Supporting Social Service Agencies During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 situation evolved rapidly at the start of 2020. To help offset part of the expenses incurred due to COVID-19, Community Chest provided $3,000 per agency to 344 NCSS Members who submitted a claim. The funds supported these members in strengthening their business continuity measures, performing cleaning and disinfection works for their premises and procuring protective equipment to ensure the safety of their staff and clients. We also coordinated the distribution of essential supplies such as contactless thermometers, surgical masks, hand sanitisers, gloves and gowns to support social service agencies’ (SSAs) programmes based on prioritised needs.

Constant communication through the sharing of regular email updates, advisories, and schemes, ensured that SSAs were kept up-to-date with the latest precautionary measures. NCSS’ Board members, and senior management also visited some SSAs, with safe distancing measures in place, to better understand their needs on the ground. A series of online chats were also initiated to provide opportunities for SSAs to network and learn from each other during the crisis.

Based on feedback and suggestions from these engagements, a series of programmes and funding schemes were designed and rolled out to help SSAs stay prepared and resilient to tackle the unprecedented challenges. The Invictus Fund was launched to alleviate the financial challenges of SSAs; as the agencies experienced a steep drop in donations and income during this period but continued to provide critical services to vulnerable individuals and families. This Fund complements The Courage Fund, which supports healthcare, frontline workers and lower income families, directly affected by COVID-19.

As the global community continues to battle COVID-19, NCSS remains committed to serving and providing support to SSAs in the sector every step of the way.

When the COVID-19 circuit breaker measures first kicked in, there were families that struggled with the requirements of home-based learning while some had to grapple with income losses. SHINE Children and Youth Services (SHINE), an SSA which focuses on helping children, youth and their families, had to quickly rise up to the challenges of coping with the increased welfare concerns of their clients and adapting to different ways of delivering services. They were able to do so with NCSS’s support that helped them with much needed essential supplies like masks and hand sanitisers, and sharing of relevant national advisories and schemes. SHINE also tapped on resources from The Invictus Fund to support the agency and its staff during this challenging period. These enabled SHINE to, not just, provide timely and much needed assistance to their clients, but also to move 14 out of 17 of their programmes online and allowed them to reach out to support children and youth from partner schools and fellow social service agencies.

NCSS staff team like all of us are also undergoing tremendous changes on work and personal fronts. We thank them for their continued focus on supporting agencies so that we can continue to provide effective and timely support for our clients.

Mrs Tan-Wu Mei Ling
Executive Director of SHINE
Together we Stand United to Overcome COVID-19

Supporting families, individuals and SSAs impacted by COVID-19 through the Courage Fund and the Invictus Fund.

Coordination & distribution of essential supplies (masks, sanitizers, contactless thermometers etc) to SSAs

Visits to SSAs pre Circuit Breaker

Online chats with SSAs

The Courage Fund

The Invictus Fund
First-time Partnership with Lazada for online fundraising

Community Chest partnered e-commerce giant Lazada Singapore for the first time in a fundraising campaign that encouraged the community to “Add A New Story” to their online shopping carts and bring hope to those in need.

Leveraging popular year-end shopping events such as the 11.11 Global Shopping Festival Black Friday, 12.12 and Christmas season, shoppers were given the option to purchase virtual gift boxes in support of social service programmes serving vulnerable groups.

The partnership enabled Community Chest to achieve a 56% increase in funds raised for its year-end campaign as compared to FY18.

Three short documentaries were also shared on the platform to give shoppers better insights on how their donations will benefit causes such as education for a child with special needs, befriending services for a vulnerable senior, job training for an adult with disabilities and support for persons with mental health conditions.

Recognising the need for customised solutions to empower the vulnerable in society, particularly in the area of employment, the Empowering for Life Fund (ELF) was created by President Halimah Yacob in 2018 to spearhead the development of effective employment programmes. Through funds raised by the President’s Challenge and a matching amount from the Ministry of Finance, $20 million was set aside to support the programmes for five years.

In 2019, the President’s Challenge raised funds for 67 benefitting organisations, including 11 programmes supported by ELF. One such programme is the Transitional Employment and Work Integration Programme (TEWIP) by Singapore Anglican Community Services (SACS) which prepares persons with mental health conditions to re-enter the workforce.

Mental health was designated as the focus area of President’s Challenge 2019. Programmes that focused on mental health encouraged members of society to come forward to seek help, creating more awareness of the needs of persons with mental health conditions. This has allowed for timely intervention that facilitated better recovery outcomes, and better support for persons with mental health conditions.
Held at Gardens by the Bay on 25 August 2019, the Community Chest's Bicentennial Community Day Out and Charity Dinner, was an opportunity for service users to enjoy a day out, and to celebrate caregivers and organisations who embody the enduring spirit of community giving.

Joined by our Guest of Honour President Halimah Yacob and Minister of Family and Social Development, Mr Desmond Lee, our service users visited the attractions within Gardens by the Bay, followed by a lantern painting session. The completed lanterns – the fruit of a collective community effort – were displayed at the Colonnade of Lights at the Gardens by the Bay during the Mid-Autumn Festival.

Donors and community partners also came together to share their talents and skills, as well as raise funds, at the Charity Dinner. Local celebrity chefs prepared a four-course menu that paid homage to the multi-cultural heritage of Singapore. Guests were also treated to an inclusive fashion runway performance involving persons with disabilities and MediaCorp artistes, and a stellar performance from local jazz singer Joanna Dong. Glenn Phua, an artist with autism represented by social enterprise The Art Faculty, created a special photo wall for the Charity Dinner.

With support from the Bicentennial Community Fund, up to 20% of all funds raised by Community Chest from 1 April 2019 till 31 March 2020 were matched dollar-for-dollar.

In commemoration of the Singapore Bicentennial, 200 runners came together to clock 2,000 km within 200 hours and raised a total of $1.6 million under the ground-up initiative, Relay Majulah. President Halimah Yacob and Speaker Mr Tan Chuan-Jin were also part of the run, and their baton passing segment was featured in the President’s Star Charity Show 2019.

Recognising Excellence in Community Giving

The Community Chest Awards recognises exemplary contributions from donors, community partners and volunteers and celebrates the impact of giving to empower our service users.

249 awards were given out to top donors and partners at the Istana on 9 October 2019. United Overseas Bank Limited (UOB) received the highest accolades and was conferred the Pinnacle and Charity Platinum Awards.

The awards event featured a special collaboration between 12 service users from APSN Bakery Enterprise and a collective of locally renowned chefs to create and serve a delicious dessert course to diners. Under the tutelage of these chefs, the 12 service users demonstrated not just their ability to work well, but also their passion to learn and excel when given the opportunity.

We continue to nurture our next generation of volunteers by inviting youths for the first time to facilitate our activities.

Sharity Day, which was held on 14 August 2019, saw over 90 youth volunteers from St Patrick’s School and River Valley High School who gave their time and talent to run carnival booths and ice-breaker games that created opportunities for meaningful interaction between children from mainstream and special education schools.

The secondary school students also volunteered their time at Community Chest Fu Dai 2020 to pack Fu Dai (‘bags of blessings’ in Mandarin) with essential household items for families and seniors. About 40 students formed an assembly line to pack needful everyday items such as cooking oil, dried vermicelli, chicken essence and Lunar New Year snacks.