

SPEECH BY MR SIM GIM GUAN, CEO, NCSS
ON THE PROGRESS OF THE SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR STRATEGIC THRUSTS
AT THE SOCIAL SERVICE SUMMIT, 24 JULY 2018 AT FAIRMONT SINGAPORE

Mr Desmond Lee, Minister for Social and Family Development

Mr Hsieh Fu Hua, President of the National Council of Social Service

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Introduction

1. Good morning. I am delighted to see many partners and friends gathered here at this year's Social Service Summit.

2. Many of you were also present at the Social Service Summit last year, where we launched the Social Service Sector Strategic Thrusts (or 4ST in short). The 4ST recognises that even as we have a collective vision of "empowering every person to live with dignity in a caring and inclusive society", we need to embrace the empowerment frame, strengthen organisations, and involve the community and the larger ecosystem as an integral part of the solution. In the past year, my colleagues and I have had many refreshing conversations with our members and partners about 4ST, and I am sure, there are many other similar conversations taking place amongst the various stakeholders. It is heartening to see that many of us are looking at how our own organisations can leverage its strengths to contribute more to the 4ST vision. Others are also using the roadmap as a reference to explore new ways to

contribute. I would like to share with you some examples, highlighted in the following video, of the sector's work to empower the individuals and communities we serve.

[4 min video]

Thrust 1 - Empowering Individuals, their families and communities

3. As we interact with service users, we learn what it means to be empowered and uncover more ways to empower our service users to a greater measure. In the video, Madam Jorah shared that the knowledge she had received from workshops has helped her gain confidence to do what is best for her and her son with special needs. Indeed, we want to empower our service users to take ownership of their challenges and chart the way forward.

4. I'm heartened to see a number of social service organisations take a step further by working with our service users to design the social service programmes that are intended to help them achieve their goals. In a survey conducted by NCSS earlier this year, 5 out of 10 social service organisations agreed that they co-create their programmes with service users. We have also seen service users who had benefited from these programmes come back as volunteers to help others out of the situation they were once in. Kok Liang, who was featured in the video earlier, is an example of someone who has battled with Schizophrenia and is now working at Singapore Anglican Community Services to help others like him in their recovery

journey. Peer support is a powerful source of inspiration and courage for those who are struggling. As Yuen Han mentioned, they can be a beacon of hope for recovering persons and their families.

5. At last year's Social Service Summit, I spoke about the Taiwha Fountain House in South Korea. This is an organisation run by its members who are recovering from mental health issues. Together, they support each other in the journey and engage with the community and businesses to create more opportunities for persons with mental health issues to participate meaningfully in society. We hope to see more of such peer-led models in Singapore, and NCSS is keen to work with partners to develop similar initiatives. There are multiple ways we can empower our service users, and I look forward to uncovering the many possibilities together as a sector, so that collectively, we may create a sustained impact on the lives we touch.

Thrust 2 – Effective Social Purpose Entities that deliver Quality, Innovative and Sustainable Solutions

6. Self-care is a concept that we are all familiar with. We need to take care of ourselves, to be in a position to care for others. In the same way, as we focus on programmes and interventions, we will also need to pay attention to organisational development, and strengthen organisational capability and capacity. We had focused quite a bit on Human Capital development over the last few years,

and will be expanding beyond human capital to look more broadly at organisational development.

7. Our partners, including funders such as ToteBoard, play an important role, as they understand the need to develop organisational capabilities and support our efforts in this area.

8. While we work hard in our respective organisations to drive social impact, we should also actively build partnerships, as service users will benefit from us working together closely as an ecosystem of partners. As Minister highlighted earlier, indeed, there is room for us to coordinate better, so that we can help service users access the services they need quickly, and in a seamless manner. At the same time, our efforts, put together, will enable us to address service users' needs in a more holistic manner.

The Social Service Navigator (With live demo)

9. At this juncture, I am pleased to introduce the Social Service Navigator. This is an interactive online platform that consolidates information on social service providers, programmes and resources all over Singapore. This platform pulls together information about the various services that are available and place it in the hands of the social service professionals. It shows the agencies around us and the services they provide, which are potential partners that we could work more closely

with. This will significantly reduce the time social service professionals spend searching for suitable programmes for service users even as it allows us to address the needs of our clients more holistically.

10. It is therefore also possible to look within a specific geographic area, and identify service gaps and focus on addressing those gaps. It will also host information on subsidies, schemes and policies, and is also available for quick reference through your mobile device.

11. At this point, I should mention that the rich database of information in the Navigator is only possible because our member organisations have contributed the information on NCSS's database and kept it up to date. Hence, I would like to thank everyone for this collective contribution.

12. The Navigator is an example of how we can use data and technology to help us work better. In the same survey we conducted this year, social service organisations highlighted that innovation was the top area that they wanted to see the most improvement in. With growing needs, the sector must look beyond current modes of operating, and explore new ways to work more efficiently and effectively. The iShineCloud, for example, will help charities manage their back-end office functions efficiently. This will allow staff more bandwidth to focus on other critical areas. As a sector, we must continue exploring resources to help us do better, and

invest in building up our capabilities so that we can be more effective in delivering quality, innovative and sustainable solutions to address social needs.

Thrust 3 – Caring, collaborative and impactful social service eco-system

13. That said, this is an endeavour that requires all of us to work together as part of a larger social service eco-system. It is about looking at our own expertise and resources, and considering how we can use them to make a difference in our society. Last Friday, the National Arts Council launched the Befriender's Art Toolkit at Montfort Care GoodLife! at Marine Terrace. Befriending is not always easy as service users may not always want to interact with volunteers. However, the toolkit is a resource that volunteers may use to build connections with the service users, and develop meaningful conversations through simple art activities. These are especially curated for seniors and children, to instil a sense of achievement, and open conversations on past experiences, as well as their aspirations for the future. Like the NAC and Montfort Care, all of us can contribute to a more impactful sector in meaningful ways by combining our expertise and resources to meet the needs in society.

14. Currently, about 6 in 10 social service organisations agree that they form strong partnerships with the government sector and the people sector respectively. 5 in 10 social service organisations agree that they form strong partnerships with private sector. This is a positive sign, and I encourage us to continue the

conversations with stakeholders across the ecosystem and explore partnerships for greater impact.

15. At the Funders Roundtable this morning, we will discuss how the 3P sectors can come together to tackle the funding challenges that we foresee in the next few years, so that we are able to create sustained social impact. Funding is a highly sought after resource, needed to support the running of social service programmes, as well as capability-building efforts in our organisations. As the needs grow, we need to optimise existing resources, but also explore new ways of growing our resources. I look forward to a fruitful discussion on new ways of funding, and how we can help social service organisations achieve greater financial sustainability, so that they can be more effective in meeting social needs.

Closing Remarks

16. In closing, I would like to emphasise that the road ahead will be a journey that we need to take together. We will need to learn from one another and work together, as we keep our sights on a common vision that we've established together in the 4ST. I wish you all a fruitful morning ahead, and I trust that the discussions today will inspire and challenge us to play a greater role in building an impactful social service ecosystem.