

A family called Singapore



IPS Senior Research Fellow Dr Yap Mui Teng addressing the audience at the Family Research Network Forum in November 2010.

By Dr Yap Mui Teng

IPS was born at the same time as Singapore's new population policy – in fact, just nine months after. IPS patron and then First Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Goh Chok Tong, announced Singapore's new population policy on 1 March 1987 and IPS was registered on 27 December the same year. The new population policy ended twenty years of what had been considered a highly successful policy to reduce the rate of population growth by fertility control and put in place a selectively pro-natalist one. The new policy was considered one of the “bold” moves made by Mr Goh and his team of younger Cabinet ministers.

IPS has been tracking demographic developments since its inception, with the convening of seminars and closed-door discussions during the directorship of its first director, Professor Chan Heng Chee. A social demographer, I joined IPS in December 1989 and continued the tradition of reviewing Singapore's population policies through research (analysis), convening of discussions among various stakeholders (bridge-building) and publication (communication).

IPS research in this area covers marriage and childbearing, immigration and emigration, and the ageing population. Attitudinal surveys on the attitudes of Singaporeans towards marriage and having children and on ageing have been carried out, either as government-commissioned projects or self-initiated by staff. Other projects involved secondary data analysis and other published material, for example speeches and reports.

A major undertaking over the past two years has been the projection of Singapore's population up to 2050, involving various assumptions of future fertility and net-migration (with mortality assumptions remaining invariant over the various scenarios). This was followed by the convening of six study groups to examine their economic, manpower and social implications as well as the implications for the physical and social infrastructure.



The IPS Conference for Population Outcomes: Singapore 2050 was held in July 2013 and the researchers presented various demographic scenarios pertaining to areas like marriage and child-bearing, social capital and the labour force.

A major undertaking in the coming year will be a panel study on the impact of longevity on the healthcare, financial and social needs of the elderly.

IPS has initiated or partnered government agencies – such as the Ministry of Community Development and Sports, MCDS (now the Ministry of Social and Family Development, MSF), NGOs such as the Tsao Foundation, and international agencies such as the World Bank – in organising various conferences, workshops and seminars to share knowledge and research findings with stakeholders.

IPS partnered the Committee on the Family and MCDS in organising Family 2000, which then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong graced as guest of honour.

Since 2008, IPS has been chosen as the MSF's partner agency to run its Family Research Network (FRN) forums. The purpose of the forums is to share research findings on the family and to stimulate interest in family research. In this regard, the ministry has also initiated a Family Research Fund which provides grants to academics, undergraduates and post-graduate students.

The results of survey research and data analysis have been published in a variety of platforms to reach out to various stakeholders. These include IPS research reports published online. Besides the policy community and general public, publications include contributions to journals such as the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* and *Lancet*.

Service contributions include membership of various government committees, such as the Committee on Ageing Issues (CAI) and the National Advisory Committee on the Family and Aged (NACFA), and service as chair of the Feedback Group on Elderly Development. Service to the academic community includes a two-year term as council member of the Asian Population Association and chairman of the Scientific Committee for the Second Asian Population Association conference held in 2012.