

**SPEECH BY MR TAN CHUAN-JIN
SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT AND ADVISOR TO NCSS
AT THE WELCOME SESSION FOR VOLUNTEER MANAGERS UNDER
THE ENHANCED VOLUNTEER MANAGER FUNDING SCHEME
ON WEDNESDAY, 24 MARCH 2021, AT 3.40 PM VIA ZOOM**

Ms Anita Fam, President of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS)

NCSS Board Members

Dr Ang Hak Seng, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Community, and Youth

Friends from the social service sector

Community Partners

1 A very good afternoon, I am glad to see so many of our friends and partners from the social service sector gathered virtually here today. In addition, a very warm welcome to the new volunteer managers recruited under the Enhanced Volunteer Manager Funding Scheme. During the launch of the scheme in August last year, I talked about the need to strengthen our volunteering ecosystem not just to tackle the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also beyond. I am glad to see our social service agencies (SSAs) taking a longer-term, strategic approach in optimising their volunteer resources by coming onboard this scheme to hire dedicated volunteer managers.

Efforts to innovate and digitalise volunteer management continue beyond COVID-19

2 Although the COVID-19 situation in Singapore has improved, we are not out of the woods yet. Social distancing measures continue to be in place, which unfortunately restrict some volunteering activities, reducing demand for volunteers. Many SSAs have shown resilience and adapted their operations such as leveraging online platforms to conduct virtual volunteering or training, or re-organising activities to smaller group sizes to allow volunteering to continue.

3 Efforts to adapt and innovate will need to continue beyond COVID-19. While we look forward to bringing back activities that allow volunteers to have face-to-face interaction with service users, it is likely that virtual engagements will become part of the new norm. This can be an addition to your array of tools to expand your reach and connect with volunteers even if they are unable to come to your centres. I am

encouraged to learn that many of you have plans for your volunteer managers to drive digitalisation in your agency's volunteer management work.

More volunteers needed to tackle socio-economic aftermath from COVID-19

4 Furthermore, while COVID-19 has caused disruptions and made us recognise the importance to pivot our strategies, we are currently facing a growing trend of complex societal issues, such as challenges of income inequality, an ageing society and global economic downturn. Manpower shortage in the sector will also likely continue. These would mean a greater demand for volunteers and the need for them to complement more operational functions within the agencies to strengthen our social service delivery.

5 For example, we need more volunteers for upstream interventions such as reading and tuition programmes to help children from low income families boost their self-confidence and cultivate their love for learning. In three towns – Kreta Ayer, Boon Lay and Woodlands, the Ministry of Social and Family Development and the Ministry of Education are currently piloting an initiative called UPLIFT (Uplifting pupils in life and inspiring families taskforce), which takes an ecosystem approach to provide more upstream support to students with emerging signs of absenteeism and higher needs in schools with the help of volunteer support. One of our SSAs, Filos Community Services, will also start a new Reading Literacy programme for pre-schoolers titled "Little Sprouts Reading Programme", with the help of their volunteers who will be running the programme on their own.

6 We will also need more befrienders to journey with families, to listen to their challenges and provide them with social-emotional support and other assistance. Cornerstone Community Services, for one, is working with volunteer befrienders to help families strengthen their relationships in a holistic manner beyond financial assistance.

7 More volunteers are also required to support the professional staff in healthcare and community care work. SATA CommHealth is increasingly tapping on their volunteers to perform the roles of an interpreter, a befriender and a chaperone so that their nursing staff can concentrate solely on their assigned duties.

Why having a dedicated Volunteer Manager matters

8 To achieve the above and more in strengthening our social service delivery requires us to strategise and dedicate resources and support to volunteer management.

9 An important step is having a dedicated volunteer manager who can engage and sustain regular volunteers, so that services to our service users are not disrupted. By better understanding the interests and aspirations of their volunteers, the volunteer managers can also provide a better volunteer experience that will motivate the volunteers to continue serving the community. Volunteer managers can also communicate the impact of volunteering with their agency to inspire more to step up as volunteers, as well as grow volunteers into leaders who can lead and inspire other volunteers. Through volunteer managers being an effective bridge between the agency and partners like corporates, grassroot organisations and schools, strong and sustainable partnerships can also be formed to provide more holistic support to our service users.

10 As we continue to encourage more people to step forward to devote their time, talents and resources to create a more caring and empowering society, let us not forget our volunteer managers who are key enablers in this vision. With that, I welcome once again, our new volunteer managers and wish you a fulfilling journey together with us to grow volunteerism in Singapore. Thank you.