**Using Trishaw Rides as a Means to Activate Service Learning
and the Impact to Date**
Building an Ecosystem for Collaborative Good

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Introduction to Cycling Without Age Singapore

Cycling Without Age Singapore (CWA) is a charity which brings seniors and others with limited mobility on trishaw rides. Our vision, as part of a global movement, is that everyone regardless of race, religion or resource has the right to wind in their hair. We subscribe to the United Nations goals of sustainability and are contributing to the following sustainable development goals (SDGs): good health and well-being, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, and partnerships for the goals. At our core, we aim to combat social isolation and promote intergenerational bonding through our trishaw rides.

We have partnered with a range of senior care centers and nursing homes across Singapore with an emphasis on low-income seniors. We provide each senior partner with the use of a CWA trishaw and implement our program. The success of our program is heavily dependent upon our volunteer cyclists which we refer to as pilots. They generously give their time to take seniors out on the trishaw rides.

We equip our pilots with two sessions of training, each encompassing three hours. The first session is the trishaw training which provides necessary skills, education on safety, and hands-on trishaw handling. The trishaws are power assisted with a battery support mechanism to enable persons of all athletic abilities to cycle the seniors. Due to the sophisticated nature of the trishaws as well as the vulnerable nature of the seniors, safety is our primary concern.

Overview of Problem

A present-day challenge identifies a growing gap between the youngest and oldest generations. This growing gap results in a divide amongst age cohorts and compromises social inclusivity. The likelihood to stereotype and become apathetic also increases as generations become siloed. The values and cultures distinct within each generation are lost when there is no generativity exchange. In addition, social isolation is on the rise with seniors at particular risk. Seniors are at

particular risk due to their shrinking social networks, reduced participation in the workforce, great probability of outliving family and friends, along with other factors. Moreover, reports of social isolation in the younger generations have also dramatically increased. This can be attributed to the increased reliance on social media and other technologies replacing the frequency of face-to-face interactions. Thus, an opportunity exists to bridge this gap and address social isolation across, arguably, every generation.

Response and Intervention

In response to this growing generation gap as well as a rise in social isolation, Cycling Without Age Singapore (CWA) developed a pilot program which encompasses an innovative service-learning pedagogy. Research indicates a strong relationship between social connectedness and well-being. As well, research shows time spent in community also has a favorable impact on our health and well-being. In particular, studies have shown scientifically significant increases in health and happiness when time is spent outdoors in green spaces. We also know that as one ages, the risk for isolation increases. Opportunities and access to green spaces and social interactions become much more limited for seniors.

Cycling Without Age Singapore (CWA) deeply values the relationships and opportunities for engagement between the pilots and the seniors. As such, we developed and deployed an aging simulation and communication skills training which serves as a key intervention for addressing the problems previously presented. The intent of the training is to equip all of our pilots with the fundamentals of aging and an aging simulation which helps to foster empathy. This three-hour training also provides education on communicating with seniors. Our goal is to equip our pilots with the knowledge and abilities to meaningfully engage with the seniors. By doing so, it offers pilots the opportunity to learn about the stories, life history and wisdom each senior has to offer. It also equips the pilots to take initiative in approaching seniors.

We engaged with a number of university students to participate in our program as a means of satisfying service-learning requirements. These students are designated as youth pilots, defined as 16 to 35 years of age. The aging simulation and communication skills training was designed specifically with the youth pilots in mind. CWA recognized an opportunity to provide youth pilots with a deeper understanding and appreciation of aging while also helping to build their confidence thereby empowering them to engage with seniors.

Impact Study and Results to Date

To understand the impact of the trishaw rides, CWA developed pre and post-trishaw ride surveys, quantitative in nature, for the youth pilots as well as for the seniors receiving the trishaw rides. The surveys were administered via online means to the youth pilots whereas seniors were given a paper form administered by our senior partner staff. For the youth baseline survey collection we asked them to self-report on a 7-point Likert Scale the following:
1. How would you rate your current comfort level communicating and interacting with seniors?
2. How would you rate your current level of empathy for seniors?

After cycling with us for at least six months we then gave youth the following (same) post-trishaw ride survey:

1. How would you now rate your current comfort level communicating and interacting with seniors?
2. How would you now rate your current level of empathy for seniors?

Qualitative research collection was also collected in the form of in person interviews with seniors to understand their experiences on the trishaws. With respect to youth pilots, a reflection survey is administered after each ride. The reflection surveys seek students to share quotes from seniors that may range from humorous, heartwarming, insightful, surprising and inspiring. Students are asked to share what they think the senior would say was their favorite experience during the rides. Students are also asked to share at least one thing they learned from a senior on the rides. The survey design allows for the opportunity to understand a range of themes and experiences through qualitative research while also understanding numerical impact through quantitative means.

To reiterate, our program recognizes seniors as the primary beneficiary with the pilots serving as a secondary beneficiary. As such, we sought to understand the impact on both of these beneficiaries. For the purposes of this paper, the impact presented forward will focus on the youth pilot beneficiaries.

With result to the impact and results to date, over 10,000 seniors (duplicated) and over 5,000 trishaw rides have been given by CWA. These youth have tremendously contributed to our growth in trishaw rides and much of CWA's success is attributed to the youth pilots choosing to engage with CWA for their service learning.

Results of quantitative data were very encouraging. Based on pre and post-survey responses, our pilots report a **26% improvement** in empathy towards seniors. They also report a **36% increase** in their comfort level communicating and interacting with seniors upon receiving our comprehensive skills training and after cycling with seniors.

Additionally, our impact study exemplifies our contributions towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).

Our qualitative data includes responses from a total of 75 youth pilots and uncovered the following impact across five themes:

1. Enhanced communication skills (SDG 11)
2. Increased desire to contribute to community and help others (SDG 10, SDG 11)
3. Increased confidence and self-esteem (SDG 3)
4. Enhanced relational skills and relationship bonding (SDG 11)
5. Increased empathy and reduced stereotyping of seniors (SDG 10)

Below are survey responses attributed to each impact theme:

Enhanced communication skills
One elderly that I will remember riding with is Mr Lee. I'm not really good at starting conversations but on that day, I had the courage to start the conversation first. I could remember vaguely what I asked Mr Lee. I asked where is the furthest he has went overseas. He said Vietnam (or Myanmar, I couldn't remember) and China.

I learnt how to communicate with the elderly regardless of race. I learnt from an elderly couple (married for 69 years, with 18 grandchildren) that to sustain a relationship, we should always be patient, willingness to give it all with whole heart, always pray to seek for easy and steadiness for the future.

I learned how to better communicate with seniors, how to keep the conversations going and be a better listener.

Increased desire to contribute to community and help others
After attending cycling sessions I feel that I should contribute more to the community to help the elderlies.

During this project I face some difficulties like managing my time and communicating with the elderlies; however after attending cycling sessions I feel that I am able to contribute back to the society and allows me to get closer to the elderlies.

Increased confidence and self-esteem
I grew more confidence through this despite sometimes I doubt myself, and seniors and mentors will always remind me of my strength.

Enhanced relational skills and relationship bonding
I learnt from the seniors that any relationship that we have like friendships, family and Boy girl relationship. The importance of sustaining all this miraculous relationships through trust, loyalty, love, honesty, patience, understanding towards each other and lastly if you're afraid of getting hurt you can't grow and learn from that relationship.

I feel happy being able to interact with the elderlies

Increased empathy and reduced stereotyping of seniors
I realised I have been stereotyping seniors and that's not fair to them. I learnt to be more empathetic to their conditions and to be more patient.

I learned about how seniors feel, they deserve more care.

While youth volunteers are the emphasis of this paper topic, we would be remiss not to mention the impact on the senior beneficiaries as well. Results with respect to the senior beneficiaries receiving the trishaw rides include:

- Enhanced opportunities for seniors to enjoy the outdoors and social inclusion within the community (SDG 10, SDG 11)
- Increased opportunities for seniors to share life stories and wisdom (SDG 11, SDG 17)
- Increased social interaction and engagement by the seniors and specifically, a *17.4% increase in social connectedness and community connection* (SDG 11)
- Improved feelings of happiness and positive emotions by the seniors and specifically, a *19.5% increase in current mood and outlook on life* (SDG 3)

Activation of Serving Learning

Service learning can be described as the intersection of education and empowerment. It enables youth to be engaged in their communities while meeting the broader needs in society. CWA has provided a platform to activate experiential learning while simultaneously transforming community. It begins by equipping each youth pilot with necessary knowledge to be successful as a trishaw pilot. This encompasses hands on trishaw training as well as a classroom format aging and communication skills training. As youth continue to the next phase of cycling with seniors, our organization provides a continuous loop for feedback and reflection through our qualitative surveys. By asking the youth after each ride what their experience was and requesting notable quotes from the seniors, the youth are able to reflect and share each act of service learning.

If service learning did nothing more than fulfill youth's need to be recognized as contributing citizens, its existence would be justified.
—David L. Manning, National Commission on Youth

Ambition to Scale and Future Opportunities

The aging population in Singapore will grow to 900,000 by 2030. The results of the impact study and service learning program inspire us to enhance our capacity to meet the growing need for activities that engage seniors and promote active aging. It is our ambition to retain our current youth pilots while also recruiting additional youth pilots. We are also in the process of the next phase of our program evaluation with updated results from both quantitative and qualitative data slated for release by end of June 2019. This will to enable CWA to further understand the impact on our youth pilots as well as identify opportunities to enhance their service learning experience.

Last, we continue to actively seek additional program opportunities that have the potential to cater to the range of youth service learning needs within the Singapore market. By way of example, we were recently awarded funding for a generativity program called Building Generations which focuses on youth aged 16 to 25 years from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. This project comes about from CWA identifying an unmet need and gap in this youth demographic. Our newest initiative, Building Generations, will help build up this generation by imparting empathy and necessary life-skills upon the youth. It is our aspiration that by giving tailored service learning opportunities to the youngest cohort, deemed at-risk and

during their formative years, the impact will allow them to meaningfully contribute to society and be successful in their transition towards adulthood.