



Background to the Community Engagement Programme

After the London bombings in July 2005, we asked ourselves whether we should do more to enhance our social resilience. The threat of extremist terrorism will not go away anytime soon and increasingly, we see involvement by homegrown elements. *We asked ourselves*

'how would our people react after a terrorist attack in Singapore? Especially if the perpetrators were homegrown?'

While we think that our good communal relations built up over the years would stand us in good stead, we also realize that this cannot be taken for granted.

2 Extremist rhetoric and sensitive political developments around the world can have a negative effect on our people. We must prepare our people to be more resilient and cohesive.

3 Firstly, we must counter the extremist ideology. In this regard, our Muslim religious leaders have been active in countering the distortions of Islam which extremist and terrorist elements purvey.

4 Secondly, we know that, in the immediate aftermath of a crisis, it could be difficult for communities to remain calm and avoid knee-jerk reactions. Communities need to trust each other and know what needs to be done to stay united before any crisis strikes. Having strong networks of trust and being committed to maintaining good relations is important.

5 But we need to do more – we need to exercise and prepare people to know what to do and what to expect in a crisis.

What is the CEP?

6 The CEP is a long-term effort to ensure that we are better equipped to maintain our social cohesion and harmony, should there be a terrorist attack in Singapore. We want to bring together Singaporeans from different communities, to strengthen inter-

communal bonds, and to put in place response plans to help deal with potential communal tensions after an incident, e.g. a terrorist attack.

Bottom-Up Approach

7 In the dialogue sessions and discussions, we have received good feedback and views. One recurrent view is that in order for the CEP to be self-sustaining, it needs to be facilitated by Government but driven from bottom-up. People and groups from the ground need to take ownership of initiatives. Hence one of the things we want to avoid is creating new layers of organisations and new structures. The Government can facilitate and offer support and resources to help the process along. People on the ground know their own domains best.

Synergizing with the Home Team Sectors

8 Since the launch of the CEP, there have been a growing number of local initiatives from individuals, groups and organisations across society. At the level of the Home Team Sectors (Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western), the community has been working with the Home Team on safety and security issues, such as in the Neighbourhood Watch Zone Scheme and to promote fire safety. CEP is therefore not very different from our current community outreach efforts. Indeed it is an extension of our ongoing efforts to involve the community in tackling safety and security issues at the local neighbourhood level, learning specific skills in emergency preparedness such as first aid and response to fires. For example,

- a) Home Team Northern Sector
 - Safety and Security Watch Group (SSWG) – bringing together the security and safety dimensions of community preparedness on the ground, and combines both Police and SCDF resources in the Sector;
 - E.g. SSWG 2006 by owners of industrial/commercial premises – Defu Lane Industrial Estate;
 - E.g. SSWG 2006 with Cheng San Merchant’s Association; Compass Point Shopping Mall;
 - Public Education Video on Counter Terrorism – it teaches how to make a simple assessment of whether an item is suspicious, what to do in the event of an unverified bomb threat in confined area with mass gathering, and how we can further equip ourselves with emergency preparedness skills;

- b) Home Team Eastern Sector

- CEP Emergency Preparedness Exercise, an Integrated Contingency Plan –
 - Emergency Preparedness (EP) Exercises have to go beyond rescue and recovery to cover the readiness to detect and prevent the fallout from potential communal tensions in a crisis. The Home Team Eastern Sector exercise is to address both the physical and psycho-social dimensions of managing a crisis. The exercise at Changi Village last year saw the participation of ethnic and religious establishments in the exercise area. The psycho-social dimension of the crisis was developed and exercise as part of the exercise scenario to address post-incident trauma and resilience issues;
 - MCYS, MOH and volunteer bodies participated in this new area which can be a potential new role for befrienders and counselors;
 - SMS crisis communications project (ongoing) – using the short messaging system (sms) as the platform to send information to constituents in a crisis;
- c) Home Team Southern Sector
- Hawker Emergency Lifesaving Point (HELP) box – a box containing essential items to help hawkers to assist market patrons to evacuate in an emergency;
 - E.g. at Holland Village since Sep 06;
 - Corporate First Responder – this is a scheme to help in business recovery from major disasters such as terrorist attacks. Key personnel, identified from building management and tenants, are allowed into the cordoned area after a major incident to assist with rescue, recovery and investigation efforts, and to implement business continuity plans. The Home Team Southern Sector has produced a video for the First Corporate Responder Scheme.
- d) Home Team Western Sector
- Outreach to foreign worker population through the foreign worker dormitories – crime prevention ambassadors were appointed among the foreign workers to assist the Police in talking to their peers on crime and fire prevention matters. They were also briefed on terrorism matters, including looking out for suspicious objects or people.

- e) The Ready Bag Programme – Get Ready*Be Ready*Stay Ready
- This programme is one in which the public can move from passive awareness to active involvement through tangible means, like preparing a Ready Bag for their family and customizing it to the needs of the family.

What can Businesses Do?

9 Besides taking part in the Corporate First Responder scheme mentioned earlier, there are many things that businesses can do to encourage their employees to be involved in the Community Engagement Programme. Employers could work closely with union leaders, line supervisors and employees to maintain awareness, vigilance and strengthen racial and religious bonds at the workplace. A good starting point would be to encourage employees at work to strengthen their relationship with their neighbours, colleagues at work and others they come into contact with.

10 At the workplace, advocate cooperation, peace and harmony among employees and encourage employees to take time to understand each other's cultural practices and preferences and bond with one another. This can be as simple as lending a listening ear to one another or finding out more about each other's likes and dislikes to get a conversation started.

11 Employers can also organise activities to provide a platform for such cross-cultural interaction. Examples of such activities would include company-wide celebrations of racial and religious festivals, company Dinner & Dances and recreational activities like Sports Day.

12 Businesses will need to be equipped to deal with any emergency that may occur at the work place. For example, you may like to think about preparing a corporate ready bag or even a response plan that would help your organization cope with a crisis situation. You may like to carry out an exercise to test out the operational readiness of your organization.

13 There are existing structures and networks for the Home Team and the community to work together. The partnership can be extended and strengthened by taking it one step further to equip and prepare Singaporeans to prevent communal tensions that may arise after a crisis, especially a terrorist attack.

Our survival as a nation depends on us.

Let us work together to keep Singapore resilient and united.

ANNEX

Resources available:

***CEP Poster**

1 This is a poster done in cartoon form by Miel of the Straits Times. It explains CEP in simple terms. The poster is available in English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil. It is also available on the Singapore United portal for downloading.

***CEP video**

2 This is a video explaining the CEP. There is also a shorter clip that lasts one minute.

***CEP booklet**

3 This is a booklet on the CEP, explaining what it is and what is involved. This booklet, in the four official languages, is also available for downloading at the Singapore United portal.

***Singapore United – the portal on the Community Engagement Programme**

4 As more organisations, groups and individuals participate in the Community Engagement Programme or CEP, one of the challenges we face is how to keep everyone involved or interested in the CEP connected and informed of what others across the various clusters are doing.

5 We have held workshops and seminars to share best practices and ideas, as well as to network and affirm friendships. However, on a sustained, day-to-day basis we needed something more. So we decided to leverage on the Internet to facilitate such interaction and contact on a day-to-day basis. Hence, we have set up **Singapore United**, the portal for CEP.

6 *Singapore United* is a simple platform for communication and dialogue within the CEP community as well as a point of contact between the CEP community and the general public. It is a shared and common space for us to interact and engage each other via the Internet.

7 The portal is not just a means for promoting CEP awareness and messages, but more importantly, it serves as a platform for the CEP Secretariat and the Cluster Lead Agencies (which comprises government agencies) to engage the CEP community, and the public as a whole. The portal was launched during the National Seminar on CEP on 24 Mar 2007.

8 The key features of the portal are as follows:

- a) The portal has a calendar which lists upcoming, present and past CEP-related events and activities. Members of the public can access the calendar to find out details of the events such as venue, objectives, contact details and even download the entry into their personal mobile calendar systems. Brochures and photos, where available, are included in the events calendar. The calendar serves as an on-line repository and archive of CEP-related events.
- b) Singapore United has archival capabilities where CEP-related materials and resources are stored on the portal under the “Resources” section. There is also a multi-media gallery under the “Resources” section where visitors can view CEP videos. Over time, the portal will become an on-line repository for CEP-related information and materials, and will facilitate research in CEP-related matters.
- c) Users can subscribe to the Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed which is available for certain pages, such as News Room and Calendar of CEP events. The subscriber will then be updated automatically whenever a new article is posted.
- d) Members of the public can give feedback and suggestions (in English or other languages) to the CEP Secretariat using an online form, which allows for the attachment of documents/files. Alternatively, feedback and suggestions can be faxed to the Secretariat.

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