

**Berita Harian Online (19 July 2021), "[Speech therapist helps children with special needs](#)"**

For almost eight years, Ms Sethulakshmi Puzhekadavil Babu assisted children with additional needs in Singapore who faced speech issues.

The speech therapist has been serving the community for five and a half years, under AWWA's Community Integration Service programme, which provides support for children with additional needs who attend mainstream schools to allow them to adapt to the school environment and their surroundings.

Before this, Lakshmi was previously employed with Metta School, a special education school in Singapore. Sharing more, Lakshmi, 34 years old, shared that she moved to Singapore from Kerala, India, upon completion of her postgraduate degree in 2013.

"A year before that, I got married, and my husband was already working in Singapore at that point of time. Upon my arrival, I began looking for employment opportunities. I was interested in joining the social services sector, and wanted to help children with additional needs. I then submitted my application to a few different organisations", she shared via e-mail.

A mother of two sons, aged six and two years old, she was conferred a Masters Degree and Bachelor's Degree in Speech Pathology from Kerala University and Mysore University before arriving in Singapore.

"Although I had to leave my family and friends, I am thankful to gain employment in Singapore, at a workplace that provides such a supportive environment. Doing something that is of interest to me is very important to me, and my family members are also happy with my situation", she added.

Today, her tasks and responsibilities include preparing speech therapy for children with additional needs at their schools or in their homes. She also works closely with parents, teachers and different agencies which are providing assistance to these children.

She shared that her experience has been positive thus far, and that she considers Singapore as her second home.

"The culture, community and Government here are great. Although I was initially worried about working abroad, I have received much goodwill here, be it from my colleagues or the clients and families I am supporting. It may also be because I am working in the social services sector, where love and goodwill is a 'common language' that is practiced throughout the sector, regardless of nationality or culture", she shared.

Asked if she had faced any negative experiences while at work, Lakshmi shared that none came to mind. Instead, she had garnered many positive experiences from working with children, their families and schools.

"Families here do not interact with me based on their presumptions of me as a foreigner. They view me, and other foreign therapists, as people who want to help and support them, and I do my utmost best to do so for any family", she added.

Outside of her work experiences, Lakshmi and family have been residing in Singapore for seven years, and do not find it difficult to adapt to the local community.

“My husband moved to Singapore in 2005 for his studies, so he has helped me a lot in understanding the different cultural aspects here”, shared Lakshmi, who added that her colleagues had also helped her greatly in this matter.

Her two children attend local preschools and actively participate in various activities at the community club near their home, including cultural festivities and Children’s Day celebrations.

Sharing that she is grateful for her positive experiences here in Singapore, Lakshmi said, “Singaporeans are kind in their interactions with foreign workers. I have never faced a situation where I was mistreated because I am a foreigner. Instead, the people around me have helped me greatly in adjusting to the changes here, and it has been a wonderful experience for me”.