



SYNERGY

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Beyond Social Services works with numerous volunteer groups to offer outreach solutions to their young members. The synergy between Beyond and one such group, Beautiful People, is benefiting teenage girls on probation.

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o curb delinquency among disadvantaged youth, Beyond Social Services (Beyond) believes in restorative justice through youth engagement. The VWO has been working with youth since 1969, and its aim is simple: to reach out to young people in as many diverse ways as possible.

TAPPING THE COMMUNITY

Beyond runs programmes to reduce delinquency among children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. Rooted in community involvement, the VWO is always looking for volunteers to serve troubled children and youth. One way it achieves this is by partnering like-minded groups that offer unique initiatives.

Beautiful People started in 2006 as a mentorship programme for teenage girls as an alternative to the mostly boy-related programmes that were widely available. The idea was for women to act as big sisters to the girls, many of whom lack maternal or sisterly figures. "When a professional woman meets with our girls from completely different backgrounds, they model new types of behaviours and beliefs, giving them new perspectives on life," noted Ms Yong Yoek Ling, a volunteer with Beautiful



Beautiful People comes under Beyond's umbrella of volunteer work programmes

People since 2008. Its signature programme offers life skills training, financial education and exposure to job opportunities to the girls introduced by Beyond as well as residents of other girls' homes.

However, mentoring alone is no guarantee that these girls will get their issues resolved. The Big Sisters have to continuously earn the trust of the Little Sisters, something the older ladies find rewarding: of the 120 active volunteers, more than 10% have been with the group for at least five years. "We value the time, talent and heart put in by the volunteers," added Ms Yong.

GROUP AUTONOMY

While Beyond acts as a facilitator by referring girls, Beautiful

People is given autonomy to plan its own initiatives. "Beyond's role is not to colonise volunteer groups. They can do a lot in the communities with their autonomy, more so than Beyond, whose hands are sometimes tied," said Ms T Ranganayaki, Deputy Executive Director at Beyond.

In return, Beyond gains from Beautiful People a framework for a workable volunteer recruitment. The engagement model is such that even when volunteers are not suited to be mentors, it finds other roles for them, for example, as trainers, facilitators or event organisers. "There are many other roles that the volunteers can play in their work with our members," Ms Ranganayaki noted.