

**SPEECH BY MR MASAGOS ZULKIFLI
MINISTER OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE INVICTUS FUND (SECOND TRANCHE)
ON MONDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2020, AT 10AM OVER ZOOM**

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

NCSS Board members

Friends from the social service sector

Community Partners

1 Good morning. I am happy to see so many of you gathered here virtually for the launch of the second tranche of The Invictus Fund.

How The Invictus Fund (First Tranche) has enabled the social service agencies

2 When COVID-19 hit us, it was a challenging time for our nation. All of us had to adapt to changes in our lives to tackle the immediate health crisis. Families and vulnerable groups were impacted; livelihoods were hit and issues of mental health and wellness surfaced. To this end, NCSS launched The Invictus Fund in April this year to raise funds from the community to enable social service agencies (SSAs) to continue providing critical services to vulnerable groups in face of this challenge. It was heartening to see such enormous support from the community. \$9.2 million was raised as of 21 September.

3 Since then, NCSS has disbursed close to \$6 million to 89 SSAs in June. This boosted their operations as they could adopt technology and business continuity initiatives. One such SSA that benefitted was Lutheran Community Care Services Ltd,

or LCCS. Through the funding, they digitalised their work processes to overcome restrictions presented by the crisis. Applicants could now submit child adoption applications digitally, instead of having to go down in-person, through new online workflows. Service users could also access support via virtual interviews, made possible with video conferencing tools. Not only was LCCS able to tide over the Circuit Breaker, they emerged stronger and become more effective in impacting lives.

The need to transform to SSA 3.0

4 This is one example, amongst many others, that have shown us that transformation can happen even during a crisis. We must not waste this opportunity. In fact, this was a common sentiment echoed by 80% of our SSA heads. Through a poll by NCSS in July, they shared that the push towards digitalisation was a positive thing that came out of COVID-19. They hoped to keep and grow it further, even beyond the current crisis.

5 As global and societal trends shift, our needs will evolve, and new challenges will emerge. We want to make our sector more resilient and able to cope with future demands. Hence, I would like to challenge our SSAs to transform to “SSA 3.0”. What is SSA 3.0? We envisage our SSAs to be driven by committed social service professionals, who are augmented by volunteers, and organisations that are enabled by technology. All this with a common purpose to better serve the needs of end users and Singaporeans. To build a more caring and inclusive society.

6 I am an engineer by training and engineers will be familiar with the concept of versioning. A change in the version number means a significant change. About 1.5

years ago, we started using the term SSA. We moved away using “VWO” to better reflect the sector’s evolving work towards professionalism and our aspiration to become agents of change. That was SSA 1.0. You may wonder: What was SSA 2.0? I think we don’t have the luxury of making incremental changes with a 2.0 version.

7 The sector must make a quantum leap from SSA 1.0 to 3.0, given the current crisis and challenges we face. In the way we transform service delivery, adopt technology, and how we use our resources to strengthen our agencies. This will also bring us closer to the 4ST vision, which is due for a refresh and something we will embark on post COVID-19. I hope all of us can dream big, make bold decisions to transform our organisations. More importantly, to rally our staff and stakeholders together to undertake these changes.

Initiatives/funds to support SSA 3.0 in 3Ts – Talent, Technology and Transformation

8 It is with this vision in mind, that I am pleased to officially launch the second tranche of The Invictus Fund. With the injection of over \$18 million from the Government, it will provide the boost to help our SSAs make the leap to SSA 3.0. Let me focus on 3Ts – **Talent, Technology and Transformation**.

Talent

9 First, on talent. I was encouraged to see more talent joining our sector in the past few years. Our workforce has steadily increased from 15,000 in 2017 to 16,500 in 2019. In the last few months, SSAs have also created more than 400 traineeship opportunities for fresh graduates through the SGUnited Traineeship Programmes.

Besides creating more opportunities for Singaporeans during this period of economic uncertainty, it has also been beneficial for the SSAs.

10 One of the trainees, Ms Chloe Tan, joined New Life Community Services. As a Trainee Youth Worker, she does very important and meaningful work to mentor our youth. Together with many other trainees in our sector, they have brought energy, fresh perspectives and talent to the agencies. At the same time, the trainees are building up their skills and gaining invaluable knowledge. This will prepare them well to join our sector or their next employment opportunity.

11 Through the National Jobs Council, the Government is investing heavily in retaining and building up our human capital. I encourage SSAs to continue leveraging on schemes such as the SGUnited Mid-Career Support Package and Jobs Growth Incentive. This is a good opportunity for our sector to hire mid-career professionals from other sectors with backgrounds in technology, finance, HR or others, looking to make the switch. Some may become our agents of transformation. NCSS will also be engaging you to identify your manpower requirements and co-design programmes to meet your needs.

12 Volunteers are also another important resource that can augment our talent pool and address manpower challenges. With increasing social awareness, especially among youth, there is no better time to welcome and engage volunteers in meaningful ways throughout our service delivery. This also supports our national vision to build a caring and inclusive home for all under the SG Cares movement. But we must do so in an effective and organised manner. To this end, NCSS launched the Enhanced

Volunteer Manager Funding Scheme last month to provide funding to SSAs to hire dedicated volunteer managers to mobilise volunteers effectively in meaningful ways and put in place a volunteer continuity plan.

Technology

13 The second T is Technology. On the digital front, our SSAs can tap on the second tranche of The Invictus Fund to acquire digital technology. This ranges from business continuity and productivity tools, to more specialised and complex systems to scale productivity and operational efficiency.

14 For smaller SSAs, you can tap on the Fund to acquire a baseline of corporate tools, including Finance or HR applications. NCSS will also be launching a one-stop technology hub, called “Tech-and-GO!”, to help SSAs who may need more support to identify and implement technology. The hub provides guidance on the suitability of pre-scoped digital solutions – which makes technology and IT equipment more accessible. For larger SSAs that are already well ahead in your own digitalisation journey, NCSS will work with you to pilot technology tools that can transform the way we deliver services. We hope it can eventually provide a model for others in the sector to learn from.

15 Successful digital transformation is not just about implementing technology. It is also about building capabilities – from the leadership level to general staff awareness. The “Tech-and-GO!” Hub will also offer SSAs curated training courses at the strategic, managerial, and operational levels.

Transformation

16 Finally, on the last T – Transformation. We need to continually enhance our organisational capabilities so that we can deliver quality, innovative and sustainable solutions to service users. At the core of every organisation are our people. Therefore, we also need to be equipped to address employee-related matters and develop our organisation’s human capital. To this end, NCSS launched the Organisation Development (OD) Journey in 2018, to overwhelming response from the sector. Of the 28 SSAs selected to participate, 12 have successfully transited to implementing their transformation plans. They include TOUCH Community Services, SHINE Children and Youth Services, and TSAO Foundation.

17 The OD Journey has taught us that the domains of Knowledge, People, Processes and Strategy are crucial ingredients in the transformation process of our SSAs, and the sector at large. The OD journey will be a continuous one, as we learn and improve the way we do things. NCSS will continue to share useful information and support future initiatives in organisational transformation to uplift the sector.

Achieving SSA 3.0 together

18 With the 3Ts – Talent, Technology and Transformation, let us work together to achieve SSA 3.0. The Government cannot do this alone, and we need everyone coming onboard. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank some of our partners. They include donors to The Invictus Fund through Community Chest like Standard Chartered and Mr Prajogo Pangestu (PANG-geh-stu), and technology enablers like Epsilon, Facebook and ThunderQuote. We are grateful for the many contributions from the community and our corporate partners.

19 Beyond the current crisis, there are other needs that loom on the horizon which require continued funding. It has been a challenge. Like some of our SSAs, Community Chest has seen a significant drop in donations to its funded programmes not directly related to COVID-19. In fact, we project a 20% to 30% drop in donations in 2020. If this continues, it would become a longer-term funding issue for the sector. Therefore, I would like to appeal to our corporate partners present today for your continued support, as well as to the larger business community. We want to ensure that Community Chest and our SSAs can continue to provide the much-needed services to our vulnerable groups.

20 I understand that some SSAs and corporate partners will be sharing their journeys in a short while. I am looking forward and hope that these will inspire more SSAs to embark on their transformation journey today. NCSS will also be providing more details for the schemes. We look forward partnering you on our journey towards SSA 3.0. Together, we will emerge stronger.

21 I wish everyone a fruitful morning ahead. Thank you.