THE NEXT DECADE: STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY'S ARCHITECTURE

THE Malay/Muslim community (MMC) has made strides over the last 20 years. It can take pride in its many achievements.

The MMC has seen improvement in educational attainment, household income, representation in higher value-added jobs. The MMC has reduced the rates of divorces and minor marriages.

Underlying these improvements has been a slew of programmes for the MMC run by Malay/Muslim organisations (MMOs) and the State. The Community Leaders' Forum (CLF) was formed by the Malay political leaders after the 2nd National Convention of Malay/Muslim Professionals in 2000. This was seen as an attempt to coordinate leadership within the MMC.

Looking at AMP alone, the figures in the table below show the extent of intervention efforts that have been made for the MMC since the formation of AMP 20 years ago:

Number of persons benefitting from AMP's programmes and services: **264,416**

Number of clients who participated in AMP programmes:

Workers training / skills upgrading – **32,785**

Education enrichment – **66,634**

Youth development – **23,193**

Helpline – **32,128**

Parenting and family education – **39,485**

Disadvantaged families assistance – **35,830**

Others (counselling, seminars, volunteers training, etc.) – **34,361**

Total amount spent on beneficiaries:
$75.2 million (including MERCU programmes)
$49.2 million (excluding MERCU programmes)

Total amount spent on various programmes and services:

Social services and community outreach: **$24.2 million**

Research: **$3 million**

Tuition and enrichment services: **$14 million**

Childcare, preschool and student care programmes (MERCU): **$26 million**

Workers training: **$8 million**

Extrapolating these figures, the amount of resources put in by the State and voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) that benefit the MMC, directly or indirectly, must have been a very substantial amount.

There is certainly no shortage of resources available to the MMC. The issue then becomes – how can we best allocate resources to get the most for our community, as it strives to become a Community of Excellence?

Absolute vs Relative Performance

Much of the positive metrics within the MMC are derived where we benchmark the community now against where it was 10 or 20 years ago *(absolute performance)*.

The reality, however, is that there are gaps between the MMC and other communities in Singapore *(relative performance)*. Some of these gaps are, in fact, widening.

Should we worry about *relative performance*?

In a fiercely competitive environment that is Singapore, it is the *relative performance* which is the more relevant metric.

The MMC has to compete with others for admission to the best schools and tertiary institutions, for scholarships and for jobs.

Singapore will become more competitive. As the most globalised country in the world and with a stated policy of attracting talented immigrants, the level of competition will increase. In a form of virtuous

(or vicious?) cycle, schools compete for the best students and companies compete for the best workers. On the flip side, students compete for scholarships and admission into the best schools or companies.

The MMC finds itself in a position where it is no longer competing with the Chinese or Indian communities in Singapore. The MMC now has to benchmark itself against the best global talents who apply for jobs in Singapore.

Is the MMC ready to do so, in this fiercely competitive world?

The reality, however, is that we are still a community in transition. The MMC has to address the gaps that it has with other communities. The effects of these gaps, some of which are long standing, become more significant in this new landscape. The MMC and its leaders must have the moral courage to accept the reality of these gaps and that there are real risks unless these gaps are promptly addressed.

What are then the more significant gaps that the MMC has to address?

The Demographic Challenge

There have been key demographic changes affecting Singapore and the MMC. These are largely brought about by immigration policies designed to compensate for the shortfall in fertility rates of specific communities in Singapore.

The MMC finds itself in a declining percentage in Singapore's resident population – it currently stands at 13.4% of the Singapore resident population, compared to 13.9% in 2000 (Graph 1).

Graph 1: Ethnic Composition of Resident Population
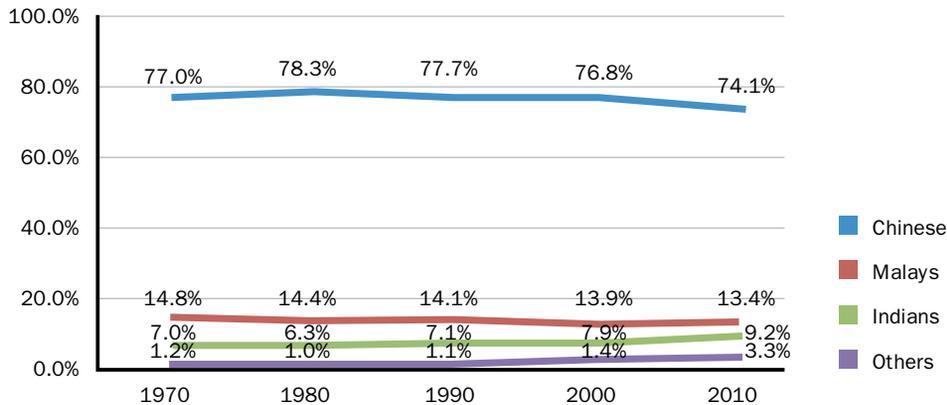
Source: Department of Statistics Singapore, Singapore Census of Population 2010: Advanced Census Release, 2010.

The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of the MMC has reduced. While the MMC has higher TFRs compared to other communities, its TFR of 1.82 is below the replacement rate of 2.1 (Table 1). In other words, the MMC population is shrinking (assuming there is no immigration of Malays/Muslims into Singapore).

Table 1: Total Fertility Rate by Ethnic Group

Per Female

Year	Total*	Chinese	Malays	Indians
1990	1.83	1.65	2.69	1.89
2000	1.60	1.43	2.54	1.59
2005	1.26	1.10	2.03	1.29
2006	1.28	1.11	2.02	1.27
2007	1.29	1.14	1.94	1.25
2008	1.28	1.14	1.91	1.19
2009	1.22	1.08	1.82	1.14
* Includes "Others" ethnic group.				

Source: Department of Statistics Singapore, Population Trends 2010, 2010.

Turning to immigration trends, it is clear from the graph below that there has been greater percentage of non-resident population in Singapore. This is not surprising, given the government's stated immigration policies.

Graph 2: Population of Singapore by Constituent Group
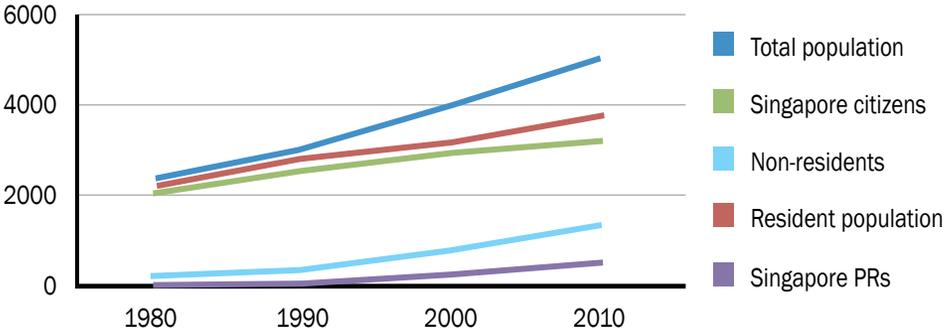
Source: Department of Statistics Singapore, Population Trends 2010, 2010.

In 2010, only 5.45% of Singapore Permanent Residents are Muslims as compared to 16.3% in 1990 (Graph 3). This is noteworthy. We can infer an immigration policy that is geared towards making up shortfall of specific communities, based on their TFRs.

Graph 3: Proportion of Muslims in Singapore
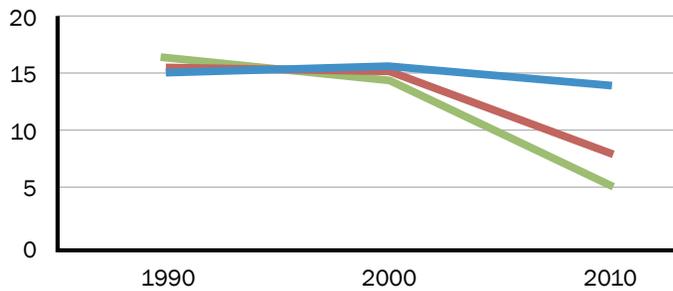
	1990	2000	2010
▬ Citizens	15.4	15.45	14.2
▬ Resident population	15.58	14.9	8.11
▬ PR	16.3	14.73	5.45

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

What are the implications then for the MMC?

The proportion of Malays or Muslims in Singapore remains an important issue. The demographic proportion of a community has a correlation to its political significance.

It is clear that the policy of immigration is a given. The issue then is whether the MMC should lose out from this initiative. Why should the MMC not attract Muslim talents from elsewhere who can contribute to the community and to Singapore?

There are benefits in attracting Muslims from the immediate region and beyond. Muslim talents can contribute to the MMC in a multitude of ways (e.g. through ideas, energies or even monetary contributions in the form of *zakat*), can serve as role models for the MMC, and can open up opportunites by facilitating internships and connections to various industries.

At the same time, it is important for Muslim immigrants to be integrated into Singapore society. We note that no Muslim organisation has tapped on the Community Integration Fund. We think this is a gap and this should be remedied.

The demographic issue presents a new challenge for the MMC to address.
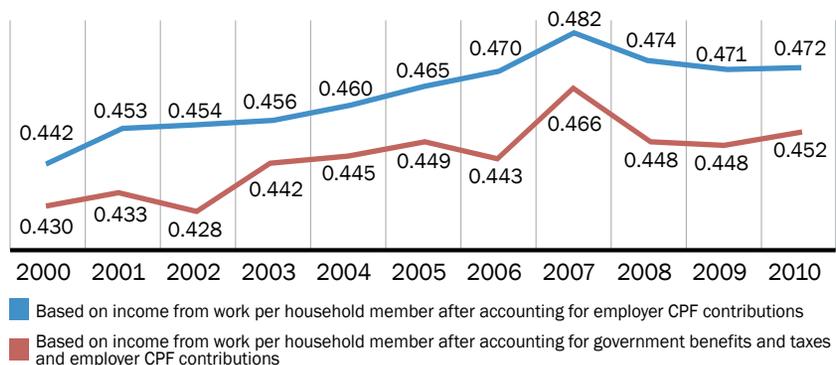
Gini in a Bottle

Singapore's core ethos has been to strive for economic growth, to attract the best talents worldwide and to reward them.

This has, however, come at a cost.

According to a report by the United Nations Human Development Report in 2009, Singapore, the Gini index lies between 0 and 100. A value of 0 represents absolute equality and 100 absolute inequality. Singapore, according to the 2009 UN report, had a Gini coefficient of 42.5, exceeded only by Hong Kong (43.4) among the countries with very high human development.

The following chart also shows a steady increase of the Gini coefficient in Singapore (based on an axis of 0-1).

Graph 4: Gini Coefficient among Employed Households

Blue line (Based on income from work per household member after accounting for employer CPF contributions): 0.442 (2000), 0.453 (2001), 0.454 (2002), 0.456 (2003), 0.460 (2004), 0.465 (2005), 0.470 (2006), 0.482 (2007), 0.474 (2008), 0.471 (2009), 0.472 (2010)

Red line (Based on income from work per household member after accounting for government benefits and taxes and employer CPF contributions): 0.430 (2000), 0.433 (2001), 0.428 (2002), 0.442 (2003), 0.445 (2004), 0.449 (2005), 0.443 (2006), 0.466 (2007), 0.448 (2008), 0.448 (2009), 0.452 (2010)

■ Based on income from work per household member after accounting for employer CPF contributions

■ Based on income from work per household member after accounting for government benefits and taxes and employer CPF contributions
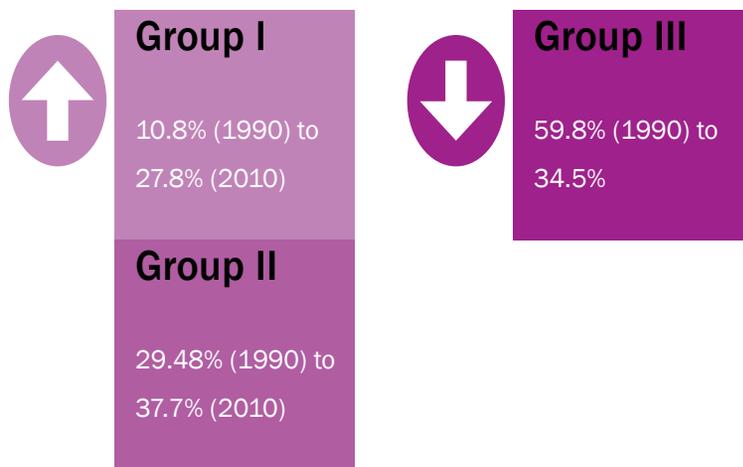
Source: Department of Statistics Singapore, Key Household Income Trends 2010, 2010.

This presents a new social challenge of a widening stratification of Singapore society.

The MMC finds itself in a vulnerable position, being over-represented in the lower-income level jobs. The easy availability of cheaper foreign labour also presents competition to the Malay lower-waged worker. There is a risk that wages will be further depressed.

The following graph shows that while Malays have more representation now (2010) in Group 1 jobs (Administrative/Managerial, Professional/Technical, Technicians/Associates), we are still over-represented (34.5%) in Group III jobs (Production, related, other).

Graph 5: Occupational Distribution Changes

Group I

10.8% (1990) to 27.8% (2010)

Group II

29.48% (1990) to 37.7% (2010)

Group III

59.8% (1990) to 34.5%

Group I: Administrative/Managerial, Professional/Technical, Technicians/Associates

Group II: Clerical, related, Sales/services

Group III: Production, related, other

Source: G Shantakumar, Singapore Malays in The New Millennium: Demographics and Developmental Perspectives, revised 2012.

Another metric worth noting is the increasing unemployment rate among Malays aged 40 and above (5.7% compared to the national average of 4.2% in 2010), primarily due to skills mismatch and lower educational profile.

Table 2: Unemployment Rates (%)

Year	Total	Malays
1957	5.2	6.6
1966	9.3	n.a.
1970	4.5	15.5
1980	3.4	3.6
1990	1.7	1.9
2000	6.0	7.3
2010	4.2	5.7

Source: G Shantakumar, Singapore Malays in The New Millennium: Demographics and Developmental Perspectives, revised 2012.

The MMC must immediately address its competitiveness to avail itself opportunities to ride the wave of Singapore's growth, and not risk drowning in the abyss of underperformance.

Economic Standing

The average Malay/Muslim household now earns more compared to what it did 20 years ago.

However, in relative terms, the income gap between Malay/Muslim households and other communities has actually widened. In light of inflation and the high cost of living, this could impact the financial standing of Malay/Muslim families.

Table 3: Monthly Household Income from work by Ethnic Group of Head among Resident Households

|	2000 ($)	2010 ($)	Average Annual Growth (%)	
			Normal	Real[1]
Average Household Income				
Total	4,988	7,214	3.8	2.1
Chinese	5,258	7,326	3.4	1.7
Malays	3,151	4,575	3.8	2.1
Indians	4,623	7,664	5.2	3.5
Median Household Income				
Total	3,638	5,000	3.2	1.6
Chinese	3,880	5,100	2.8	1.1
Malays	2,709	3,844	3.6	1.9
Indians	3,438	5,370	4.6	2.9

[1] The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is used as deflator to compute real change.

Source: Department of Statistics Singapore, Key Findings on Household Size, 2010.

Education – Excellence or Exasperation?

In relation to education, Malay students have improved significantly in *absolute terms* – even though there appears to have been plateaus in certain metrics. This is generally the case across the board, as evident below:
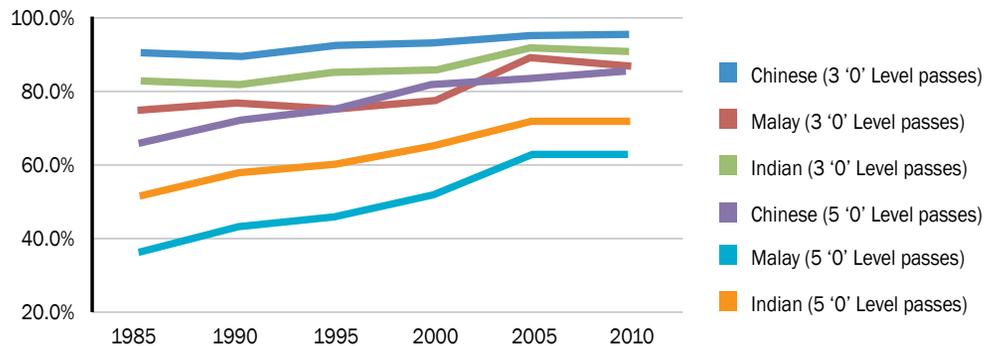
Graph 6: Malay Students' Educational Performance (1985 - 2010)
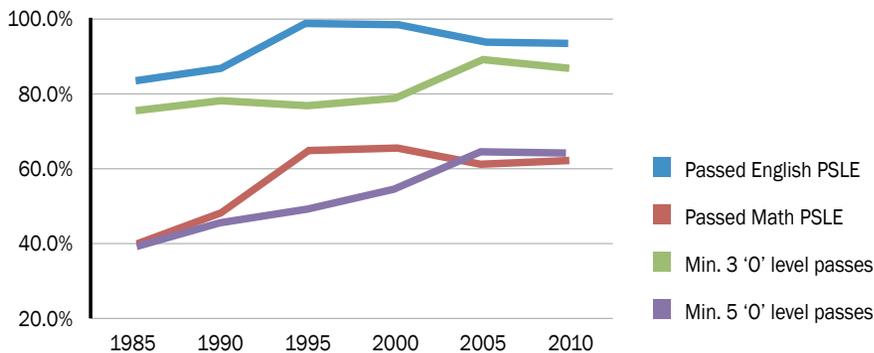
Source: Ministry of Education, 1985 - 2010.

The sad reality, however, is Malay students are still in "catch-up" mode in trying to close the gaps with other communities *(relative performance)*. Generally, the performance of Malay students in the key national examinations is below national benchmarks, as illustrated in the following graph relating to GCE 'O' Level examinations.

Graph 7: Percentage of Pupils with At Least 3 or 5 'O' Level Passes by Ethnic Group

Legend:
- Chinese (3 'O' Level passes)
- Malay (3 'O' Level passes)
- Indian (3 'O' Level passes)
- Chinese (5 'O' Level passes)
- Malay (5 'O' Level passes)
- Indian (5 'O' Level passes)

Source: Ministry of Education, 1985 - 2010.

Malay students are still over represented in the Normal (Academic) and Normal (Technical) streams as well as in Learning Support Programmes (Graph 8).
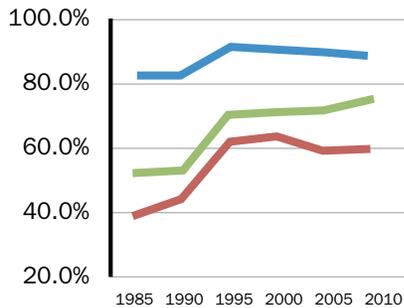
Graph 8: % Malay Students in Learning Support Programmes
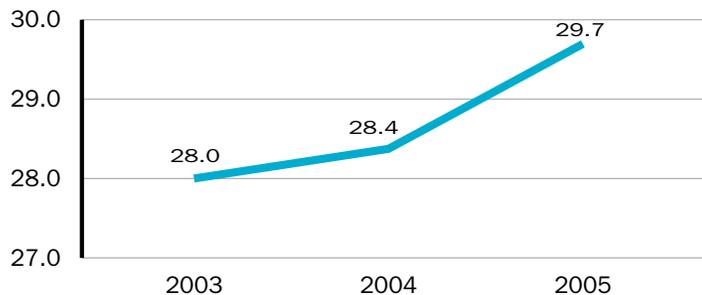

Source: Berita Harian, 21 June 2005.

In relation to Mathematics, the gap between Malay and non-Malay students at PSLE and 'O' Level examinations is still significant, as shown in the graphs below:

Graph 9: Percentage of PSLE Students Scoring A* - C in Standard Mathematics by Ethnic Group

Source: Ministry of Education, 1985 - 2010.

Graph 10: Percentage of Students Passing Mathematics at 'O' Level by Ethnic Group
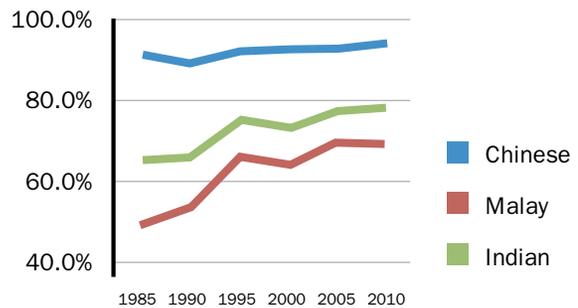
Source: Ministry of Education, 1985 - 2010.

The other metric of concern relates to admission to universities. Here, we see that the number of university qualified Malays has not improved significantly since 2005, hovering at around the 5% level. This contrasts with 22.8 % at the national level.

Table 4: Percentage of Highest Qualification Attained by Malays in Comparison to All Races

Highest Qualification Attained	Malays (%)				All Races (%)			
	1990	2000	2005	2010	1990	2000	2005	2010
Below Secondary	69.3	50.1	30.4	37.0	58.3	42.6	25.8	32.4
Secondary	25.8	32.1	35.4	27.1	26.5	24.6	23.3	18.9
Post-Secondary	4.4	15.8	29.2	30.8	10.8	21.0	28.6	25.9
Secondary*	-	10.6	-	19.2	-	9.9	-	11.1
Diploma**	-	5.1	-	11.6	-	11.1	-	14.8
University	0.6	2.0	5.1	5.1	4.5	11.7	22.4	22.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: G Shantakumar, Singapore Malays in The New Millennium: Demographics and Developmental Perspectives, revised 2012.

*Note: * Non-tertiary, ** includes Professional Qualifications*
All figures exclude students who are currently enrolled.
Figures for post-secondary include polytechnic graduates.

The grim reality for our students is that our education system is becoming even more competitive, especially with the influx of foreign students.

Our educational attainment remains a challenge. Considering that education is the key to social mobility, the community needs to devise strategies to hasten the progress of our students closing the gaps.

Leadership, Civil Society and Young Professionals

The political landscape has evolved significantly over the last 20 years.

The watershed May 2011 General Election (GE) brought to the fore the new expectations of the Singapore electorate. Singaporeans are not shy to demand more involvement, transparency and engagement in policy making. Singaporeans air their criticisms openly.

Singaporeans demand a diversity of opinions, in the belief that this will bring about the best solutions for Singapore and Singaporeans. The May 2011 GE also saw the increasing prominence of alternative news media sites and the increasing role of social media in reflecting the pulse of the electorate.

The new climate makes it conducive for civil society to grow in Singapore.

Another issue that needs revisiting is the approach taken in relation to issues faced by the community. The current paradigm is that a lot of the issues are seen as community issues and addressed primarily by community-based VWOs. The systemic issue is that

community-based VWOs may not be fully resourced to understand and adequately address the complexity of issues. Also, these issues cut across various communities and should be addressed as national issues.

AMP has previously called upon the State to play a strategic leadership role in addressing issues as national issues and VWOs can play a partnership role as outreach agents.

It is perhaps also timely for MMOs to look at issues beyond that of the MMC and enter into the national civil society space. There is no reason why MMOs cannot participate in national issues, especially where these national issues have a bearing on the community.

The MMC has a relatively large youth base. This must be seen as an asset rather than a liability. We need to intensify efforts to tap on young and emerging professionals to empower them to think of issues affecting the community and to get them to be engaged in the community. In a community which does not have a large pool of professionals, we need to tap on every available resource. We should see our young emerging as the next generation of leaders of the community and provide an appropriate platform to empower and excite them about giving back to the community.

The Convention Theme – the Need to Strengthen our Architecture

The MMC has yet to arrive. While it is headed in the right direction, the MMC remains a community in transition. Whilst we acknowledge the many achievements that the MMC has achieved, we must have the courage to face up to and confront the gaps.

These gaps will take time to close up. However, we need to hasten our approach, given that the effect of the gaps will be more stark in this increasingly competitive, stratified and globalised environment.

The Convention Panels have spent more than two years critically examining the gaps faced by the MMC and to think of breakthrough strategies where possible. The Panels have looked at existing programmes, gone through robust discussions with various community stakeholders and leaders and hope that these strategies will further propel the community into its Vision of one of excellence.

It is fair to say that an architecture has already been set in place over the last 20 years by the political leadership, MMOs and the community. It has yielded results. The MMC has benefitted.

The overarching theme is one of Strengthening our Community's Architecture. Whilst the basic framework is in place, we need to tweak components of this architecture to further thrust the community forward.

It is our hope that the Panel strategies will strengthen the community's architecture.

These specific Panel strategies are set out in the ensuing chapters of this journal.

The following chart in the next page sets out a broad overview of the strategies proposed by the Panels, clustered according to platforms, institutions, financial networks, programmes and an integrated research approach. The chart also sets out the outcomes and the outreach of the strategies.

	STRATEGIES	OUTCOMES	OUTREACH
Strengthening our Community's Architecture	**Platforms** • ComFor • YEMP Forum • MEX • Platform for non-tertiary youths	• Civil Society Participation/Active Citizenry • Think Tank/Advocacy • Engaged and Empowered Young Professionals • Dynamic Community	• Individuals • Parents • Young and Emerging Professionals • Families • MMOs • Micro businesses • Community investors • Singaporean community • Foreign Muslims • New Muslim migrants • Singaporean Malay/Muslims based offshore
	Institutions • Parent School • Debt Advisory Centre • Institute of Social Action Workers	• Robust & Resilient Families • Adequate and professionally equipped social action workers • Financially sound families	
	Networks • Micro Business Fund	• Financially sound families • Emerging micro businesses	
	Programmes • Family and community engagement • Graduates in Every Family • Motivated Learners • Youth-Centric Islamic Programme • Promote community health/ mental wellness • Integration programme • Scholarship for foreign Muslim students	• Empowered Parents • Educationally Excellent, Socially Progressive • Religiously connected youths • Physical and Mental wellness	
	Integrated Research Network • Education • Islam • Financial standing • Social • Perception Survey	• Integrated research approach/ perception survey backing for strategies	

In summary, it is our hope that the strategies will:

• Strengthen civil society leadership within the MMC and the broader Singapore society;

• Encourage MMOs to approach issues from national perspectives;

• Encourage thought leadership and advocacy of issues through various platforms;

• Foster more engaged and empowered young professionals who can contribute back to the community and the broader Singapore society;

- Encourage foreign Muslim talents and integrating them into the MMC and Singapore society, so that they may contribute to the betterment of the community;
- Strengthen the family structure – by empowering parents and by fostering their financial soundness;
- Motivate our children and their families to strive for excellence in education, in order to make them more competitive;
- Increase the pool of professional social workers to address various social issues within the MMC;
- Set up a micro business fund to encourage the further growth of micro businesses;
- Engage our youths in Islam to provide them a core spiritual ballast; and
- Provide an integrated research approach to support the various strategies.

It is our hope that the strategies can collectively increase the community's competitiveness, as it strives to achieve excellence and take its pride of place in Singapore and the global arena.

Mohd Nizam Ismail
Chairman
Convention Steering Committee
3rd National Convention of Singapore Muslim Professionals