

As an agency under the Ministry of National Development, the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) is driven by a purposeful mission to shape our nation's built environment.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

by Julailah Wahid



Singapore has come a long way from being a rural and congested town. Over the years, our country has progressed into a highly urbanised city with world-class infrastructure. Amidst this rapid urbanisation, our buildings play a vital role in ensuring sustainable growth for land-scarce Singapore.

In a bid to develop a future-ready built environment for Singapore, BCA has launched several initiatives, such as the BCA Green Mark Scheme. Since its implementation in 2005, more than 31 per cent of our built environment has been 'greened'. This includes new and existing Green Mark buildings, which have been retrofitted with technologies and materials that reduce dependence on natural resources.

Meet Lee Si Min, a BCA scholar who is helping to 'green' our nation.

GETTING INTO THE GREEN SCENE

As an Executive Manager in the Green Building Policy Department, Si Min develops climate change mitigation measures for the building sector. Her main role is to plan and implement policies to encourage the proliferation of green buildings. This is part of the national target to 'green' 80 per cent of all our country's buildings by 2030.

"I appreciate my job because I get to see the impact of energy conservation through quantifiable measures and policies. We conduct plenty of industry consultations, which allow me to keep in touch with the ground and hear feedback from our stakeholders in the building sector," says Si Min.

As part of her job scope, Si Min had the opportunity to represent the building sector at last year's COP21 in Paris. Also known as the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, COP21 gathers participants from all over the world, including official delegates from government, intergovernmental organisations, UN agencies, NGOs and civil society.

It was an eye-opening experience for a young officer like Si Min, who had the privilege of participating in the launch of the unprecedented Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction as well as interacting with government officials from other countries. She also worked alongside fellow officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Climate Change Secretariat. "Managing international relations and negotiations was not easy! Nonetheless, it was an enjoyable learning opportunity. Participating in this historic moment is definitely one of the highlights of my career," gushes Si Min.

Si Min has also worked on interesting projects, such as the production of a commemorative book called *Realising Singapore's Green Building Dream: Towards a Future-Ready Built Environment*. To commemorate the Green Mark Scheme's 10th anniversary, the book features profiles and pictures of 50 outstanding green buildings in Singapore.

Si Min notes that while many 'green' measures have been incorporated into Singapore's built environment, people should also do their part to reduce their carbon footprint.

"Recently, we found that 50 per cent of a building's energy consumption stems from its occupants. No matter how much we advocate the Green Mark Scheme for buildings, the remaining effort has to come from its occupants. It could be as simple as switching the lights and computer off when you leave the room," says Si Min.

BOUNDLESS EXPOSURE

One of the biggest challenges for young officers can be their lack of experience. This is especially so for Si Min, whose work often revolves around complex policies. Fortunately, the support and

encouragement from her colleagues and superiors have helped her to overcome the steep learning curve.

"As a young officer, it is natural to have gaps in your knowledge. I overcome this by speaking to experienced colleagues to learn about the technicalities and policy considerations. The good thing about my job is that it's never a routine! There are always unexpected hurdles and deadlines to manage. I'm constantly challenging myself and learning here," shares Si Min.

Moreover, Si Min's early exposure to the organisation provided her with the building blocks to learn and grow. Si Min did two internships at BCA during her undergraduate studies. In her freshman year, she was attached to the Green Mark Department, where she shadowed Green Mark assessors during their pre- and on-site assessments. She had the opportunity to work on the Building Retrofit Energy Efficiency Financing scheme (BREEF), which is a loan scheme that helps building owners overcome the high initial costs of energy-saving retrofits. "Besides learning about the job scope, I also gained knowledge on green features and current initiatives to promote sustainability in buildings," says Si Min.

Contrastingly, Si Min's second internship was with the Building Engineering Group, where she had the opportunity to explore geotechnical engineering and learn about Singapore's plans for underground development. She was introduced to methodologies for underground mapping, and contributed to developing a 3D model of Singapore's underground space.

"As scholars, we get to experience work life a lot earlier. We are even assigned mentors to guide us during our undergraduate studies. We also get to network with seniors and fellow scholars, who often give invaluable insight on the different departments and programmes available within the organisation," explains Si Min.

ATTRACTING PASSIONATE INNOVATORS

BCA is always on the lookout for resourceful, energetic and driven individuals who are passionate about developing an excellent built environment for Singapore. If you identify with this vision, heed Si Min's advice: "We are an organisation that values innovation. People at BCA embrace new ideas and solutions. In fact, my idea to switch the lights off during lunch hour actually became a reality in our new office! If you are curious and innovative, there will be many opportunities for you to grow here."



LEE SI MIN

BCA OVERSEAS UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLAR

Executive Manager, Green Building Policy Department