

MEDIA RELEASE



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PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE SETS ASIDE \$10 MILLION TO HELP VULNERABLE GROUPS CHANGE THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES

- *President's Challenge 2018 partners NTUC and e2i in new programme to uplift 5,000 low-income members and families a year*

SINGAPORE 11 FEBRUARY 2018 – The President's Challenge has set aside \$10 million over the next five years for a new "Empowering for Life Fund" to empower vulnerable groups. This was announced by President Halimah Yacob at the President's Challenge 2018 launch, held in conjunction with the Healthcare Services Employees' Union's (HSEU) bursary award event today.

"Our societal needs going forward will be more complex and multifaceted. President's Challenge will have to respond by adopting a sharper focus on key complex social issues. Our main aim should be to empower the vulnerable. President's Challenge must help disadvantaged groups change their circumstances and bring about more sustained changes to the lives of those we impact. This way, we can partner one another to build a Singapore we want – a home where we care for each other; a community where we give each other a leg up; and a nation where we move forward together", said President Halimah Yacob.

The new **President's Challenge Empowering for Life Fund** will fund programmes to help the less fortunate, in the areas of skills upgrading, capacity-building and employment. It will focus on supporting customised, dedicated services to the most vulnerable groups, and facilitate their integration into society. The programmes that it fund will handhold the most disadvantaged families on their journeys to improve their circumstances. The aim is to help these families bounce back quickly from setbacks and stay adaptable.

This year, one of the programmes that will be supported by the Fund is a pilot programme called **NTUC LIFT-UP Pathfinder**, where 50 low-income families will undergo **customised training to level up their employability, skills and resilience**. The training, undertaken by NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) in partnership with training providers, will last four to six months. It aims to improve the skillsets of low-income families, such as communication, digital and

financial management skills, as well as help them in building emotional resilience. Volunteer befrienders will also step in to help provide support and guidance.

LIFT-UP Pathfinder is an enhancement of the LIFT-UP programme launched in 2016, under the NTUC-U Care Fund. LIFT-UP offers low-income families from NTUC affiliated unions/associations opportunities to attend experiential workshops that promote family bonding, as well as enrichment workshops to broaden their exposure and develop skills in their areas of interest, such as photography or entrepreneurship. With the support from President's Challenge, 5,000 low-income members and their families are expected to benefit each year from the LIFT-UP and LIFT-UP Pathfinder programmes.

Chan Nget Hoong, a Senior Patient Service Associate with KK Women's and Children's Hospital, is one of the HSEU families looking forward to signing up and receiving further support under LIFT-UP Pathfinder. Two of her children have been receiving HSEU Bursary awards to alleviate their school-going costs for the past 5 years. The family is a beneficiary of the existing LIFT-UP programme. With a monthly household income that is just enough to get by, she hopes that LIFT-UP Pathfinder will empower her family to move out of their current situation.

"It is a challenge to find time and the right courses to upgrade myself. My son wants to be an entrepreneur and the talks we have attended under LIFT-UP programme often encourage him to think big and pursue his dreams. My daughter is studying hard in the hope of becoming a lab technician. I hope LIFT-UP Pathfinder can offer more customised support that help point my children in the right direction, bolster their career aspirations and bring them a better paying job," said Nget Hoong.

NTUC Assistant Secretary-General Zainal Sapari, who is also Director of NTUC Care and Share Department and NTUC U Care Centre, said, "NTUC has an array of initiatives that aim to help our low-income union members and their families lessen their financial burden. In addition to this, we hope to equip them with relevant skills to enhance their employability and resilience, so that they can have better opportunities to progress in their careers. The partnership with President's Challenge 2018 for LIFT-UP Pathfinder will help NTUC sustain these efforts in helping low-income families upskill as a family."

Besides low-income families, President's Challenge will continue to support a wide-range of programmes across various sectors including children and family services, healthcare and eldercare, disability services, rehabilitation of ex-offenders, as well as sports, the arts, heritage, culture and nature. This year, President's Challenge is supporting 59 beneficiary organisations.

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About President's Challenge

Started in 2000, the President's Challenge is an annual community outreach and fund-raising campaign for beneficiaries selected yearly by the President's Office. The Challenge represents a coming together of people from all walks of life, under the President's patronage, to help the less fortunate. It serves as a call to all Singaporeans to do their part to build a more caring and inclusive society by giving of their time, skills and enterprise.

Since 2012, the Challenge was expanded to go beyond fund-raising, by including volunteerism and social entrepreneurship. From 2018, the President's Challenge will look into more customised and upstream support to help the most vulnerable change their circumstances through skills upgrading, capacity building and empowerment. The operating costs of the President's Challenge are covered separately by a grant from Singapore Totalisator Board as a community initiative. 100% of donations raised under the President's Challenge go to charities, causes and social service organisations supported by the President's Challenge.