the main factors that affect women's financial security over the life course; identify the main point of intervention at which women are most at risk of becoming financially insecure and to advocate for policy changes to enhance the financial security of older women through adequate interventions throughout the life-course. The study will utilise secondary data.

The report is expected to be completed by July and a session is being organised to share the results at the UN ESCAP regional review of MIPAA in September this year.

1.3 SCOPE Diabetic Management

ILC Singapore has started to pilot test a diabetic management programme targeting older adults (from age 55 and over) in March 2016. An evaluation study is going to be conducted for this pilot programme to extensively study the structure and processes of this pilot diabetes self-care learning programme in order to deliver – as the final outcome of this project – an effective community-based diabetes self-care teaching program, with variations tailored to the heterogeneous nature of older people with diabetes, recognizing ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic and educational differences.

The objectives of this project are to —

- 1) Pilot a 12-week training programme;
- 2) Improve control of HbA1C among community-dwelling older adults with diabetes in Singapore;
- 3) Study the impact and processes on its effectiveness on improving the motivation, self-efficacy, self-care activities, health-related quality of life and diabetes knowledge;
- 4) Produce a final SCOPE-DM: Live Well of Diabetes program model (with learning aides, etc.) based on the pilot tailored to the needs of mature diabetic patients in multi-cultural Singapore.

Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative indicators will be monitored, involving interviews as well as biometric measurements. A set of questionnaires will be used to measure the participants' motivation, self-efficacy, diabetes self-care activities, health-related quality of life and diabetes knowledge. Other evaluation variables are: Blood sugar control will be measured using HbA1C ; Body mass index (BMI); Blood pressure; Lipid panel (blood test); Urine albumin-creatinine ratio

(urine test); Improved compliance with medications and medical follow-up; Adherence to yearly diabetic eye and foot screenings; and Socio-demographic Profile - Socio-demographic data will be collected at baseline, including gender, age, marital status, monthly household income, education level, employment status, race, religion, type of housing and living arrangements.

1.4 Cognition Study (on dementia)

ILC Singapore is part of multi-partner team implementing a study on dementia in the Whampoa community in Singapore. Our partners are the research team from the Centre for Ageing Research and in close partnership with our colleagues from the Dementia Care Services of our Hua Mei Centre for Successful Ageing (HMCSA) initiative, Das started to pilot test a diabetic management programme targeting older adults (from age 55 and over) in March 2016. An evaluation study is going to be conducted for this pilot programme to extensively study the structure and processes of this pilot diabetes self-care learning programme in order to deliver – as the final outcome of this project – an effective community-based diabetes self-care teaching program, with variations tailored to the heterogeneous nature of older people with diabetes, recognizing ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic and educational differences.

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1.5 Household budgets for elderly people in Singapore

ILC Singapore has commissioned one of its Advisers to undertake a study to come up with how much budget is really needed by elderly in their old age. The study will be based on the Minimum Income Standard methodology developed in the UK (from the Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University).

The objectives of this study are to-

- 1) Define and calculate the household budgets that elderly people in Singapore require to achieve an adequate living standard. The results will provide a baseline that can be updated in future to take account of inflation.
- 2) Understand how budget change with the transition to old age (defined as age 65 and above), with co-residence and with disability.
- 3) Present a preliminary analysis of what elderly people define as adequate with the incomes that elderly people actually receive and the income thresholds adopted in existing social policies

2. Collaborative Platforms and Capacity Building

Events organized to date include the following:

2.1 Second Multi-Partite Regional Meeting on the Financial Security of Older Women in East and Southeast Asia (October 2016)

The 2nd Multipartite Regional Meeting on the Financial Security of Older Women in East and Southeast Asia on 10-11 October 2016 gathered more than 80 participants from 7 countries and governments all over the region: Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand

and Vietnam representing policymakers, programme practitioners and researchers in the areas of ageing, finance, economy and population planning.

The Network Partners reaffirmed its key goals of building a body of knowledge to increase awareness on the issue and help inform policy and program development. The Network will also strengthen coalition of organizations that focus on older people and women. Among the many challenges faced by women in securing old age finance, the Network identified the following as its main areas of concern: 1) income generation, 2) women's labour force participation, 3) work in old age, 4) social pension, 5) financial literacy, 6) child care, 7) gender sensitization, and 8) ageism. The Network will embark on a study on women's impoverishment over the life course. Country-level studies will be initiated simultaneously and a comparative analysis will also be attempted across all participating countries. Through the study, the Network aims to conduct strategic advocacy campaigns reaching out to critical policymakers at both national and regional platforms.

2.2 ASEAN Committee on Women Workshop on Women and Financial Security

ILC Singapore was invited by the Ministry of Family and Social Development of Singapore to co-organize a workshop on women and financial security as part of the ASEAN Committee on Women Meeting it hosted on October 2016.

2.3 Strategic Advocacy Workshop

ILC Singapore organized a workshop for the Regional Learning Network last March 2017 in Chiang Mai. The outcome of this workshop was a draft national advocacy plan for the following countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

3. Conference Presentations

- 3.1 Incentivising self-care: exploring the feasibility of private-people sector partnership to drive cost down', Singapore Actuarial Society, Health and Retirement Conference 2016
- 3.2 'Role of Community Development in Enabling Ageing in Place', 8th International Conference on Social Work in Health and Mental Health 2016
- 3.3 'Tsao Foundation and its Programmes', Practice and Implementation on Successful Ageing in Malaysia and Japan Conference 2016
- 3.4 Ensuring the Rights of the Vulnerable (in the context of migration)', 11th Women Ministers and Parliamentarians Conference 2016
- 3.5 The Feminisation of Ageing: The Regional Learning Exchange on Women's Financial Security as a Multi-stakeholders' Response', ASEAN Committee on Women Meeting in Singapore in 2016
- 3.6 Impact of ageing: what can individuals and private sector do to address the challenges "resulting from ageing", Living to 100 Symposium by Actuarial Society (US) 2017
- 3.7 'Women and Ageing in Singapore', SCWO President's Forum 2017

**NUS-TSAO FOUNDATION AGEING RESEARCH INITIATIVE
(OCTOBER 2015- JUNE 2016)**

A) RESEARCH OUTPUT/OUTCOMES

1) Intergenerational Transfers among Older Singaporeans

The primary aim of this study is to assess the relationship of gender and marital status with receipt from and provision to, elderly Singaporeans of four complementary types of intergenerational support: monetary, material, emotional, and time. We are particularly interested in the effect of being female and single. This subgroup is typically hypothesized to be mainly recipients of support.

Output

Publication:

- Gubhaju, Bina et al. 'Intergenerational support to and from older Singaporeans: Results from the Panel on Health and Ageing of Singaporean Elderly', Book chapter under review at Routledge for a special issue on Singapore Families and Population Dynamics, Centre for Family and Population Research, March 2016
- Gubhaju, Bina et al. 'Families helping across generations', Policy brief (draft completed June 2016).

2) Status of Single Elderly in Singapore

Although low, the proportion of elderly living alone or one-person households in Singapore has been increasing. Many previous studies have highlighted the negative consequences of living alone. However, recent studies have shown a more nuanced and mixed view that is not always negative. The objectives of this study are twofold: 1) to identify the key predictors of living alone among older Singaporean men and women; 2) to examine the social and health consequences of living alone among older Singaporean men and women

Output

Publication:

- Gubhaju, Bina et al. 'Living arrangements of community-dwelling older Singaporeans: predictors and consequences', Journal article *Revise and resubmit at Ageing and Society*, 29 April 2016

Presentation:

- Gubhaju, Bina. 'Living arrangements of community-dwelling older Singaporeans: predictors and consequences', Paper presented at the International Sociological Association RC28 (Social stratification and mobility) meeting 2016', 27 May 2015.

Media coverage:

- “Poll on elderly Singaporeans throws up surprises”, Straits Times 30 May 2016

Ongoing Work Plan

- Gubhaju, Bina et al. ‘Elderly and living alone: predictors and consequences’, Policy brief (draft in progress)

3) Qualitative study on coping strategies and caregiving arrangements of lower-income households with dependent elderly

The project primarily seeks to establish a qualitative account of the mosaic of support and contextual challenges faced by primary caregivers of dependent elderly who reside in low income households in Singapore. Through and analysis of in-depth interview data featuring 20 male and female caregivers of Chinese and Malay ethnicities, this study will shed light on their coping strategies, obstacles, aspirations, and post-care concerns within the thematic domains of their residential environment, socio-familial circumstances, experiences with social welfare institutions, and personal value systems.

Output

Publication:

- Thang, Leng Leng and Johan Suen. “Contextual challenges and coping strategies: A qualitative study of caregivers of dependent elderly from lower-income households in Singapore”. Final report (Submitted 11 March 2016)

Presentation:

- Thang, Leng Leng and Johan Suen. “Who Cares for the Caregivers?: Contextualizing Care, Aspirations, and Filial Piety among Caregivers of Dependent Elderly in Low-Income Households in Singapore”, Paper presented at the Asia Research Institute Conference on Long-Term Care for Elderly in ASEAN Plus Three: Research and Policy Challenges, 1 March 2016.

**NUS-TSAO FOUNDATION AGEING RESEARCH INITIATIVE
(JANUARY 2017-MARCH 2017)**

A) RESEARCH OUTPUT/OUTCOMES/PROGRESS

1) Disability and social support

Prior literature has shown that older persons disability is a strong predictor of increases in support received for ADL or IADL-related help. However, studies have also shown that elderly are not only passive recipients of support and that even when in need themselves are able to provide some forms of support. Less is known of the interdependence of different types of support received *and* provided by levels of disability and how this relationship differs for men and women. We hypothesize that older adults are less likely to provide instrumental help with increasing disability but will compensate by providing more monetary and emotional support. We also hypothesize that older adults will receive less monetary support in exchange for more help received for physical care and instrumental support. We test these hypotheses using the 2011 Panel on Health and Aging of Singaporean Elderly (PHASE).

Progress

Publication:

- Gubhaju, Bina et al. 'How does health of older Singaporeans impact receipt and provision of social support.' (Analyses and draft in progress)

2) Caregiving in Singapore

Using the Singapore Survey on Informal Caregiving (2010-2011) the objective of this project is to provide a descriptive profile of older (55 years and above) family caregivers of Singaporeans aged 75 and over who require human assistance with at least one Activity of Daily Limitation (ADL). We examine the health status of older family caregivers, mainly spouses, and find that despite their deteriorating health, older family caregivers in Singapore continue to work very long hours both in terms of their caregiving roles as well as being employed in full-time or part-time work.

Progress

Publication:

- Gubhaju, Bina et al. 'Singapore's older family caregivers: deteriorating health but still working (very) long hours.' (Analyses and draft in progress)

3) Expected years of living alone or living with someone among older Singaporean men and women

Given Singapore's rapidly aging population coupled with declining fertility it is expected that co-residence will decline and the proportion of oldest-old living alone will increase further.

Relatively little is known regarding the number of years that older adults in Singapore can expect to live alone in their remaining years. Using three waves (2009, 2011, 2015) of the Panel on Health and Ageing of Singaporean Elderly (PHASE), the objective of our paper is to estimate the number of years older adults in Singapore can expect to live in a particular living arrangement using multi-state life table methods. Only a few prior studies have used multi-state life table methods to examine life expectancy by living arrangements. Results of this research are important for policy makers in determining future housing and care needs of older Singaporeans in a context where fewer children are available to care for their elderly parents.

Progress

Publication:

- Gubhaju, Bina et al. 'Expected years of living alone or living with someone among older Singaporean men and women.' (Analyses in progress)

4) Caring for persons with dementia and their caregivers in the community: Towards a sustainable community based dementia care system.

In collaboration with the Tsao Foundation and Centre for Ageing Studies, Temasek Polytechnic, the aim of this project is to implement and evaluate a new model of dementia care involving multifaceted components of care management, self-care, and cognitive training based on an in-depth understanding of persons with dementia and their caregivers in the Whampoa community.

Output

Grant awarded by MOH's National Innovation Challenge (NIC) on Active and Confident Ageing, Letter of Award dated 15 Feb 2017.

Progress

- Submitted documents for NUS-Institutional Review Board for ethical approval, 01 Feb 2017
- Research Collaboration Agreement (RCA) drafted for review.
- Invitation to tender (ITT) for Survey Company sent to NUS Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) for review.
- Drafting of qualitative and quantitative survey and interview questionnaires.
- Project meetings held on 09 February 2017; 13 March 2017; 24 March 2017

5) Household Budgets for Elderly People in Singapore

This study aims to establish the budgets that different types of elderly household require to live adequately in Singapore. The objective of deriving household budgets is to understand the amount of financial resources needed to achieve a minimally acceptable way of life, while taking into account the prevailing standard of living in a particular place, context, and time. The budgets are based on what elderly Singaporeans regard as universally necessary to meet their needs for social participation and inclusion. This research will contribute to understanding of the multi-

dimensional and relational aspects of economic security and deprivation. Findings from this study will also provide a benchmark to assess the current financial situations of elderly people, evaluate implications of policy developments, and design income interventions.

Jan – March 2017:

- organised a 4-day workshop conducted by two researchers from the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP) at Loughborough University;
- filled positions for full- and part-time Research Assistants (RA); and conducted pilot focus groups.
- The actual focus groups are expected to take place in May-June 2016.
- Participant recruitment, research on various costs, and consultation with experts in healthcare, nutrition, and utilities are ongoing.