

Social Inclusion & Participation Have Greatest Impact to Improving Quality of Life of Vulnerable Groups and Seniors

- *Views gathered directly from about 2,500 respondents indicate need for everyone in the community to go beyond seeing a person for just their physical and mental condition, but as persons first.*

Singapore, 12 June 2017 – Findings from an extensive study on perceptions of different groups on their **Quality of Life (QOL) Study** by the **National Council of Social Service (NCSS)** in 2016 were announced today. The Study surveyed 3,458 Singaporeans and Permanent Residents aged 18 years and older. This sample size included about 2,500 seniors, persons with disabilities, and persons in recovery from mental health issues and seeking help, to specifically understand QOL from their perspective.

The Study was based on the World Health Organisation (WHO) QOL Framework. This framework is one of the most comprehensive as it comprises six domains and 24 facets to assess QOL. It has been tested for validity and reliability in over 30 countries, cultural settings and profiles, and has add-on modules for disability, mental health and seniors to allow a better understanding of their QOL.

The insights and findings from the NCSS QOL study will be useful for stakeholders in the social sector in areas of QOL to guide development of programmes, initiatives and further research. The study is slated to be published in September 2017.

OVERALL FINDINGS

Findings showed that social inclusion and participation had the greatest impact on improving quality of life of persons surveyed.

- 6 in 10 persons with disabilities believe they cannot achieve their hopes and dreams
- 3 in 10 persons in recovery and seeking help feel the same
- 1 in 10 seniors are not satisfied with their opportunities to continue with achieving in life, such as their dreams, aspirations and hobbies.
- Persons with disabilities who engaged in a main activity, such as in a social

service programme, employment or education, were 1.5 times more likely to have better QOL.

- Persons with disabilities and persons in recovery, who participated in sports or physical recreational activities, were 1.7 times more likely to have better QOL.
- Seniors who participated in sports or physical recreational activities were 2.3 times more likely to have better QOL.

For Vulnerable Groups:

Persons surveyed desired improvement in their level of independence and psychological well-being.

- 5 in 10 persons with disabilities perceived themselves to lack the autonomy in making big decisions in life.

In a follow-up qualitative study, one person with disability said: *“I still can do what everyone can do, just in an alternative way ... I still want to feel valuable and learn new things.”* Another expressed the same sentiment: *“When I was younger, my mother wouldn’t let me do anything by myself, not even wash the dishes, just because I don’t have an arm.”*

- For persons in recovery, 4 in 10 worry about their future prospects in life. Their main desire is to be employed, and to improve their level of independence.

For Seniors:

For Seniors, recognition for their past contributions, appreciation for their present and hope for the future had the greatest impact on improving their QOL. 1 in 10 Seniors are not satisfied with their opportunities to participate in community activities

Mr Gerard Ee, Chairman of Advocacy & Research Panel, NCSS said: “The findings from the NCSS Quality of Life Study indicate that each of us should see vulnerable groups and seniors as persons first. They highlight the importance of the social service ecosystem in addressing a person’s needs holistically. We should change our mindset to go beyond seeing the person for just their diagnosis or as recipients of help, but as people like you and me, with the need for social inclusion and aspirations for the future.”

“NCSS hopes these findings will guide our partners and stakeholders to work on solutions to enhance the quality of life of persons we serve. We encourage everyone to support and empower all individuals to achieve their potential in areas such as education, employment and within the community.”

The Study offered **three recommendations** to improve QOL for these groups:

1. Promote social inclusion in the community, such as through employment, community activities or sports.
2. Recognise the importance of empowering these individuals to have the autonomy to make decisions and improve their level of independence.

3. Everyone can support and empower these individuals by seeing them as persons first, with aspirations and abilities. By doing so, they can achieve their potential in areas such as employment, education and in the community.

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National Council of Social Service (NCSS)

NCSS is the umbrella body for over 450-member social service organisations in Singapore. Its mission is to provide leadership and direction in enhancing the capabilities and capacity of our members, advocating for social service needs and strengthening strategic partnerships, for an effective social service ecosystem. Community Chest and Social Service Institute (SSI) are part of NCSS.

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