

**Event Summary of  
3<sup>rd</sup> Family Research Network (FRN) Forum:  
Research and Policies on Child Development and Resilience**

**28 August 2009  
Mind Champs, HDB Hub**

Co-organised by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) and Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports (MCYS), the forum is a regular series of closed-door discussions on emerging social trends and possible research topics on the family. This forum addressed research and policies on child development and resilience. It offered five presentations and was attended by 109 participants from universities, social service agencies and government agencies.

Mr Egwin Lian, Assistant Director, Strategic Planning, Research and Development Division, MCYS, spoke on the current trends of decreasing family sizes and increasing divorces and remarriages. He provided an overview of government policies tailored to support child development by strengthening families, easing costs and raising standards. The Enhanced Marriage and Parenthood 2008 package and the Community Care Endowment Fund Scheme were cited as examples of how MCYS continued to improve on its programmes.



In the second presentation, Professor Jean Yeung, Asia Research Institute and Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore (NUS), provided the rationale behind making investing in early childhood a policy priority. There was growing evidence from research that showed the benefits and cost effectiveness of investing in early childhood development. Related research by Dr James Heckman found that the rate of return to a dollar investment made while a person is young is higher than the rate of return to the same dollar made at a later

age. Recent studies also revealed that a family's socio-economic status did influence a child's cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural outcomes.

In the third presentation, Dr Han Chang-Jeun, Department of Social Work, NUS, spoke on the development and implications of savings policies for children around the world. According to him, asset building provided institutional opportunities of savings for enhancing human capital and social development. He identified ~~Cash Transfers~~ ~~Social Services~~ and ~~Savings Policies~~ as important social policy pillars for children and families. He provided examples of savings programmes in some countries such as the Child Transfer Fund in the UK, Youth Development Account in Taiwan, Child Development Account in Korea and Uganda and the Post-Secondary Education Account and Edusave in Singapore. He called for more research to examine how savings policy and programmes could be established.

For the second half of the forum, Dr Daniel Fung, Chief, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Institute of Mental Health and Adjunct Associate Professor, Duke-NUS Graduate School of Medicine and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) shared his research experiences on Attention-Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) as an example of how research could be incorporated into healthcare. His model comprised four systematic stages. The first stage, involved assessing needs arising from prevailing trends of ADHD. The next stage was about finding solutions to meet these needs. The third stage evaluated outcomes and effectiveness of the solutions. The final stage established a well-developed network of stakeholders to disseminate information and share practices.



Lastly, A/P Chang Weining, Division of Psychology, NTU, examined how the family perspective aided understanding of child development and resilience in Asian societies. The commonalities between members of the Asian family unit were a strong factor for the individual's resilience. Resilience was part of a psychological process an individual underwent to minimise negative impacts and maximise well-being in the face of adversity. In the Asian context, one's well-being was dependent on one's family. Individuals were likely to rely on or place family unity before self in the face of adversity.



The question and answer sessions centred on suggestions for research to focus on the intergenerational poverty cycle and family-related policies as a way to identify, formulate, and enhance early childhood development and resilience. There were further suggestions to reform funding structures and having access to information on overcoming time and financial constraints encountered in longitudinal research. The importance of healthy familial relationships for developing greater resilience in an individual was also emphasised.

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*Notes taken by Chua Chun Ser, IPS Research Assistant and Serena Chan, IPS Research Intern*