

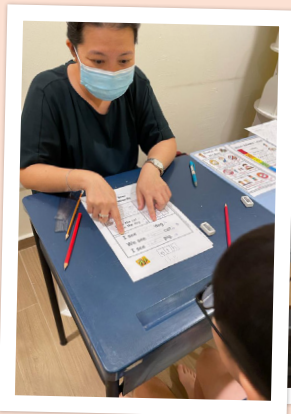
Supporting Children with Special Needs in Out-of-Home Care in Singapore

FY23 Annual Impact Report

Reporting Period: 1 Aug 2022 to 31 Dec 2023

Project Profile

Goal	Children in out-of-home care with special learning needs are better equipped to manage the demands of formal education and to realise their developmental potential.
Outcome	Children in out-of-home care achieve improvements in cognitive functioning and academic skills through learning support programmes (LSPs) that are sensitive to their learning and behavioural difficulties.
Output	Children in out-of-home care with special learning needs receive financial support to attend LSPs that address their learning and behavioural difficulties.



On-site literacy sessions at Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home. Sessions are conducted by Dyslexia Association of Singapore educational therapists in small group settings that are sensitive to the learning and behavioural profiles of children in residential care.

Project Progress

As of December 2023, World Vision Singapore (WVS) has been working in partnership with **3 out-of-home care (OHC) agencies** and **3 learning support programme (LSP) providers** to support children in out-of-home care with special learning needs:

OHC agencies

Boys' Town,
Gracehaven (Salvation Army), and
Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home (CSL)

LSP providers

Care Corner Singapore (CCS),
Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS), and
SHINE Children and Youth Services (SHINE)



16 children were nominated by CSL and enrolled on the One Life Fund to receive specialised learning support in literacy from DAS through a highly customised teaching arrangement, in which educational therapists conduct lessons on the premises of CSL with the support of residential care staff.

- Due to the psychological profile and behavioural challenges of children in residential care, which arise from past trauma, WVS, CSL, and DAS agreed that the nominated children would attend LSP sessions on-site at CSL in very small groups of 2-4 children (rather than at external centres run by the LSP providers) so as to facilitate their learning in a familiar environment, and so that CSL's staff could be present to help manage behavioural issues during the lessons and ensure that they proceed smoothly and safely.



The project allowed educational therapists from DAS to work very closely with CSL's case workers to cater to the specific learning needs of each child.

- Detailed information about each child's ability, learning profile, triggers, and strategies for behavioural management were shared by CSL's case workers with DAS's educational therapists prior to the commencement of on-site teaching.
- Educational therapists were alerted to incidents that had occurred prior to the lessons that might potentially affect the child's mood and ability to learn.
- CSL's case workers had regular check-ins with the educational therapists to provide them with feedback, based on observations made during the lessons. These check-ins enabled the educational therapists to adapt their pedagogy and structure their lessons to help each child to learn as effectively as possible. For example: More hands-on activities were incorporated for some children who learned better this way. "Scaffolding" was also employed as a teaching concept to break lessons down into smaller tasks, with a tool or structure provided for each task to help them achieve the lesson objectives.



Tripartite meetings between WVS, CSL, and DAS were conducted at least once every semester to review teaching practices, address challenges arising from behavioural issues and developments in the children's care status, and adjusted to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for the children. For example: the reconfiguring of teaching groups where needed, based on the children's learning levels, dynamics, behavioural profiles, and school schedules.



In total, **24** children, aged between 8 to 16 years, from the three OHC agencies attended LSPs during this reporting period, and all of them have had their LSP fees covered through this project:

- 22 children with literacy challenges attended the Main Literacy Programme (MLP) delivered by DAS (16 of whom were taught on-site at CSL to accommodate their behavioural challenges)
- 1 child with literacy challenges was enrolled on KidsLearn English with CCS
- 1 child with numeracy challenges was enrolled on KidsLearn Mathematics with CCS
- 92% had an attendance record of 75% and above for their LSP sessions
- 100% showed an improvement in their learning behaviour, based on observations reported by their caregivers, school teachers and/or educational therapists
- Among children for whom baseline assessment results were available:
 - 100% maintained their performance, or achieved an improvement, in LSP assessments
 - 100% maintained their performance, or achieved an improvement, in school assessments for the subject for which they were receiving remediation

As of 31 December 2023, **19 children** continue to be beneficiaries of this project. **5 children** have left the project due to the following reasons:

- 1 child was reunified with her natural family.
- 1 child was discharged from the foster care system as he was adopted.
- 1 child was withdrawn by the OHC agency to stabilise his foster placement as he was experiencing behavioural challenges.
- 2 older children have moved on to further studies at the Institute of Technical Education.

For FY2024, we aim to double the number of children in out-of-home care with special learning needs whom we support in Singapore, so that more children can be better equipped to learn in school and realise their educational potential. Thank you for your continuous support of our One Life Fund.

Stories of Positive Change in Children on the One Life Fund

The names of all children mentioned below have been changed to protect their identities.

Improvements in the educational performance, learning disposition, and behaviour of the children have begun to emerge. Here we share some encouraging examples:

“8-year-old Ben used to have a short attention span for literacy tasks and it often presented as a trigger for him with temper tantrums. Now, he appears to be able to sustain a 2-hour session with no negotiation and temper tantrums.” **(CSL CASE WORKER)**

“9-year-old Tom started to be able to use more words to express himself to get what he wanted instead of snatching things he wants.” **(CSL CASE WORKER)**

John is a Secondary 1 student residing at CSL who struggled with spelling and writing. Since he started attending literacy sessions with support from WVS's One Life Fund, he has progressed in his literacy skills.

“[My educational therapist] really improved my English a lot. Each time she would go through new learning concepts and spelling dictation with me before she got me to practise writing. The use of card and sound drills as well as games made learning interesting for me,” says John, who aspires to be a world-renowned chef when he grows up.



“The children and youths show an interest in phonics, spelling, reading comprehension, and writing. They also demonstrate better reading fluency given that they received explicit phonological awareness and synthetic phonics training.” **(DEDE THAM, EDUCATION MANAGER AT CSL)**

James, who is 12 years old this year, is part of the first cohort of children who have benefitted from this tripartite partnership with WVS, CSL, and DAS. He has been residing in CSL since 2021. His parents were unable to care for him, and he experienced multiple disruptions under his relatives' care. Apart from being diagnosed with dyslexia, he presents moderate receptive and moderate-severe expressive developmental language disorder¹. This makes it hard for him to learn in regular classes. He also exhibited self-harm behaviour.

His family background and negative early childhood experiences may have also affected his academic performance. With the support from WVS's One Life Fund, James is now able to receive dyslexia-specific remediation in the children's home to improve his reading and spelling abilities. Since he began in May 2023, he has gained more confidence in expressing himself in English and now enjoys engaging in social interactions. He has also shown a growing interest in basic reading activities independently.

¹Moderate receptive and moderate-severe expressive developmental language disorder means that the child's reading and writing age is below his biological age.