



# EMPOWERMENT DECONSTRUCTED!

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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# Understanding Empowerment: The 'What' And 'Why'

### What?

- Increase a person's ability to **participate in** and **influence matters** that affect his or her life
- Be characterised by **strength, choice, ability to make decisions, control** and **dignity**
- **Own** issues and **take charge** of one's own life

### Why?

- Increases independence which leads to **improved quality of life**
- Increases **perceived quality** of services received
- **Reduces costs** (less need for institutional support)
- Promotes **sustainable change** (decreases reliance on external resources)

### How?

- Provide an **environment that facilitates service users' understanding** of their role, knowledge and skill acquisition
- **Accept service users' definition** of the problem; help them articulate clear personal goals
- Build on service users' **strengths**
- **Co-produce** with service users



#### Myth 1

#### SERVICE USERS MAY NOT WANT TO BE EMPOWERED

- One's lack of resources and inadequate choice-making infrastructure discourages a person's motivation to express views, set goals and take charge.

#### Myth 2

#### EMPOWERMENT IS A PROCESS THAT PRIMARILY HAPPENS AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

- Empowerment entails individual and collective change; change is necessary at structural and community levels as the larger environment can undermine opportunities and participation.

## State of Empowerment

### Where are we as a sector?

From NCSS' Social Service Sector Survey (2018), more than half of SSAs are of the view that they are to some extent practicing empowerment:

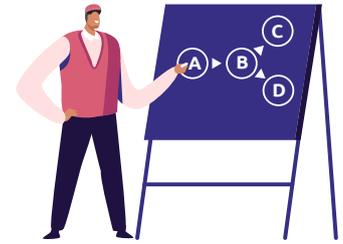
- **71%** of the sector strongly agreed/agreed that they provide options to service users.
- **58%** of SSAs strongly agreed/agreed that they co-create services and programmes with service users.
- **Almost half** of the SSAs expressed a desire to improve in co-creating solutions and programmes with service users, particularly the multi-sector and eldercare agencies.



At a collective level, NCSS has promoted empowerment through Public Education and worked with ecosystem partners to offer person-centered services. For example, the **Beyond The Label** and **See the True Me** public education campaigns, **Peer Support Specialist** and **Empowering Seniors** project.

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## The Process



### A. Do A Self-Assessment

Ascertain to what extent service users in your agency have been participating in the design & delivery of services.

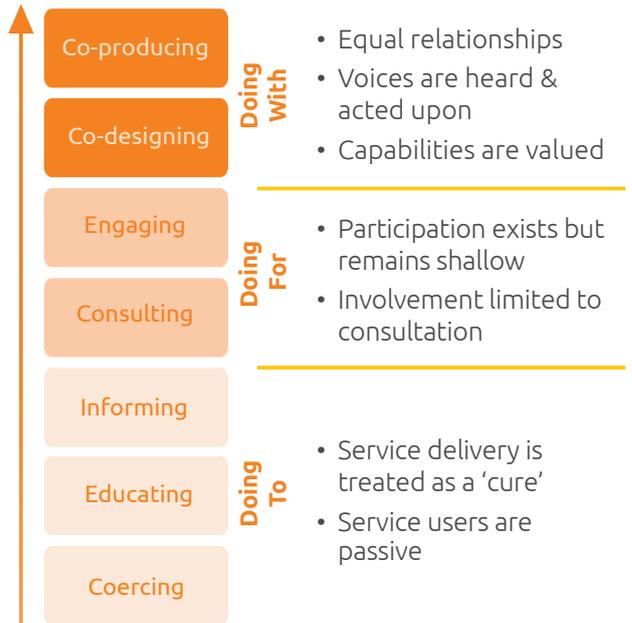
#### Where am I?

Consider to what extent the 6 principles of co-production are practised:

1. **Assets:** Seeing people as equal partners rather than passive recipients
2. **Capabilities:** Building on what people can do and supporting them to put this to work
3. **Mutuality:** Reciprocal relationships with mutual responsibilities and expectations
4. **Networks:** Engaging a range of networks, inside and outside 'services' including peer support, to transfer knowledge
5. **Blurred roles:** Removing tightly defined boundaries between professionals and recipients to enable shared responsibility
6. **Catalysts:** Shifting from 'delivering' services to supporting things to happen and catalysing other action

### Co-Production is...

A relationship where professionals and citizens share power to plan and deliver support together, recognising that both partners have vital contributions to make in order to improve quality of life for people and communities. - Nesta, 2012



Source: Slay and Stephen (2013)'s adaptation of Arnstein (1969)'s Ladder of Participation

### B. Identify Barriers To Empowerment & Actions To Overcome

Identify the barriers specific to you and your organisation so that you can take actions to overcome them and make progress.

### The Individual... Or The Organisation?

...both. Successful empowerment requires changes within the individual and organisation. Belief systems, structures and processes are key enablers to empowering practice.

Common barriers	Description	I can...
<b>Inadequate Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empowerment not mandated in service models; lack of strong policy drivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share candidly with policymakers on the ground challenges faced to shape policies</li> </ul>
<b>A General Lack Of Understanding On What Empowerment Means</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A need for more operational definitions for better actualisation at all levels</li> <li>Empowerment not embedded in the organisational culture, resulting in lack of/ uneven application</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use templates &amp; guidelines; share resources; speak to peers</li> <li>Ensure senior leadership buy-in for empowerment to be structured in a way that becomes 'everybody's business'</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient resources that reduces agencies' capacity and/or lead to trade-offs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share resources across organisations; Demonstrate co-production results</li> </ul>
<b>Accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service users experience barriers to participation e.g. language, inaccessible formats, difficulty getting to meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-produce format of meetings for accessibility; train staff to produce "Easy Read" documents; leverage on digital means</li> </ul>

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## C. Design Your Solution & Implement

### How?

Stage	Description	Tools
<b>Needs Assessment</b> on service users (early stage)	Service users identify their needs and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Problem and Solution Tree</b></li> <li>• Future Workshop</li> <li>• Backpack method</li> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> <li>• Kitchen Talks</li> </ul>
<b>Service Design</b> (after needs assessment)	Stimulation of new ideas for social services or adaptation of existing services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Theory of Change</b></li> <li>• Business Model Canvas</li> <li>• Double Diamond</li> </ul>

### TOOL 1: PROBLEM & SOLUTION TREE

#### When to use?

When understanding problems and their causes.

#### How to use?

Participants are put into small groups to discuss problem, causes and consequences.

#### What does it do?

Visualise how causes and problems are connected.

### TOOL 2: THEORY OF CHANGE

#### When to use?

When activities that contribute to desired impact need to be identified.

#### How to use?

Participants map out goals, logical steps towards change, measurable effects and key assumptions.

#### What does it do?

Outlines steps to achieve goal; make connections; spot risks; alignment to a larger goal.

## Peers in the sector

### SINGAPORE ANGLICAN COMMUNITY SERVICES

Empowerment at **Organisational** level

- Empowerment as purpose of the organisation
- Staff mindset: Recovery model embraced by majority of staff
- Hiring practices: Ensure staff's motivations are aligned and believe in empowering the vulnerable individuals

### ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE ASSOCIATION

Empowerment through **Voice**

- Encouraging service users to step up and speak up as self advocates to reduce stigma i.e. Voices for Hope programme
- Building networks of persons with dementia and caregivers who are confident in public speaking to be a spokesperson

### RAINBOW CENTRE

Empowerment through **Community**

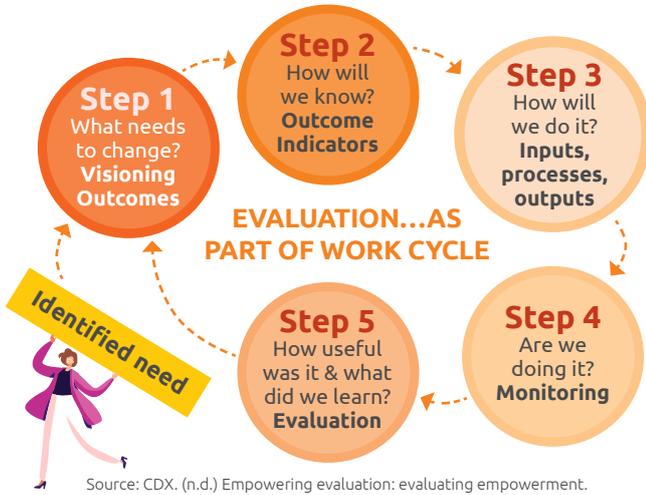
- Tapping on strengths of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)
- PwDs and families are included and connected with resources in the community through community connectors
- PwDs are socially connected and supported within their own communities



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## D. Review Your Solution

Evaluation is a useful process of reflection, improvement and learning.



## Some common indicators...

- Skill development
- Self-worth
- Competence
- Self-efficacy
- Willingness to participate in collective actions
- Community connectedness
- Control over decisions and resources

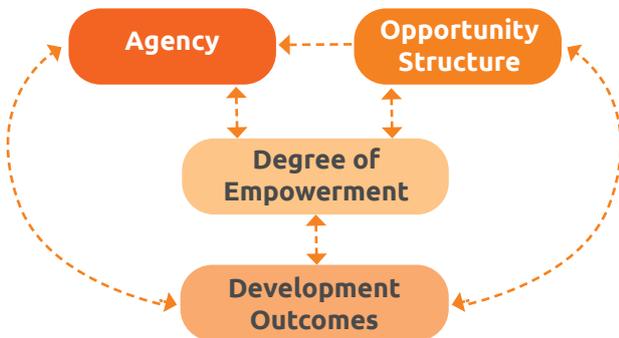


How do we know which to adopt?

- The World Bank's Measuring Empowerment Framework explains the factors affecting empowerment.

## Measuring Empowerment Framework

An empowered person has the capacity to make effective choices, that is affected by: (i) Agency (ii) Opportunity Structure



Source: Figure 1 in Alsop, R. & Heinsohn, N. (2005).

Guiding Questions:

- Are there opportunities to choose?
- Are choices actually made?
- Does the choice made bring desired outcome?

Consider **Domains**:

**State** (political participation), **Market** (credit, labour, goods), **Society** (family, community).

Consider **Levels**:

**Macro** (National), **Intermediary** (between national & residential), **Local** (residence)

## Empowerment Framework

Domain/ Subdomain	Contributory Factor	Level		
		Macro	Intermediary	Local
State – Justice, Politics, Service Delivery	i. Agency ii. Opportunity Structure	Degree of Empowerment i. Presence of choice ii. Use of choice iii. Effectiveness of choice		
Market – Credit, Labour, Goods				
Society – Family, Community				