This case study examines the impact of the external environment on the strategies and operations of a charity in Singapore as well as the sustainability of social enterprise operations when environmental and organisational contexts changed and grew in complexity over time.

Society for Aid to the Paralysed was established in the 1960s to provide gainful employment for the physically disabled. Since then, it had to continuously adapt to changing economic and social contexts in Singapore in order to remain relevant in the social space in which it operated.

By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the charity’s name was changed to Society for the Physically Disabled reflecting a repositioned vision/mission that focused on partnering the physically disabled to develop to their fullest potential and to champion their cause in the wider community. While the scale of the social enterprise operations it had begun in the 1960s declined, it continued to expand the depth and scope of its programmes for the physically disabled.

Topics covered: The external environment of non-profit organisations: resources, stakeholders and institutional fields; the impact of environmental changes on social enterprise operations; managing mission, strategy and change.
FOUNDING MISSION – CHAMPIONING GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT FOR THE DISABLED IN 1960s

In 1964, a group of Rotary Club\(^1\) members concerned with the plight of the disabled people in Singapore, registered a society – Society for Aid to the Paralysed (SAP).

This was an era of high unemployment in Singapore and people with physical disabilities, competing with the able-bodied for jobs, had little chance of finding gainful employment. A group of young men, disabled from poliomyelitis or amputations and unable to find work, killed time playing ball games at an empty field in Tiong Bahru, a suburb in Singapore. Playing late into the night, their presence in the field was noticed by those living and working in the neighbourhood.

SAP founders raised funds and a sheltered workshop – the Leslie Rayner Sheltered Workshop\(^2\) – was built in 1967. Twenty disabled men became the first employees of SAP’s workshop.

The workshop started with carpentry work (making bottle crates) and over the years added other work activities such as book-binding, making soap boxes and simple assembly of electronic components. In June 1970, a new building was opened to cater for the growing number of disabled people seeking jobs with the SAP. At its peak, SAP provided training and employment (sheltered and supported) for 153 physically disabled people. The charity took on jobs that could be performed by very low-skilled workers who generally had little potential for skills development. These included contract work such as assembling bicycle spokes, folding hotel brochures, and inserting pamphlets into envelopes. By 1979, the workshop was self-supporting and profitable.\(^3\)

Statistics of Disabled Persons in Singapore

At the end of 1988, the Central Registry of Disabled Persons recorded 12,526 disabled people with all forms of disability. The Registry was disbanded in 1989 on the recommendation of the Advisory Council on the Disabled as it was a register of users of disability services, rather than a full register of persons with disabilities.\(^4\) Persons with disabilities who did not access government or National Council of Social Service (NCSS) funded services did not have to register. There was also the problem of keeping the register up-to-date. In 2006, the committee that prepared the Enabling Masterplan recommended that Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) undertake a study to determine the prevalence rate of disabilities in Singapore, including conducting a national census or survey.\(^5\)

Employment in Singapore (1960s – 1980s)

In the 1960s, with unemployment a central concern in Singapore, the government adopted a strategy of rapid industrialisation based on export-oriented labour-intensive manufacturing. In 1966, the country’s labour force was 575,000 with an unemployment rate of 8.9 percent. By 1980, the labour force grew to 1.09 million while the unemployment rate fell to 3.6 percent.\(^6\)

By the end of 1970s, the strategy to resolve the unemployment problem succeeded in turning the situation in the manufacturing sector to one of labour shortage. To make up for this shortfall and in the face of rising wages, manufacturing companies resorted to the recruitment of foreign labour from neighbouring countries. In 1980, foreign labour accounted for 7.3 percent of Singapore’s workforce.

The government moved to discourage labour-intensive industries and promote skill-intensive high value-added industries. This turned the focus on increasing labour productivity and policies were implemented during the 1980s to encourage employers to switch to more capital-intensive methods of production to increase output per worker.\(^7\)

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\(^1\) The first Rotary Club was set up in Singapore in 1930. Rotary club members included a diverse group of professionals working to address various community and international service needs.

\(^2\) Named after Leslie Rayner, a member of the Singapore Rotary Club, and a founder of the SAP.


SOCIETY FOR THE PHYSICALLY DISABLED (SPD) IN THE 21ST CENTURY

For more than 45 years, SAP’s (and later SPD) sheltered workshop continued to provide work for its physically disabled people. The charity competed with commercial firms for contract jobs that it needed to ‘feed’ its workshop operations.

Over this period, with its focus on the integration of physically disabled persons into mainstream society, the scope of the charity’s programmes for its beneficiaries grew in range and scale, beyond that of providing employment for disabled persons.

As the range of beneficiaries of SAP’s programmes grew to include persons with physical disabilities (and not only those who were paralysed), a name change was necessary and in 1998, it became Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD). (See Exhibit 1 – SPD Milestones.) SPD articulated its mission as:

The Society for the Physically Disabled is committed to working in partnership with people with physical disabilities to develop their potential to the fullest so that they can be self-reliant and independent.8

(See Exhibit 2 – SPD Vision and Values.)

By the first decade of 21st century, the focus of SPD’s programmes championing the cause of people with physical disabilities shifted, reflecting changes in demands and needs of its growing base of beneficiaries. Existing programmes were revised and new ones implemented to meet these changing needs. The major growth was in programmes associated with rehabilitation and therapy, and day activity/care services. (See Exhibit 3 – SPD Growth in Clients and Programmes.)

The charity was also moving beyond direct employment of people with physical disabilities. The focus shifted to enhancing beneficiaries’ employability, self-reliance and independence, mainly through skills training and education:

We are committed to continually improving and fine-tuning the ecosystem for vocational training and employment for people with disabilities and hope to be able to encourage them to embrace these opportunities and lead self-determined lives with the help of technology.9

Chia Yong Yong
President of SPD (2010)

Resources

To support the programmes, SPD’s income grew from S$4.7 million in 2004-05 to S$11.5 million in 2009-10 (see Table 1). In 2010, grants and subvention from government agencies accounted for 35 percent of its income while donations and programme fees amounted to 40 percent and 10 percent respectively.

Table 1
SPD – Financial Highlights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Income $</th>
<th>Expenditure $</th>
<th>Net Surplus/ (Deficit) $</th>
<th>Staff Costs* $</th>
<th>Staff Strength** (As at 31 Mar)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>4,747,523</td>
<td>4,545,798</td>
<td>201,725</td>
<td>2,496,097</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06 (restated)</td>
<td>5,575,120</td>
<td>5,746,842</td>
<td>(171,722)</td>
<td>3,034,915</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07 (restated)</td>
<td>6,995,835</td>
<td>6,861,607</td>
<td>134,228</td>
<td>3,932,832</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>11,199,486</td>
<td>9,764,652</td>
<td>1,434,834</td>
<td>4,974,853</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>9,816,221</td>
<td>9,575,284</td>
<td>240,937</td>
<td>5,065,903</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>11,598,512</td>
<td>9,828,274</td>
<td>1,770,238</td>
<td>5,056,815</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes staff salaries, benefits, recruitment and training expenses.
** Does not include physically disabled people employed at the Production Workshop and Multimedia Centre Social Enterprise.

9 ITAP graduation ceremony, Microsoft scholarship awards and awareness campaign all part of new drive. (2010, January). Extrapage.
SPD’s employee strength of 113 included professional and direct service staff such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, assistive technology specialists, training officers and social work professionals who made up about 81 percent of the workforce. The remaining staff provided indirect services such as human resource, IT, office administration, finance and fund-raising support. (See Exhibit 4 – SPD Organisation Structure.) SPD’s full-time staff was supported by 500 regular volunteers who contributed more than 14,000 hours of voluntary service in 2009-10. A total of 1,880 volunteers had registered with the charity during the year.

PROGRAMMES & SERVICES

In the year ended March 2010, SPD served 2,800 clients through various programmes and services.

(a) Rehabilitation and Therapy

SAP launched rehabilitation and therapeutic programmes in the 1990s to help people with physical disabilities develop their full potential to be self-reliant and independent. A decade later, the charity opened a purpose-built centre for vocational rehabilitation. By end-2010, the range of rehabilitation and therapeutic activities undertaken by the charity included:

- **Day rehabilitation and support services**: The objective was to offer affordable therapeutic services to patients discharged from acute care hospitals, especially those who had suffered from stroke, spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, cerebral palsy and other neurological conditions. To relieve the demand for these services at its headquarters (Tiong Bahru) and to shorten the travel time for some patients, SPD also operated a satellite centre – SPD@Tampines in the eastern part of Singapore, with the capacity to serve 600 disabled people each year.10

- **Home-based rehabilitation and therapy services**: Started in 2006, Therapy@home service provided therapy to physically disabled people of all ages who were unable to leave their homes for therapeutic treatment due to the severity of their disabilities. The aim was to provide training in basic living skills to enable them to be independent and to equip caregivers with the necessary skills so as to avoid premature admission to nursing homes.

- **Paediatric rehabilitation services**: This unit was set up in 2005 to help disabled children overcome developmental challenges and through early intervention, minimise the risk of their developing a long-term disability. This service complemented therapy services received by the child at his/her special school or mainstream school and included:
  - Therapy Outreach for Pre-schoolers: for children from three to six years old with mild learning difficulties (within the mainstream pre-school).
  - Continuing Therapy: centre-based speech and occupational therapy services for children under 16 years of age.

- **Specialist rehabilitation services**: With a long history of involvement with people with disabilities, SPD had developed competencies in the recruitment, supervision and management of therapists. In 2005, it started SPD Therapy Hub11 to address the growing need for step-down rehabilitation and community-based therapy services in Singapore.

The Hub provided physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy not only for SPD’s various rehabilitation programmes but also for other voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs). Therapists were assigned on a contractual basis to special schools, early intervention programmes, community day rehabilitation centres, day care centres, nursing homes and community hospitals. Services included direct patient care, documentation of services, development of individualised care plans, regular reviews and updates of care plans, and professional supervision of therapy staff.

In 2009, in recognition of its competencies in this area, SPD Therapy Hub was appointed by the NCSS to provide clinical supervision to newly-graduated therapists, junior therapists and foreign therapists. By end-2010, the SPD Therapy Hub comprised a team of 40 therapists including 20 occupational therapists, 15 physiotherapists and five speech therapists.12

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11 SPD Therapy Hub employs qualified therapists who are recognised through their membership with the Singapore Physiotherapy Association, Singapore Association of Occupational Therapists, and Speech Language and Hearing Association Singapore.
12 SPD Management.
Dysphasia management services: In 2009, SPD moved into a new dimension in addressing the needs of people with physical disabilities by launching the first community-based swallowing management programme in Singapore. This programme helped patients who had difficulty in swallowing due to weakened or damaged muscles, degenerative conditions\(^{13}\), or ageing.

(b) Social Support

The charity began addressing the social needs of people with physical disabilities and their caregivers in the 1990s.

One of the early programmes was a Day Activity Centre set up with the help of SOKA, a community organisation, to train low-functioning persons with physical disabilities to be independent and self-sufficient. The programme also enabled family members who were caregivers to hold their jobs.

Specialised Case Management Programme: started in 2006 to help people with an acquired disability as well as their caregivers to cope with the social, financial and rehabilitation needs. Under the programme, professional social workers provided counselling to clients and families, leveraging on existing SPD programmes and services (such as paediatric rehabilitation, assistive technology, and learning and development programmes) to help alleviate their problems. Befriending and mentoring services were also made available for students with physical disabilities.

(c) Educational Support

In 1985, a former SAP President Lee Boon Huat, in his will bequeathed to SAP a sum to start a scholarship awards programme for the mainstream school education of students with physical disabilities or who had parents with physical disabilities. In the first year, a total of S$9,100 was presented to 25 successful candidates. Over the years, this initiative evolved into the SPD Education Programme.

Beyond financial awards, the SPD education programme offered a range of services such as centre-based and on-site therapy, social work support, subsidised tuition support and enrichment programmes. In this way, SPD sought to level the playing field for physically disabled students to help them cope with the increasingly demanding curriculum in mainstream schools.

Through investing in the educational needs of our children and youth, you are generating a ‘multiplier effect’ among the students as we equip them to make an impact on our society. You are enabling our students to aspire to higher heights of academic and personal achievements even as they work hard and persevere with the support of their families. As the proverb goes – ‘it takes a whole village to raise a child’\(^{14}\).

Chia Yong Yong
President, SPD (2011)

SPD’s major educational support activities included:

- **SPD Bursary Award**: given to physically disabled students or children of disabled parents from low-income families studying in mainstream schools (from primary to tertiary levels). The quantum of the grant ranged from S$300 a year for primary level to S$6,000 a year for university level. By 2010, financial awards amounting to S$2.8 million had been disbursed to over 3,200 students\(^{15}\).

- **Learning Development Centre**: started in 2005 with a S$250,000 donation from StarHub, a telecommunications company. This programme allowed students with physical disabilities to have more opportunities for learning and socialising. Activities were held in informal settings promoting academic, personal and social development, and included the following:
  - sports and adventure
  - self-development
  - social and recreational activities
  - career guidance

Social workers reached out to parents and teachers to equip them to work with students with disabilities.

\(^{13}\) Parkinson’s disease, Alzheimer’s disease, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, dementia, congenital defects. People with swallowing difficulties risked having their food intake going into their respiratory tract instead of the oesophagus. They were also at risk of malnutrition and/or dehydration.

\(^{14}\) Speech by Chia Yong Yong, President of SPD. (2011, January 28) SPD Education Programme Awards presentation ceremony.

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
(d) Assistive Technology for People with Disabilities

Increasingly, SPD began to tap on technology to enable physically disabled persons to enhance their rehabilitation process and to assist them to lead more independent lives. The charity’s Assistive Technology Centre (ATC) set up in 2001 promoted the use of assistive technology (AT) devices by providing advice, consultation, assessment and training.

In 2005, the ATC was appointed by NCSS to provide services in AT for all people with physical disabilities, and the centre was renamed as the Specialised ATC. ATC extended its AT services to disabled persons at other VWOs, schools, other rehabilitation organisations and the community.

Four years later (in 2009), ATC’s expertise was recognised by NCSS and it was appointed as the Centre of Specialisation for AT in Singapore. In this role, the charity conducted practice-related training and coaching sessions to build capability in AT for other agencies providing similar services.

To further enhance the use of AT devices, SPD set up an Assistive Technology Loan Library in 2008, the first of its kind in Asia. Computer accessibility tools and AT devices for trial before purchase could be borrowed from the library:

*If they can take the device home, they can have a better idea of whether or not it is suitable for them. The devices are quite expensive, so it is good to be sure before they buy them.*

Ms Chia Woon Yee
Director of Technology, SPD

(e) Advocacy

SPD began to focus its advocacy efforts on specific areas including physical and transport accessibility, technology and community rehabilitation from 2005. Platforms used in its advocacy efforts included:
- public relations and publicity strategies.
- publications and other corporate print and audio-visual materials.
- visits and school talks.
- promotion of key messages through the media, events, collaterals and other opportunities (see Table 2).
- partnerships with external organisations to raise awareness and profile of SPD’s programmes (for example a clinical education centre for students from Nanyang Polytechnic and National University of Singapore, training provider for social service courses by Institute of Technical Education, and a ‘web accessibility advocacy project’ with Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore).

In 2009, SPD commissioned a study on the level of acceptance and inclusion of people with disabilities in Singapore.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advocacy platforms</th>
<th>Third-party events</th>
<th>Solicited opportunities</th>
<th>Unsolicited opportunities</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Occasions</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles/Broadcast Opportunities</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Vernacular</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Summary Coverage of SPD in the Media (2009-10)

Source: SPD Annual Report 2009-10, p. 32.

16 Assistive Technology referred to the application of technology to help people with physical disabilities overcome the limitation of their disabilities so as to enable them to perform activities of daily living.

17 The Specialised ATC would also develop a guide, manual or set of doctrines on the use of AT and document evidence-based practices.

Unfortunately, there are still many in our community who have misconceptions of people with disabilities. Almost half of the general public view people with disabilities as dependent and in need of help from others all the time. Sixty-six percent are of the view that people with disabilities should be accompanied by a non-disabled person at public places such as the market, shopping centres, when using the ATM etc. This study shows clearly that more public education is necessary.19

Chia Yong Yong
President, SPD (2010)

The survey findings reinforced SPD’s mission of integrating people with physical disabilities into mainstream society.

(f) Vocational Training and Support Services

Beyond direct employment, the charity also began preparing beneficiaries for open employment. In 1986, the SAP Vocational Training Centre was set up as an intermediate stage before open employment. The Vocational Training Centre (later known as sheltered workshop) was organised as a semi-industrial workshop to provide a simulated industrial environment for the trainees until they could find jobs in the open market.20

Other employment-related programmes launched included:

- **Sheltered Workshop**: For physically disabled persons (18 to 55 years) who were unable to obtain jobs in the open employment market, SPD ran a sheltered workshop at its headquarters. Trainees performed simple work activities such as folding hotel brochures, inserting pamphlets into envelopes, packaging, letter-shopping, tagging of products, assembly of components and price tagging. These subcontract jobs were secured from external sources, were not regular and subject to availability and pricing. Trainees were paid an allowance for work done, thereby facilitating the goal of self-reliance and independence. Such work opportunities also provided a form of on-the-job training for the disabled.

Since 2005, some were given the opportunity to work at the customer’s premises as trainees. This exposed them to a real work environment as well as to working shifts, which helped to prepare them for employment in the open market.21

- **IT Apprenticeship Programme (ITAP)**: This was set up in 2008 and targeted at developing IT literacy and competency of disabled persons, through modular IT and work training curriculum (see Table 3) as well as participation in commercial projects and internships. The goal was to improve their employability. During the training course, no allowance was paid to trainees. However, those placed under internships in external organisations received a monthly allowance.

- **Employment Support Programme (ESP)**: This was launched in 2010 to provide job matching and up to six months of job support services upon successful placement of trainees to facilitate the disabled person’s transition to open employment. This programme also served other people with physical disabilities, hearing and visual impairments and those who required direct job placement/support services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track</th>
<th>Specialisation</th>
<th>Training Period (months)</th>
<th>Possible Job Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Services</td>
<td>Administration Support</td>
<td>3 – 4</td>
<td>Administrator/Customer Service Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management Support</td>
<td>6 – 9</td>
<td>Management Support Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book Keeping</td>
<td>6 – 9</td>
<td>Accounts Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia Design</td>
<td>Visual Communications</td>
<td>6 – 9</td>
<td>Visual Communications Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Web Design</td>
<td>6 – 9</td>
<td>Web Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video Editing</td>
<td>9 - 12</td>
<td>Video Editor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


19 Speech by Chia Yong Yong, President of SPD, at the SPD Education Programme Awards Presentation Ceremony. (2010, January 30).
• **Infocomm Accessibility Centre (IAC):** In 2006, Microsoft in partnership with SPD established the ‘Microsoft Accessibility and IT Training Centre, leading to the setting up of the S$4 million IAC in 2008.22 The IAC was specially designed to cater to the needs of people with physical disabilities, with shorter training hours over a longer period and laboratories equipped with special devices like one-handed keyboards and modified mouse.

Providing structured IT training for disabled people which led to industry-recognised certification would enhance employment opportunities of persons with disabilities. Courses ranged from basic computer skills to advanced programming. Between 2008 and 2010, IAC provided over 2,200 training places to more than 1,000 people.23

(g) **Direct Employment – SPD Ability Enterprise**

By 2010, the carpentry workshop that the charity had started in 1964 to provide employment to disabled persons had evolved into two separate units under the umbrella of the SPD Ability Enterprise:

i) **Production Workshop (PWS):** The PWS provided employment opportunities for people with disabilities who were unable to secure gainful employment in the open market. The workshop focused on commercially viable lines of work and sale of products at trade fairs and exhibitions. Education institutions, commercial organisations and private individuals were among SPD’s customers.

In 2004-05, the charity regarded this operations as a social enterprise with the goal of balancing its social mission (assisting disabled people achieve financial independence through employment) and enterprise sustainability.24 In 2010, the PWS offered the following services:

- Bookbinding and photocopying
- Fabrication of customised leather-bound photo albums
- Design and sale of greeting cards
- Lifestyle products (fancy files and notebooks)
- Subcontract jobs

ii) **Multimedia Centre (MMC):** This was set up as a pilot project in July 2004 to assist people with physical disabilities to be gainfully employed in the field of IT. In the first year, five trainees were placed in open employment while 18 trainees had undertaken training in web design, digital art, desktop publishing, data entry, IT and network support, eBay transactions and e-filing of income tax. In August 2007, the Multimedia Centre Social Enterprise (MMC-SE) was launched. Services included:

- Web page design
- Website hosting and maintenance
- Electronic greeting cards
- Digital art
- Data entry

**SPD ABILITY ENTERPRISE – COMPETING IN THE MARKETPLACE**

**The Production Workshop (PWS)**

The Leslie Rayner Sheltered Workshop was renovated and modernised in 1984 to improve productivity as well as the working environment.25 However, as Singapore’s economy moved up the development ladder, jobs such as the making of wooden crates or soap boxes also moved out of the country to cheaper locations abroad.

In the 1990s, the PWS employed about 25 disabled persons working on two streams of business activities – i) printing and ii) bookbinding and greeting cards. Over the years, the workshop employees had acquired the requisite skills and competencies needed to carry out the work. They were mostly in their late 40s, unionised and represented by the Singapore Manual and Mercantile Workers’ Union.

The printing business was discontinued in 2002, as it was not able to keep up with technology advances in printing equipment/ processes, which meant new capital and higher skill-sets requirements for the disabled people. As low-cost printing jobs moved out to developing countries in the region, only the more technically advanced and specialised printing activities remained in Singapore.

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22 Through extended collaboration with the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA), the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) and the Tote Board.
23 Speech by Chia Yong Yong, President, SPD, at the Microsoft Unlimited Potential Scholarship Award Presentation and IT Apprenticeship Graduation Ceremony. (2010, October 7).
25 Supported by the Institute of Industrial Engineers of Singapore who volunteered their services.
Competition in the bookbinding business was keen in 2005 and the charity had to bid for jobs on an equal footing with commercial enterprises employing able-bodied staff. The value of the jobs secured declined as the market for leather-bound photo albums gave way to digitised photos with technological advancement. Furthermore, its main customer base among the expatriate community in Singapore was also shrinking.

Demand from public libraries for PWS’ bookbinding services was also on the decline as these libraries moved increasingly to digital media and e-books. To sustain demand for its bookbinding services, the workshop shifted focus to binding theses of students from tertiary institutions. (See Exhibit 5 – SPD Production Workshop and Products).

At the end of 2010, the workshop had 14 employees, working on book binding and book restoration jobs as well as paper-based lifestyle products.

**Multimedia Centre (MMC)**

This web design unit began commercial work in 2004 and grew quickly with 19 physically disabled trainees in 2007. In October 2007, the MMC Social Enterprise was formed and six trainees who had acquired the relevant skills crossed over as employees. However, by the end of 2010, the MMC had just four employees.26

The charity’s annual greeting cards project was the major job for MMC employees. SPD employed able-bodied staff to handle the sales coordination and marketing of the greeting cards.

MMC’s disabled employees focused on designing the greeting cards’ layouts while the rest of the work was outsourced to external graphic art houses for card enhancement, printing and packaging. As organisations moved from purchasing printed greeting cards to electronic cards, it created new business opportunities for MMC. However, this led to a dip in the demand for its printed greeting cards.

The SPD Ability Enterprise employed eight able-bodied staff to market and supervise the jobs for the two sets of business activities.27

**Business operations**

A major challenge for SPD Ability Enterprise was the fall in the number of disabled employees over the years:

> The priority of SPD is always to place people with disabilities in mainstream open employment. This has an impact on the intake for our PWS and MMC which provide employment to the physically disabled with requisite skills. As such, we have had no “new blood” in these two programmes for the last 5 years.

Abhimanyau Pal
Executive Director, SPD

At the PWS, most of the employees were recruited in the 1970-80s and were due to be retired from production work within the next five to 10 years.

The expected flow of disabled persons who had undergone SPD’s rehabilitation services or vocational training activities and could be moved into full-time employment at the charity’s social enterprise units did not materialise. Pal explained:

> I have noted a change in the client profile. Previously physical disability was mainly due to congenital reasons, cerebral palsy or polio. Polio has been eradicated. Now the key reasons for disability are early stroke, accident or early amputation. Many from this group can find alternative employment themselves and don’t need to come to SPD. That is a happy problem for us. So, people coming to us now are really ‘low-function’.

> There are also challenges in managing their income expectations. Some have seen the world and are often in a state of denial [about their condition]. When they come to know the amount they will receive, they are not keen to take on the job.

26 The rest moved to the IAC for further IT training.
28 Interview with authors. (2011, January 4).
The MMC was created to leverage on IT-based work that could provide new job opportunities for persons with physical disabilities, especially those who had the interest and ability to perform in this field. However, there was a shortfall of competent disabled persons available for employment but for different reasons:

The sea change in Singapore’s economic and social context from the era in which the Leslie Rayner Workshop was set up to that in 2011, presented some of the most severe challenges and decisions confronting SPD’s leadership with regard to these programmes:

> We don’t have the best workers; we don’t have the best resources. Our factors of production are compromised but we are trying to provide gainful employment to our clients – the disabled.

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**Table 4**

**Financial Highlights – Sheltered Workshop, Production Workshop and Multimedia Centre**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong> generated by Sheltered Workshop, PWS and MMC</td>
<td>373,500</td>
<td>504,905</td>
<td>757,591</td>
<td>903,897</td>
<td>660,878</td>
<td>436,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expenses</strong> relating to above programmes:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Cost of Sales</td>
<td>139,434</td>
<td>142,796</td>
<td>178,222</td>
<td>217,721</td>
<td>130,818</td>
<td>94,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Transport</td>
<td>16,226</td>
<td>71,831</td>
<td>49,027</td>
<td>53,304</td>
<td>14,540</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Physically disabled employees at PWS – Salaries and related costs (including Central Provident Fund)</td>
<td>167,590*</td>
<td>162,063</td>
<td>155,421</td>
<td>190,663</td>
<td>208,771</td>
<td>224,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Physically disabled trainees at sheltered workshop – Allowance</td>
<td>179,496</td>
<td>177,276</td>
<td>223,282</td>
<td>249,436</td>
<td>206,826</td>
<td>157,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Physically disabled employees’ and trainees’ benefits</td>
<td>28,472</td>
<td>21,947</td>
<td>67,929</td>
<td>57,040</td>
<td>30,428</td>
<td>41,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net surplus/(deficit)</strong></td>
<td>(141,492)</td>
<td>(15,403)</td>
<td>60,906</td>
<td>140,010</td>
<td>30,731</td>
<td>(95,680)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes transport expense for PWS, MMC, Sheltered workshop and enclave workshops.

Source: Compiled from SPD Annual Reports.

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29 Interview with authors. (2011, January 4)
30 ibid.
For those who are severely disabled, open employment is a challenge. They require assisted transportation due to their disabilities. Furthermore they live in various parts of Singapore, so there are transport coordination issues.31

Royson Poh
Assistant Director, Vocational Training Division

SPD’s management saw their ability to keep 25 PWDs in employment over the last 10 years as a major achievement:

Others may not think so but we believe that people with disabilities must be part of the community. SPD provides them a meaningful life, self-respect and dignity through gainful employment. How do you price meaningful life or dignity? The issue is one of social impact and social returns versus financial returns.32

Abhimanyau Pal
Executive Director, SPD

While SPD’s leadership used the Balanced Scorecard to measure the performance of its programmes, the challenge was how to put quantifiable values on goals such as social impact and outcomes for the activities of the PWS and MMC.

Furthermore, there was a need to measure the social impact and returns from the entire range of programmes and initiatives. This would mean comparing the relative impact of per dollar spent on the Ability Enterprise with that of other SPD programmes ranging from rehabilitation and therapy to vocational training and education support.

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON EMPLOYMENT OF DISABLED PERSONS

New perspectives were emerging with regard to people with disabilities in Singapore, including the articulation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) as:

Those whose prospects of securing, retaining places and advancing in education and training institutions, employment and recreation as equal members of the community are substantially reduced as a result of physical, sensory, intellectual and developmental impairments.33

MCYS (2004)

Disabled employment as a business case

In February 2007, a Singapore government report, Enabling Masterplan, was released which charted the development of programmes and services in the disability sector for the period 2007 to 2011. The Masterplan shifted the disabled employment paradigm from one based on compassion or corporate social responsibility to one based on industry needs.

With disabled employment based on a ‘business case,’ the government policy focused on providing disabled persons opportunities for ‘industry-specific skills training’, and where possible, receive recognised certification leading to sustainable employment.34

The previous policy of ‘Many Helping Hands’ approach comprising government agencies (such as MCYS, NCSS), charities and families was seen as inadequate in bringing about greater social and economic participation of disabled persons in the mainstream society. The report called for greater involvement of other government agencies [such as the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA)35, Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Health (MOH), statutory boards] as well as industry players.

As part of this Masterplan, a value chain framework for the assessment, training and employment of PWDs was drawn up (see Figure 1).

Incentivising employers of PWDs

The framework also identified industries where PWDs might find employment opportunities. As an incentive
to employers, an ‘Open Door Fund’ (ODF) was set up in 2007 by MCYS under which employers who hired disabled persons were eligible for a grant of up to S$100,000. The grant was to support employers’ efforts to re-design jobs or processes, modify workplaces and develop training and integration programmes for disabled workers (including hiring a job coach for PWDs or a consultant to train co-workers and supervisors in working with PWDs).

Between 2007 and 2010, a total of S$2 million was disbursed for the ODF scheme. In 2009, the ODF was enhanced to include apprenticeship training schemes for persons with disabilities and enhanced job support from employers. By early 2011, more than 450 persons received employment in at least 80 companies through assistance from the fund.

An alliance of private-sector employers promoting employment opportunities for people with disabilities, the Enabling Employers Network (EEN), was also established in 2007 to encourage employers to create sustainable jobs for the disabled people. This included the setting up of industry-specific Centres of Training and Integration (CTI) to offer disabled persons structured on-the-job training. By July 2010, two such training centres were established, one in the hospitality industry and the other in the call centre sector.

In March 2011, the inaugural ‘Enabling Employers Awards’ were presented as a recognition programme to acknowledge organisations which employed disabled persons on an ongoing basis and who had made significant efforts to integrate such employees into their workforce.

Concurrent with the Enabling Masterplan report, the MCYS also released a road map for the employment

of disabled persons (see Figure 2) outlining the vocational and skills training paths for PWDs to prepare them for open employment. This framework included a structured process through which a group of disabled people would be categorised as either ‘Work Ready’ or having ‘No Employment Potential’ by their mid-20s.

Moving in tandem, the MOE also announced a vocational preparation framework for Special Education Schools for special needs students (including the disabled) to facilitate their successful transition to employment.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

At the beginning of 2011, the fast moving landscape for people with disabilities in Singapore presented both opportunities and challenges for SPD. For more than 45 years, the charity had played a major role in changing the lives and perceptions of people with physical disabilities. Some of its pioneering efforts included operating a version of a social enterprise before the term was coined and creating an outsourcing therapist service – SPD Therapy Hub.

As SPD neared its sixth decade of existence, the charity faced economic and social contexts vastly different from that confronting its founders. SPD’s leadership had kept faith with the charity’s pioneers’ mission of providing gainful employment for disabled people. National policies and plans implemented by the government to optimise the employability of all its citizens including PWDs would require a review of some of its key programmes. There were new programmes to be deliberated and launched to meet the needs of an expanding base of beneficiaries.

Given the new economic and social realities, the challenge for SPD was to renew its mission as a champion of disabled persons and continue to be true to the spirit of its pioneers.

Singapore’s population grew from 2.07 million in 1970 to 5.07 million in 2010 and its GDP (at current market prices) rose from S$5.87 billion to S$303.65 billion over the same period (see Exhibit 6). In March 2011, employment stood at 3.13 million while overall unemployment rate was 1.9 percent. The manufacturing sector accounted for about 25 percent of the economy while the services sector contributed 67 percent.

EXHIBIT 1
SPD MILESTONES (1964-2010)

1964
- Registration of Society for Aid to the Paralysed.

1985
- SAP Scholarship awards.

1994
- SAP Vocational Rehabilitation Centre: first purpose-built centre by a VWO to provide rehabilitation of people with disabilities.
- Day Activity Centre: train low-functioning people with physical disabilities.

1998
- Name changed to ‘Society for the Physically Disabled’.

2001
- Assistive Technology Centre (ATC): provided advice, consultation and training on AT devices.

2003
- Multimedia Centre (MMC): web page designing, website maintenance, web hosting.
- SPD-Singapore Power Rehabilitation Centre: day rehabilitation services after acute care at hospitals.

2005
- ATC renamed Specialised ATC: appointed by NCSS to provide services in AT for all people with physical disabilities.
- SPD Therapy Hub: SPD therapists provided services to other VWOs.
- Paediatric Rehabilitation: for children with special needs below 16 years.
- Learning and Development Centre: enrichment programmes for students.

2006
- Therapy@Home Service: for clients who were unable to leave their homes.
- Specialised Case Management Programme: for people with acquired disabilities and caregivers.

2007
- SPD@Tampines: first satellite centre in the eastern part of Singapore.
- Multimedia Centre Social Enterprise (MMC-SE).

2008
- Infocomm Accessibility (IA) Centre: provided training in infocomm technology across disability types.
- AT Loan Library: lend AT devices for trial.
- IT Apprenticeship Programme (ITAP): on-the-job training and structured courses.

2009
- Specialised ATC appointed as the Centre of Specialisation AT by NCSS – provided advice, consultations and practice-related training for all other agencies.
- Dysphagia Management Programme: first community-based swallowing management.

2010
- Employment Support Programme (ESP): job placement and job support services for trainees.
- SPD Youth Aspiration Award: gave up to S$5,000 per recipient to pursue their interests outside of the academic arena.

1967
- Leslie Rayner Sheltered Workshop: provided employment opportunities to the physically disabled.
- Carpentry, book binding, assembly work.

2008
- Infocomm Accessibility (IA) Centre: provided training in infocomm technology across disability types.
- AT Loan Library: lend AT devices for trial.
- IT Apprenticeship Programme (ITAP): on-the-job training and structured courses.

2009
- Specialised ATC appointed as the Centre of Specialisation AT by NCSS – provided advice, consultations and practice-related training for all other agencies.
- Dysphagia Management Programme: first community-based swallowing management.

Source: Created by authors based on SPD website.
EXHIBIT 2

SPD – VISION AND VALUES

Vision

To build an inclusive community where everyone is a part of it, and not apart from it.

Values

Being a partner of choice
Maximising abilities and unlocking potentials for greater independence through the provision of efficient quality services

Engaging in advocacy and sustained public education
Working towards more inclusiveness and accessibility with a vision of enabling every disabled person to participate in all life domains

Technology
Unlocking the potentials of our clients through technology

Providing vocational training and employment
With the aim of promoting inclusion and participation in the workplace

Rehabilitation
Establishing partnerships towards independence

Supporting children and youth
Providing an early start for a better tomorrow for disabled children and youth

Developing better internal processes
Updating, reviewing and improving our processes regularly for quality service delivery

Source: SPD Website.
EXHIBIT 3

SPD – GROWTH IN CLIENTS AND PROGRAMMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation Centre</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>289</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paediatric Rehabilitation (at HQ)</td>
<td>Programme not started</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>147</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day Activity Centre</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Activity Centre/Sheltered Workshop</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD Therapy Hub(i)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>~1,200</td>
<td>&gt;1,400</td>
<td>1,879</td>
<td>2,092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD Education Programme(ii)</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialised Case Management Programme</td>
<td>Programme not started</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>663</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD@Tampines (including Paediatric Rehab)</td>
<td>Not opened</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>247</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Apprenticeship Programme</td>
<td>Programme not started</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialised Assistive Technology Centre</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT Loan Library Programme</td>
<td>Programme not started</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infoocomm Accessibility Centre (IAC)</td>
<td>Programme not started</td>
<td></td>
<td>108</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>348</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dysphagia Management Programme</td>
<td>Programme not started</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Workshop – Social Enterprise</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia Centre (MMC) – Social Enterprise(iii)</td>
<td>MMC provided training to 18-19 trainees</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of clients helped(iv)</td>
<td>~ 600</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1,883</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,639</td>
<td>2,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(i) Number includes clients served in internal programmes and partner organisations.
(ii) From FY 2004-05 to 2006-07, the number denotes total of physically disabled students and students with physically disabled parents. From FY 2007-08 to 2009-10, the number refers to physically disabled students under the programme.
(iii) In October 2007, the Multimedia Centre Social Enterprise was formed and trainees who had acquired relevant skills crossed over as staff of SPD. The rest moved to the IAC for further IT training.
(iv) Total number does not represent summation of clients served by all above programmes because of overlap in client numbers across programmes.

EXHIBIT 5
SPD PRODUCTION WORKSHOP

PRODUCTS FOR SALE

Source: Provided by SPD.
EXHIBIT 6

SINGAPORE ANNUAL GDP AT CURRENT MARKET PRICES