CHEAT SHEET

Harmony in Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue & Integration Efforts

Introduction

Society

Citizens

A **SOCIETY** is defined as 'a large group of people who live together in an organised way, making decisions about how to do things and sharing the work that needs to be done'.[1]

CITIZENS are individuals like you and your neighbours who make up a society. Each individual has his/her own needs, priorities and aspirations, although some individuals may share common needs and wants. Hence, there are challenges within the society such as deciding what is good for the society. On this regard, disagreement with one another may arise.[2]

> To help address challenges arising from differences, the government may play a role in making decisions on behalf of the people. At the same time, citizens too have a responsibility in building a conducive and liveable environment, where there is peace and harmony.[3]

Integration efforts in some Asian countries

'Harmony Street' in Malacca, Malaysia

The Cheng Hoon Teng Temple, Kampung Kling Mosque and Sri Poyatha Moorthi Temple were built close to each other in the 17th to 18th centuries.[4]

Photo courtesy of: Jakub Michankow via Flickr

Photo courtesy of: Yun Huang Yong via Flickr

Itaewon District in South Korea

Photo courtesy of: Grace Teo

- Known as the 'Global Village of Seoul'
- Characterised by the area's cultural diversity, especially Islamic influences
- Houses the Seoul Central Mosque
- Provides opportunities to sample a large variety of food including Middle Eastern cuisine[6]

Photo courtesy of: PhareannaH [berhabuk] via Flickr

Geylang East Estate in Singapore

- 19th century Sri Sivan Temple and Foo Hai Ch'an Monastery are located side by side at Geylang East Avenue 2
- The Wak Tanjong Islamic Institution and Masjid (Mosque) are located nearby

Photo courtesy of: Grace Teo

Tai Kok Tsui Temple Fair in Hong Kong

- The fair showcases Chinese and Indian cultural dances by various groups
- Visitors can experience South Asian food, clothing and henna painting
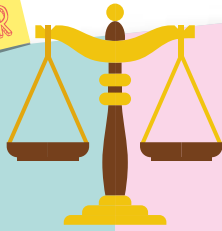- Suppported by the Chan Hing Social Service Centre[5]

What makes for a good society?

POLITICAL FACTOR

Stability is achieved through implementation and execution of law and order. Everybody understands and abides by the law.

No law and order can be implemented. Each man makes his/her own decision and takes power into his/her own hand.

SOCIAL FACTOR

Mutual respect and tolerance for one another's religious beliefs, values and practices create a peaceful environment to live in.

Chaotic situations may arise. People live in constant fear and distrust.

ECONOMIC FACTOR

With stability and peace comes economic progress.

Local and foreign investors can set up businesses, thus creating jobs and employment opportunities for all.

Local and foreign investors will not have the confidence that their businesses will be successful.

Far less employment opportunities will be available if investors are deterred from setting up businesses.

SINGAPORE'S CONTEXT

As a small country with limited land area and scarce natural resources, Singapore's economy and development are reliant on its human resources. It is well documented in our history books that many people, from as early as the 18th century, have been enticed to work and live in cosmopolitan Singapore. During his visit to the Vatican City in May 2016, President Tony Tan shared that *"for Singapore, racial and religious harmony is fundamental not only to our progress but to our very existence, and that from the start there was a great deal of emphasis on building bridges across communities".* [7] Integration is the key to harmony and prosperity in Singapore, and there are various government and non-government agencies supporting and promoting it.

Here are some examples of integration efforts in Singapore:

Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles (IRCCs)

There are interfaith platforms in every constituency that promote racial and religious harmony for social cohesion, through interfaith visits, dialogues and workshops organised for the community. [8]

Grassroots involvement of new residents

Anchorvale Community Club Management Committee (CCMC) welcomes new citizens to serve as grassroots leaders and members. They contribute by managing the community club and organising programmes for the community.

Kaki Bukit Resident's Committee (RC) welcomes the participation of new residents in grassroots activities. [9]

COMMUNITY CLUB

DID YOU KNOW?

- **'Racial and Religious Harmony'** is **1 of the 5** Singapore Shared Values fundamental to the Singaporean identity. [10]

- 18th December is **International Migrants' Day**. [11]

- **40,000 members** of the public (including locals and foreigners) have visited the **Harmony Centre at An-Nahdhah Mosque** in Bishan since 2006. [12]

Community Safety and Security Programme

An initiative started at Teban Gardens in 2012 which involves foreign worker ambassadors, the police and grassroots volunteers in neighbourhood patrols. [13]

People's Association (PA)

Organises chit-chat sessions between locals and immigrants for some 20 neighbourhoods around the island. The aim is to share stories and social norms to help newcomers get to know the community better, and to feel more welcome. [14]

National Integration Council (NIC)

Organises community-building activities such as social gatherings to celebrate festivities, where helping one another is the main message of these social gatherings. [15]

Migrant Workers' Centre (MWC)

A non-governmental organisation, the MWC facilitates social acceptance and integration through community engagement activities that bring migrant workers and locals together in celebratory events. [16]

Inter-Religious Organisation, Singapore (IRO)

The IRO, originally known as the Inter-Religious Organisation of Singapore and Johor Bahru, was founded on 18 March 1949 to promote friendship and cooperation among members of different religions.

It had originally represented six religions: Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism. Over the years, it expanded to include Zoroastrianism, Taoism, the Bahá'í Faith and Jainism. The IRO is involved in many local activities and events, and plays an important role in educating the Singapore public about different religions. [17]

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Source Look at its origins. Is it trustworthy?

Understand Know what you're reading. Search for clarity.

research Dig deeper. Go beyond the initial source.

evaluate Find the balance. Exercise fair judgement.

s.u.r.e.
Source · Understand · Research · Evaluate

Tips on Information Literacy:
Evaluating Online Information Sources

The Internet provides a platform for anyone to publish and share information with a global audience, without having to reveal his/her true identity. As such, Internet users have to be mindful that not all web sources are trustworthy or have good intent. Here are **5 evaluation criteria** to help you evaluate information posted online for credibility.

AUTHOR: Who is the writer?

Can you identify the true identity of the writer or organisation he/she represents?

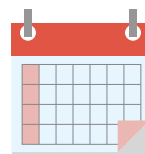Are you able to contact the owner of the website?

ACCURACY: Is the information true or false?

Are the presented facts, statistics and data taken from credible sources? Can this information be falsified to make up a story that is not true?

TIME: When was the information published?

Where can I find information pertaining to the publication date? Is this site updated regularly?

CONTENT COVERAGE: What is the topic discussed?

When reading information in a website, identify the main subject or topic of discussion. How much detail is included for this topic of discussion? Has the writer included both the pros and cons?

INTENTION: Is the information presented objectively?

Is this information based on facts or opinions?

Why did the writer put up and share this information or opinion? Did he want to share, educate, entertain or confuse the audience?

*Disclaimer: This publication is meant for educational purposes only and the information presented is accurate at the time of production.

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