

**ADDRESS BY MS TAN LI SAN,
CEO OF NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE,
AT THE NCSS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020, 15 JULY 2020**

Introduction

1. Ms Anita Fam, President of NCSS, NCSS Board Members, Council Members, Ladies and Gentlemen. A very good afternoon!

2. I am very happy to be here, at my first NCSS AGM as CEO. While I never attended the NCSS AGM, I was no stranger to the Social Service Summit, which I attended in various capacities. I was a member of the Social Service Sector Strategic Thrust (4ST) Steering Committee. I also sat on the Boards of a couple of SSAs in the last six years before joining NCSS. It is a privilege to join the NCSS family, and to be given the opportunity to build on the strong foundations that have been laid.

3. The video you just saw summarises the achievements of NCSS in the past year. Many of the initiatives have brought us a little closer to achieving the vision of 4ST to Empower Lives, Build Effective Social Purpose Entities and Nurture a More Collaborative and Impactful Social Service Ecosystem.

4. Shortly after I joined NCSS in January, we were hit by COVID-19. Circuit Breaker was challenging for SSAs. During this time, we heard a lot of feedback through our Online Chats, Capability Circles and other engagement platforms about the kinds of challenges and difficulties you faced during this time.

Supporting One Another to Overcome COVID-19 & Creativity and Adaptability of Service Users

5. NCSS responded by distributing masks and other essential supplies, making available ComChest emergency funds, and helping SSAs to adopt technologies to continue operations. At the same time, there were also many heart-warming stories of resilience, support, creativity and adaptability.

6. Across Singapore, communities stepped up to support those in need. Since NCSS launched the Courage Fund and Invictus Fund, we raised \$15m and \$6.7m respectively. We are so grateful to the individuals and corporates who donated not only money, but equipment like masks and sanitisers, and gave their time and resources to distribute aid and provide tech support.

7. It was particularly heartening to see SSAs reach out and help each other. Sian Chay Medical Institution, an SSA, donated \$1 million to the Invictus Fund to benefit other SSAs who may be in a more dire financial situation. Mercy Relief offering their staff to help SOS man its hotline, and pointing them to other resources. SSAs also galvanised their peers and other stakeholders through new collaborations to ensure vulnerable groups remain supported. Project Makan was one such example where The Social Kitchen partnered with YMCA Orchard and SHINE, and they worked with logistics companies and commercial restaurants to deliver more than 100,000 meals to vulnerable families during Circuit Breaker.

8. We also heard heart-warming stories about the creativity and adaptability of service users, like persons with intellectual disability who embraced and enjoyed the range of online activities that MINDS rolled out during that time.

Deeper Partnerships and Collective Impact

9. These are strengths and opportunities that we want to build on as we move forward, we want to tap on the “collective learning”, a term I’m borrowing from an NCSS Board member, of the sector to emerge stronger. As Anita mentioned, we want to move decisively to leverage on technology and data, strengthen manpower capabilities, innovate the way we deliver services and build deeper partnerships so that we can improve our service delivery. Together, this will enable us to solve more and more complex issues. This will be a key focus of the Beyond COVID-19 Taskforce. Let me share in a little bit more detail on what we hope to work with all of you on.

Leverage Technology, Build Capabilities

10. First, on leveraging technology. Beyond improving productivity, we have realised during this crisis that technology is so critical to ensure business continuity. It can help us deliver services safely and effectively to reach new groups that need help, and connect with other stakeholders like donors and volunteers.
11. NCSS will work with you to develop a Sector Digitalisation Roadmap to chart the way forward, connecting with partners from government and the private sector to do this together. We will need new skills to do this. Along with the results of our recently-completed Training Gaps Analysis, we will enhance the suite of

programmes offered by our Social Service Institute, introduce more learner-centric training interventions, and work with SSAs through our Training Network Model to build capabilities and learning ecosystems.

Putting Individuals, Families and Communities at the Centre

12. Even as we go high-tech, we must remain high-touch. We will continue to put individuals, families and communities at the centre of what we do. The current crisis has brought into focus the groups that might need more help in the days and months ahead: Isolated seniors, families in crisis, persons with mental health conditions. We want to uncover their needs and aspiration and innovate the way we deliver our services to serve them better. We can make better use of data to analyse gaps, spot unmet needs and assess the impact that we are making.
13. The Design4Impact design challenge that NCSS has just launched is one of many platforms where we will tap on the creativity of the community to develop new and better solutions. To address complex needs of our service users, we must do things in new ways and build deeper partnership using a collective impact frame to co-create and deliver effective outcomes.
14. Economies have been hit by COVID and the recovery will be long. We will need to ensure resources are used well. This might mean having to re-prioritise funds to more urgent and important needs or creating new and sustainable financing instruments.

15. With increased awareness and interest in social issues among the community, among youths, we can harness this momentum by encouraging community participation and volunteerism as a “force multiplier”, another term borrowed from an SSA leader.

Closing

16. Even as we do all these with the sector, I should add that we at NCSS realised that we also need to level up the way we adopt technology and connect with all of you, work in a more integrated fashion internally and with other government agencies and funders to make things more seamless for SSAs.

17. Together with the new Board of NCSS, we hope to work more closely with all of you. Learning from the past few months, we know we can do so much more by tapping on each other’s strengths and assets. Not only across the social service ecosystem, but also with the public sector, private sector partners and our communities.

18. While there is uncertainty ahead, I know that by working together, we will be able to emerge stronger as a sector and to make our society a more inclusive and compassionate one.

19. Thank you very much!