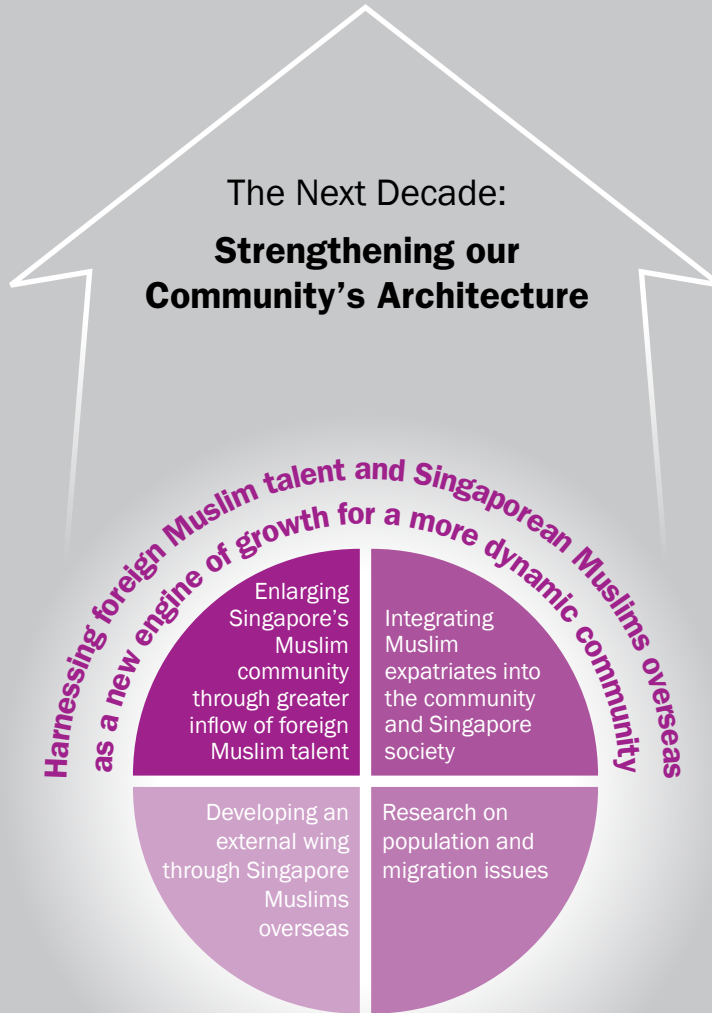




**MUSLIM
EXPATRIATES**

MUSLIM EXPATRIATES PANEL

STRATEGY AND RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE



PREAMBLE

The first decade of the new century has seen fundamental changes in Singapore's strategy for growth and survival. Growing competition as well as a declining population has seen Singapore riding aggressively on the forces of globalisation to remain relevant to the international economy. As a result, Singapore has followed an approach of creating a conducive environment for foreign talent to work and live here. The demography of the Muslim community in Singapore has correspondingly changed. Muslim foreign talent is increasingly visible. While their exact numbers cannot be ascertained, it is fair to assume that their numbers have increased. With a growing pool of Muslim professionals from abroad, the Muslim community in Singapore is in a position to harness the expertise and knowledge of the foreign talent for its own development and growth.

Moving forward, the Muslim community should leverage on Singapore's broader strategy of tapping into the international foreign talent pool in its bid to not only remain competitive, but also to grow in numbers and quality. The Muslim community must view the increasing pool of Muslim expatriates and professionals as its new engine of growth. In forging this strategy, steps must be taken to first integrate Muslim expatriates into the local Muslim community so that there is no gulf between the Muslim expatriate community and the local Muslim community. In sum, Singaporean Muslims must embark on a comprehensive and sustained strategy to harness the expertise of the Muslim expatriates while taking appropriate measures to attract more foreign Muslims to Singapore to offset the relative decline in the local Muslim population.

It is this desire to increase the quantity and quality of the Muslim community that a breakthrough strategy, the Muslim Expatriates Network (MEX), was initiated by AMP as the first step towards developing a new engine of growth and at the same time, addressing the issue of demographic changes within the community.

BACKGROUND

The desire to draw more foreign Muslim talent is in tandem with Singapore's strategy of attracting foreign talent with the aim of staying globally competitive and offsetting the country's declining population. A paper released by the National Population and Talent Division (NPTD) on 24 April 2012 stated that in scenario – where no new citizens are added and Singaporeans are not replacing themselves through procreation – the population will start shrinking in 2025. The declining population trend affects all communities – including the Malay/Muslim community.

The strategy to attract the best international talent is deemed as the most effective way by the Government in tackling the issue of declining population and ensuring that Singapore remains globally competitive. To further secure foreign talent in the long term, the Government has made application for citizenship and Permanent Resident (PR) status more easily attainable to them, in the hope that they adopt Singapore as their new home.

However, the policy has also come with its own set of challenges. The rapid influx of foreigners into Singapore has raised several concerns

amongst the local populace. The added competition from foreigners in the job market, integration issues, and the lack of differentiation in citizenship perks between immigrants and locals were expressed.

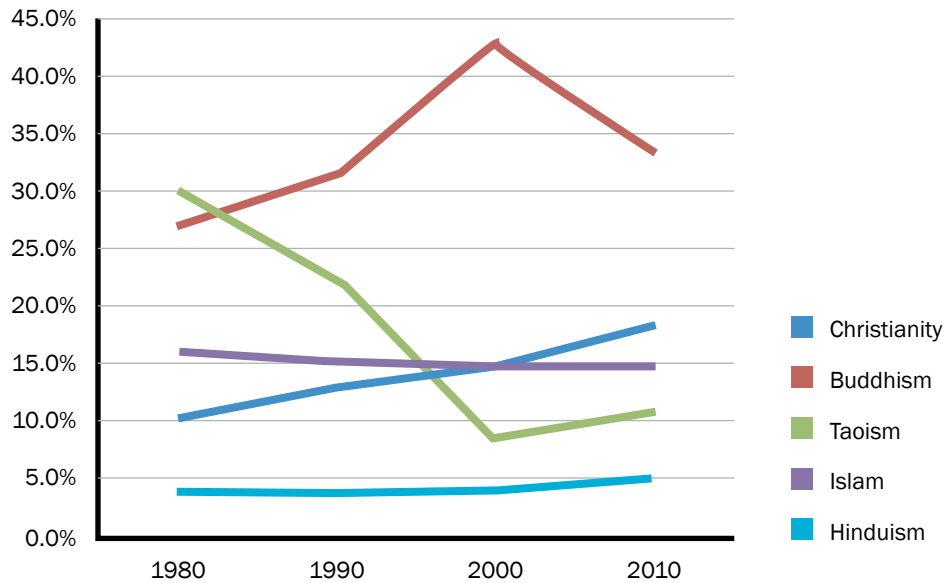
For the minority Muslim population in Singapore, there is an added concern over this policy. The policy has seen the percentage of Muslims in the country decline, raising perceived concerns over the shrinking socio-political influence of the community as well as issues over the preservation of Muslim identity.

Table 1: Resident Population Aged 15 Years and Over by Religion

	Number				Percentage			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Total	1,640,078	2,078,842	2,494,630	3,105,748	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Christianity	165,586	264,881	364,087	569,244	10.1	12.7	14.6	18.3
Buddhism	443,517	647,859	1,060,662	1,032,879	27.0	31.2	42.5	33.3
Taoism	492,044	465,150	212,344	339,149	30.0	22.4	8.5	10.8
Islam	258,122	317,937	371,660	457,435	15.7	15.3	14.9	14.7
Hinduism	58,917	77,789	99,904	157,854	3.6	3.7	4.0	5.1
Other Religions	8,971	11,604	15,879	10,891	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7
No Religion	212,921	293,622	370,094	527,553	13.0	14.1	14.8	16.9

Source: Department of Statistics Singapore, Census of Population 1980; 1990; 2000; 2010.

Graph 1: Resident Population Aged 15 Years and Over by Religion (%)



Source: Department of Statistics Singapore, Census of Population 1980; 1990; 2000; 2010.

From the 2010 Census of Population, the Muslim residential population stood at 457,435. This is an increase when compared to year 2000 (371,660). However, an examination of Graph 1 above points to a gradual decline of the Muslim population as a percentage of the national population since 1980.

The Muslim residential population makes up 14.7% of the total residential population today – a slight decrease as opposed to 14.9% in 2000. However, the decline is more noticeable when compared to 1980 and 1990: from 15.7% to 15.4%. There is thus a worry that the Muslim community might see further reductions if the current trend continues. This would ultimately alter the future social landscape of the Muslim population triggering socio-economic and political challenges.

When the figures were broken down according to ethnicity, the decline was observed across most ethnic groups (Table 2).

Table 2: Percentage of Resident Population of Muslims Aged 15 Years and Over

Religion	Total		Chinese		Malays		Indians		Others	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
Islam	14.9%	14.7%	0.3%	0.4%	99.6%	98.7%	25.6%	21.7%	22.3%	9.2%

Source: Department of Statistics Singapore, Census of Population 2010, 2011.

Inevitably, after taking into consideration the continuous growth of the residential population of Singapore, the following question needs to be asked: in terms of population growth, has the Muslim residential population benefited from the influx of foreign talent, as much as the other faith groups? Has there been enough effort to attract foreign talent from the Muslim world to seek business or career opportunities in Singapore?

Foreign Muslim Talent and the Singapore Muslim Population

According to the 2010 Census of Population, the profile of the Muslim residential population in Singapore has not changed much over the years, despite the country opening its doors wide to immigrants and foreign talent.

Table 3: Resident Population of Muslims Aged 15 Years and Over by Residential Status

Religion	Total	Singapore Citizens	Permanent Residents
Islam	457,435	432,986	24,449
Percentage	100%	94.7%	5.3%

Source: Department of Statistics Singapore, Census of Population 2010, 2011.

The residential profile of the Muslim community in 2010 showed that it is mainly made up of Singapore citizens at 94.7% (Table 3). Nearly 90% of them were citizens at birth (Table 4). The Malays continued to form the majority of the Muslim residential population at 83.5% (Table 5).

Table 4: Residential Population of Muslims Aged 15 and Over by Place of Birth (%)

Place of Birth	Muslims in Singapore
Singapore	88.12%
Malaysia	5.58%
China, HK, Macau	0.04%
India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka	3.72%
Indonesia	1.87%
Other Asian Countries	0.45%
European Countries	0.1%
USA & Canada	0.02%
Australia & New Zealand	0.03%
Others	0.06%

Source: Department of Statistics Singapore, Census of Population 2010, 2011.

Table 5: Singapore Muslim Population Aged 15 Years and Over by Ethnic Group

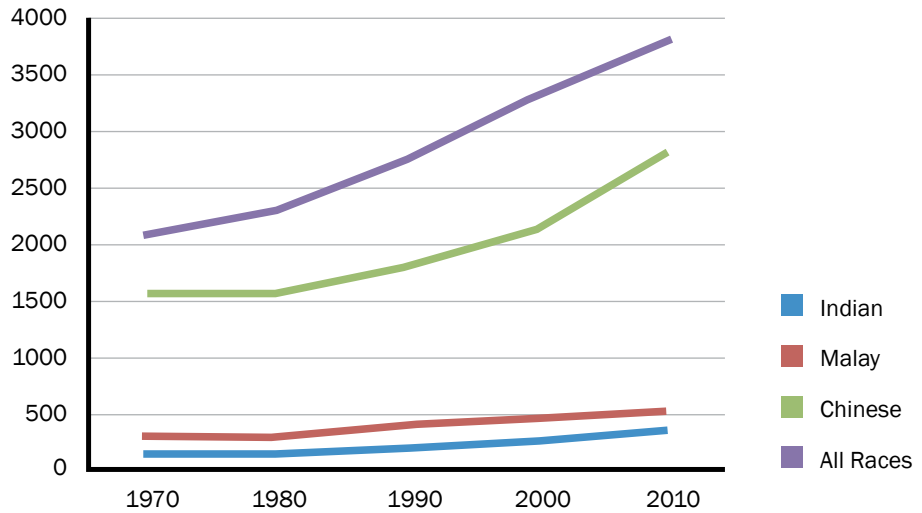
	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians	Others
Islam	457,435	8,332	382,017	57,546	9,540
	100%	1.8%	83.5%	12.6%	2.1%

Source: Department of Statistics Singapore, Census of Population 2010, 2011.

Malays: Demographic Trends and Challenges

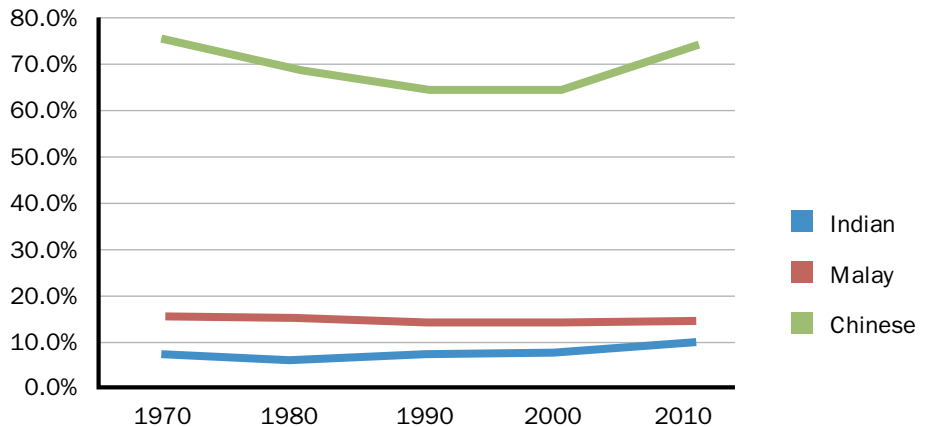
A study of the demographic trends and challenges affecting Singaporean Malays therefore is needed, as these will have an impact on the larger Muslim community, especially in terms of the religious and cultural identity of the Muslims.

Graph 2: Trend in Residential Population by Ethnic Group ('000)



Source: Department of Statistics Singapore, Census of Population 1970; 1980; 1990; 2000; 2010.

Graph 3: Trend in Residential Population (%) by Ethnic Group

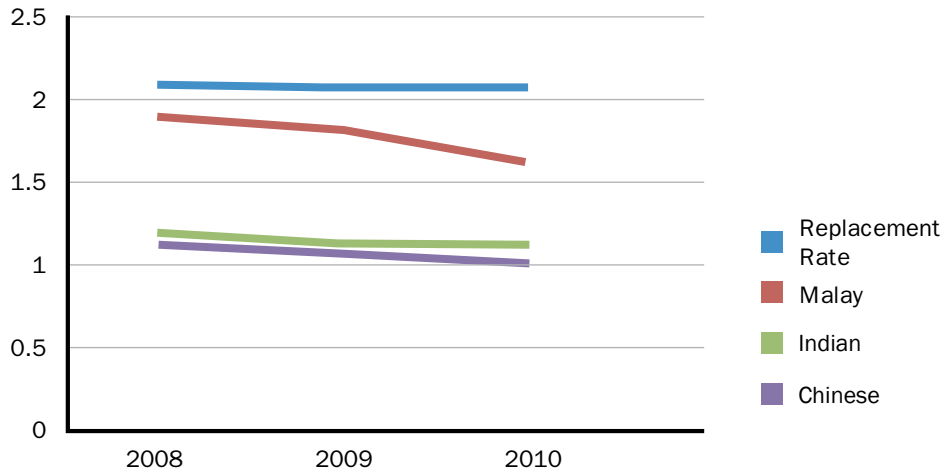


Source: Department of Statistics Singapore, Census of Population 1970; 1980; 1990; 2000; 2010.

In 2010, there were a total of 503,900 Malays in Singapore. Similar to the other ethnic groups that experienced population growth, the Malays too saw a steady increase in absolute numbers since 2000, albeit at a much lesser rate in relation to the other races.

However, in terms of proportion, the Malays actually experienced a slight decrease, from 13.9% (2000) to 13.7% (2010). The declining trend has occurred since 1970.

Graph 4: Trends in Fertility Rate by Ethnic Groups



Source: ChannelNews Asia, 2011¹.

A future challenge that the community is likely to encounter is the declining fertility rate of the Malays which is gradually matching that of the other ethnic groups. While their fertility rate is higher than the Indian and Chinese communities, it is still below the required replacement rate of 2.1 and currently stands at 1.65 compared to the Indians at 1.13 and Chinese at 1.02. A more disconcerting issue is that the Malays charted the sharpest decline in fertility rate since 2008 when compared to the other ethnic groups.

From the demographic trends identified, the following questions arise: what would be the cultural and religious impact on the Malay (and Muslim) community if this declining trend continues? Is the Malay (and the larger Muslim) community comfortable with such a demographic decline?

Foreign Muslim Talent

There is no available data to determine the exact size and profile of Muslims within the foreign talent community. It is noted, however, that there exists a number of social groups catering to the needs of the various foreign Muslim expatriate communities.

The Turkish Cultural Centre in Singapore, for example, was set up more than a decade ago to promote the culture of the Turkish community as well as inter-cultural exchanges between Singapore and Turkey. Likewise, the Singapore Bangladeshi Society and Singapore Pakistani Association were formed to promote Bangladeshi and Pakistani cultures respectively. These associations have also embarked on activities to cater to the socio-cultural needs of the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities. Another example of a cultural group is the Indonesian Muslim Association of Singapore (IMAS).

The establishment of these groups is an indicator of the strong presence of Muslims within the expatriate communities in Singapore. The associations reflect the strong socio-cultural engagements that take place within the foreign Muslim communities. An issue that could impede the integration of these communities into the larger Singaporean nation is the socialisation patterns within these communities, which appear to be limited within their own cultural groups only. The only cultural group that seems to be an exception

is the Turkish Cultural Centre that has been active in engaging other communities in Singapore. Interactions with the other communities seem limited and this means that newer platforms and spaces must be created to allow for more socialisation between the locals and expatriate Muslim communities.

Towards a More Dynamic Muslim Community

Indeed, the integration of the local Muslim community and foreign Muslim communities will result in a Muslim community that is not only larger in numbers but more affluent and dynamic thus shaping positively the future landscape of the Muslim community in Singapore. The local Muslim populace could in turn harness the talent and resources of the foreign Muslim community to assist in propelling the overall community forward. In essence, the Muslim expatriate community can be the new engine of growth for the local Muslim community.

How then, can these communities synergise and propel each other to greater heights as one cohesive community? As a start, these Muslim communities, both local and non-local, should consider expanding their common space, accommodate and eventually integrate.

Over time, the Muslim expatriate community can potentially identify themselves more closely with the local Muslim community – in the same way that the early generation of non-Malay Muslims integrated and identified themselves with the Malay/Muslim community. The glue that binds them together is their affiliation to the Islamic faith. Thus far, there has been no significant effort undertaken towards achieving this goal, making the current

proposal even more significant in the long run.

There are many factors that draw foreign Muslim talent to Singapore. For these expatriates, Singapore is a preferred destination to pursue career or business opportunities. Likewise, many feel that they are able to observe and preserve their Islamic religious practices and cultural lifestyles. The government's attempts to attract investments from the Middle East and other countries, a wide variety of *halal*-certified eateries, mosques and numerous other Islamic institutions providing a myriad of services that serve the needs of Muslims are some of the Muslim-friendly benefits available here. Moreover, Singapore has a well-developed infrastructure to facilitate business and commerce.

To the local Muslim community, embracing the presence of foreign Muslims will allow them to experience new cultural interactions within the Muslim community. This could catalyse a shift of mindsets and attitudes in both positive and constructive ways. As a potential engine of growth for the local Muslim community, the talent and expertise of Muslim expatriates should be harnessed such that over the longer term, the Muslim community will become more competitive, dynamic and relevant in the Singapore of today.

The implementation of the above idea can only occur through the formation of a new platform aimed at bringing local and expatriate Muslim communities together in sharing a common cause of moving the Singaporean Muslim community forward. Tentatively termed as the *Muslim Expatriates Network (MEX)*, the platform would comprise members who are professionals from both the expatriate and local Muslim community. It is hoped that this platform will act as a catalyst for the expatriates to act as a new engine of growth for the larger Muslim community in Singapore.

The strategy can be scaled up gradually to involve more players and a wider network over time.

The efforts to realise this aspiration should also be extended beyond Singapore. Through MEX, efforts will be taken to develop a *consortium of networks* to be created globally and aimed at connecting Muslims from around the world to Singapore Muslims. For Singaporean Muslims who are residing overseas, the MEX network can be a channel for them to stay rooted to Singapore and remain aware of developments within the Muslim community in Singapore. For Muslims from other parts of the world who may wish to seek opportunities in Singapore, the MEX network can be a source of information. These channels will also act as global tentacles, scouting and attracting bright Muslim talents internationally to come to Singapore and contribute in creating a global and dynamic Muslim community in the country.

Sources:

¹S Ramesh, "MM Lee weighs in on Singapore's record-low fertility rates", 18 January 2011, <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/singaporelocalnews/view/1105496/1/.html>

STRATEGY

Harnessing foreign Muslim talent and Singaporean Muslims overseas as a new engine of growth for a more dynamic community

On the positive side, there is an inflow of Muslim expatriates which has yet to be channeled positively for the benefit of the local Muslim community.

While the number of professionals within the Malay/Muslim community is growing, an increase in the number of Muslim professionals will accelerate the community's development and progress. At the same time, the growing numbers of local Muslim professionals and students overseas can be turned into potential seeds for an "external wing" or representatives of the Singapore Muslim community over time.

The Muslim community presently does not have a comprehensive strategy to address this new challenge – a decrease in its percentage vis-à-vis the other communities. MEX is a breakthrough strategy – the first step of a more comprehensive plan to address the community's population slide. Apart from attracting more Muslim expatriates and keeping local Muslims rooted to Singapore, the community needs to also address other issues that can impinge on their overall population numbers in the future, such as the growing trend of unmarried singles, late marriages and lower marital fertility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The inflow of foreign Muslim talent is a productive resource for the economic, financial and cultural well-being of the local Muslim community in Singapore. In order to harness the positive strengths of the Muslim expatriates to act as a new engine of growth for the Malay/Muslim community and to promote the integration between local and expatriate Muslim communities, the following recommendations are proposed:

Recommendation 1: Enlarging Singapore's Muslim community through greater inflow of foreign Muslim talent

This recommendation is expected to be implemented through the following initiatives:

- ***Build a consortium of networks locally and globally to promote inflow of Muslim talent to Singapore***

This consortium of networks will provide linkages among Muslims in Singapore, local Muslims overseas, and Muslims from other regions such as Southeast Asia, the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent. It is imperative that awareness is created about MEX as well as its objectives and role. This could encourage foreign Muslim talent to consider Singapore as a possible location to work or park their businesses. It will also help address the declining proportion of the Muslim population in Singapore.

MEX has consulted the different Muslim expatriate communities to ascertain their level of interest and willingness to participate in this initiative. This cooperation will assist in broadcasting the MEX

initiatives to interested Muslims in their respective countries of origin. MEX seeks to organise more discussions with these organisations representing the different Muslim expatriate communities in Singapore with a view to getting them on board to devise ways of attracting foreign Muslims to come and settle in Singapore.

For a start, an initial group has been formed as part of a Consortium of Strategic Partners. This consortium is intended to grow gradually over time to expand the networks locally and overseas.

- **Set up a Government-supported MEX Scholarship Fund to attract Muslims from the region and globally, to pursue tertiary education in Singapore**

MEX is also planning to set up a Scholarship Fund to attract foreign Muslim students to study in Singapore universities and colleges. These scholarships can be modeled along the line of the government's ASEAN Scholarship programme which has been successful in attracting talented foreign students from ASEAN countries to Singapore to study and subsequently work in Singapore. Many of these students eventually became citizens. The community's Scholarship Fund will be targeted towards attracting Muslims from Southeast Asia - although this is not exclusive - and talented Muslim students from other parts of the Muslim World can apply for the scholarship as well.

As part of this initiative, MEX will raise its own funds. MEX has been in discussions with the government on the possibility of securing matching grants for the funds raised by MEX.

Recommendation 2: Integrating Muslim expatriates into the community and Singapore society

This recommendation is expected to be implemented through the following initiatives:

- **Build an online portal for Muslim expatriates for their social networking and to meet their religious, community and professional needs, while facilitating their integration with the local Muslim community**

This portal will provide a comprehensive pool of information for Muslim permanent residents (PRs), new citizens and foreign Muslims living, working and studying in Singapore. For the Muslim expatriates, the portal will facilitate their initial move to Singapore. Consequently, this portal will provide a platform for them to eventually interact, integrate and share their experiences, professional expertise and concerns with the Muslim community in Singapore. Through this effort, an online bond among the different communities can be forged to develop a vibrant and cohesive Muslim community.

The portal seeks to promote Singapore as an attractive location to conduct businesses, organise cultural activities, further one's education and build a new home for foreign Muslim students and professionals.

This portal could also be a link with Muslims overseas as the portal will provide them with information about Singapore that they could consider in their decision making process should they wish to ultimately make Singapore their home.

- **Involve top Muslim expatriates to act as role models for the local community**

Muslim expatriates who are CEOs and top executives can be invited to give talks and workshops on career and skills development. Such senior expatriates can also act as mentors to aspiring young Muslims in Singapore.

Recommendation 3: Developing an external wing through Singapore Muslims overseas

This recommendation is expected to be implemented through the following initiatives:

- **Establish MEX Chapters in countries or cities where Singapore Malays/Muslims have migrated, study and/or work**

The first MEX Chapter has been seeded in Australia where many Malays/Muslims from Singapore have chosen to migrate to, with Melbourne acting as the hub to network with Muslims from Singapore, both former citizens as well as those who are now residents in Australia. A local Melbourne-based organisation of Singapore Malays/Muslims is collaborating with MEX to develop a network of Singapore Muslims in Australia, extending to Sydney, Perth and other cities where there are Muslims from Singapore. In line with MEX's strategy of developing a "consortium of networks", the plan is to replicate the Melbourne model to other parts of the world where there are Muslims from Singapore, such as the UK and Middle East. In the long-term, we hope to see this network of networks grow to become the external wing of Singapore's Muslim community.

The objective of this external wing is to develop a two-way process of interaction for mutual benefit. On the one hand, the external wing will allow the Singapore Muslims overseas to maintain contact and family ties with the Muslim community in Singapore for emotional, cultural and religious reasons. On the other hand, the external wing will allow the Muslim community in Singapore to maintain contact with the Singapore Muslims overseas so that they can have a channel to continue contributing to the wellbeing of the community in Singapore. This is especially so with those who have given up their Singapore citizenship. Those who are still Singapore citizens can perhaps be persuaded to retain their status, given the demographic trends affecting the community in Singapore. It must be stated that this strategy of developing an external wing is complementary. The main strategy to address the demographic trends will have to tackle the fundamental problem of the population decline of the Malay component of the Muslim community.

MEX will also leverage on Singaporean Muslim student communities abroad who form an important component, being the younger generation of the Muslim community. One such group is the Singapore Muslim Students Overseas (SMSO). Their partnership with MEX will provide assistance to local Muslims studying overseas so as to strengthen the bond with them as well as the sense of a Singaporean Muslim identity. This will hopefully persuade young Singaporean Muslims overseas to eventually return to Singapore and/or at least not to give up their citizenship. Those who chose to remain overseas will be encouraged to help develop the community's external wing.

MEX takes the view that migration – whether into or out of Singapore – is a trend that must be taken as a fact of the globalised world today. Singapore Muslims who choose to remain overseas can still be seen as an asset to the local Muslim community even if they are no longer Singaporean. The ideal is that they remain Singaporean even as they reside and pursue their livelihoods overseas.

Recommendation 4: Research on population and migration issues

This recommendation is expected to be implemented through the following initiatives:

- **Study the demographic and population trends of the local Muslim community**

Research must be undertaken to better comprehend demographic and population trends affecting the local Muslim community. Studies must be commissioned to keep track of issues impacting the local Muslims and Muslim expatriate communities. This initiative should also study factors that push local Muslims to emigrate.

There is a need to have a deeper appreciation of the expectations and perceptions of the local and foreign Muslim community in Singapore. This will enable MEX to develop further strategies and to engage in dialogues with relevant agencies to address the various population and demographic trends affecting the Muslim community.