



# **Vision 2008 - Towards 50 Years of Structured Social Services**

**REACHING OUT**  
*Changing Lives*

Serial No: 025/PD06/AUG04

Prepared by NCSS with inputs from Ministries and Voluntary Welfare Organisations

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## **VISION 2008: TOWARDS 50 YEARS OF STRUCTURED SOCIAL SERVICES**

### **BACKGROUND**

The year 2008 will mark 50 years of structured social services in Singapore, 1958 being the year that the then Singapore Council of Social Service was established to coordinate the services of Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWO). This will be an opportune time, in anticipation of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, to review progress, sharpen focus and define further directions for the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) and the social service sector. This exercise, which will be named Vision 2008, will be undertaken with reference to the NCSS Vision of Social Services in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (SS21 Vision).

2 Launched in 1999, the SS21 Vision examined the strategic drivers for change and mapped out directions for the social service sector for the 21<sup>st</sup> century under the broad categories of **Social Service Areas, Volunteerism, Funding & Accountability, Governance & Management, and Strategic Partnerships**. An examination of the SS21 Vision reveals that it is still valid and relevant. Hence, Vision 2008 will set directions that are in line with the SS21 Vision. (See Annex A for details on NCSS initiatives and achievements in support of SS21 Vision.)

### **SOCIAL TRENDS, SCENARIOS AND DRIVERS FOR CHANGE**

3 Globally and in Singapore, we are facing an increasingly volatile socio-economic environment. Social and demographic trends indicate new and emerging social issues and needs that have important implications on social service planning and development. The economic and social progress of Singapore has also led to changes in society in terms of its levels of affluence and education.

4 The anticipated trends that will affect the social service scene for the next 4 to 5 years can be summarised as follows:

- a ***Ageing population*** – Singapore has one of the fastest ageing populations in the world. In year 2003, 1 in 13 (or 7.6%) of the population was 65 years and above.<sup>1</sup> In year 2030, 1 in 5 (or 19%) of the population will be elderly.<sup>2</sup> The trend for the next 4 to 5 years will be an increased pace

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, Statistics and Resource, Information on Elderly, [http://app.mcys.gov.sg/web/indv\\_researchstd.asp?szMod=indv&szSubMod=researchstd](http://app.mcys.gov.sg/web/indv_researchstd.asp?szMod=indv&szSubMod=researchstd)

<sup>2</sup> Source: Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, Statistics and Resource, Information on Elderly, [http://app.mcys.gov.sg/web/indv\\_researchstd.asp?szMod=indv&szSubMod=researchstd](http://app.mcys.gov.sg/web/indv_researchstd.asp?szMod=indv&szSubMod=researchstd)

of ageing in our population. With smaller families, caregivers for the elderly will face increasing stresses. Also, the impending scenario in the year 2030 will mean a compelling need to put in place more programmes and services for the elderly, both mainstream and disadvantaged.

- b ***Low economic growth & non-traditional clients of social services*** – Economic growth in Singapore will not be at the high numbers of the 1980s and 1990s. This means that there will be a strain on resources for social service organisations, from both government and community sources. The economic slowdown has also led to an increase in the number of workers being retrenched and number of failed businesses. Many of those who have not traditionally needed social services are now in need of such services. This group of non-traditional poor clients will steadily swell.
- c ***Limited employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups*** – The average unemployment rate for the period from year 2002–2003 was 4.6%, an increase from year 2000–2001 of 3.2%.<sup>3</sup> The group of able-bodied employed persons will compete fiercely for jobs and this will mean less employment opportunities for persons with disability, those who are discharged from prisons and older workers. The whole philosophy of integration of the disadvantaged groups into mainstream employment needs to be reviewed to take into account the new reality.
- d ***Stresses affecting mental health of Singaporeans*** – The mental health of the population has increasingly been an area of concern. Singaporeans face more stress at the workplace owing to stiff economic competition and associated societal pressures. A segment that has escaped the radar of the mental health authorities is the working adults. The current economic climate will no doubt inflict more stresses on this particular group, since they are especially susceptible to worries of unemployment, retrenchment and economic uncertainty.
- e ***Rising trend in juvenile delinquency*** – There has been an increase in the number of juveniles arrested for offences since year 2002, out of which four-fifths were students. Young persons are valuable assets to our nation. Each person lost to juvenile delinquency is a loss to our society. Considerations should be made to address the needs of youths at-risk of delinquency or leaving schools prematurely and to provide opportunities for them to be re-integrated into the education system or be meaningfully engaged in employment.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Ministry of Manpower, Labour Market Statistics, Unemployment, [http://www.mom.gov.sg/MOM/CDA\\_PopUp/1,1135,4023-----5838----,00.html](http://www.mom.gov.sg/MOM/CDA_PopUp/1,1135,4023-----5838----,00.html)

- f ***Higher educated Singaporeans leading to higher expectations*** – The average monthly nominal income per employee has risen from \$1,918 in year 1993 to \$3,213 in year 2003.<sup>4</sup> The level of education in Singapore has also improved significantly, with 10,010 students graduating from universities in year 2003 compared to 7,248 in year 1993.<sup>5</sup> With higher levels of affluence and education, society will have higher expectations of service quality and standards, and there will be greater public interest and concern about the use of funds donated to social services.
- g ***Better technology for human services*** – Developed countries have tapped on technology for human services for some time. Such technology includes information and communications technology as well as assistive technology and devices. Singapore needs to take major steps in this direction, not only as a way to manage the situation of limited resources but also, and more importantly, as a way of enhancing service quality in the social services.

All the above factors present a significant impetus for change in the social service sector, and specifically underscores the need for a mature social service system to meet the new and increasingly complex needs of society.

## **STRATEGIC THRUSTS OF VISION 2008**

### **(A) New services to meet emerging needs**

5 ***Community-based and caregiver services for the ageing population*** – To address the issues concerning Singapore's rapidly ageing population and the rising trend of larger numbers of small families, NCSS will have to work with the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) and social service providers to put in place quality, effective and more integrated **community-based and caregiver services** in addition to residential and institutional services. Community-based services will support and assist in the clients' integration into the mainstream community, and have a tremendous value in reaffirming the clients' dignity and self-esteem in their familiar living environment. Caregiver services will ease the burden of working Singaporeans now experiencing a 'sandwich effect' having to care for aged parents as well as young children at the same time.

6 ***Active ageing*** – The financial, health and psycho-social well being of the elderly will be one of the major challenges of our nation. While some will need

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<sup>4</sup> Source: Ministry of Manpower, Labour Market Statistics, Earnings and Wages, [http://www.mom.gov.sg/MOM/CDA\\_PopUp/1,1135,4023-----4275\\_3031---6398----,00.html](http://www.mom.gov.sg/MOM/CDA_PopUp/1,1135,4023-----4275_3031---6398----,00.html)

<sup>5</sup> Source: Ministry of Education, Education Statistics Digest Online, <http://sam11.moe.gov.sg/esd/extract27.asp?UTotal=on&YearFrom=1992&YearTo=2003&MaleFemale=on>

services and assistance, the bulk of the elderly of the future will still be able to stay active and contribute. There is a tendency for social services to focus on the down and out, and neglect the mainstream. NCSS will work with selected VWOs and experts to generate ideas and formulate effective **initiatives to promote active ageing in Singapore**. The idea of a “third age” with suggestions for programmes and services will be developed for consideration by the government for national implementation.

7 ***Support for the new disadvantaged persons*** – Economic restructuring will continue to affect many more individuals and families who will find it difficult to make ends meet. The government’s philosophy in financial assistance has emphasised on promoting self-reliance and preventing dependency. With this goal, NCSS will work with VWOs to develop enterprising **social support programmes for families** undergoing transitional poverty. NCSS will also continue to provide inputs to the MCYS in ensuring that the safety nets are adequate to meet the general needs of Singaporeans.

8 ***Integration of persons with disability into mainstream employment*** – Low value-added jobs have been moving out of Singapore and economic restructuring has left many able-bodied persons unemployed. While NCSS will continue to advocate for integrated employment for persons with disability, the reality is such that persons will find it much more difficult to secure employment in the mainstream. The need for **more sheltered workshops and co-ordinated training-for-placement programmes** for these people will have to be seriously explored, and plans put into place quickly to address the employment situation for them. To ensure that our children with special needs receive better services, NCSS will work with MOE to suggest new developmental projects to improve the quality of special education curriculum and pedagogy, and to create more avenues for staff training and professional development. NCSS will also consider differentiated solutions for different segments of people with disability.

9 ***Mental health and family support among Singaporeans*** – NCSS will embark on new and substantial efforts to promote and maintain good mental health in the various segments of the population. It will also develop service models for children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). To help the elderly cope with depression, NCSS will work with VWOs to develop and provide **specialised elderly support programmes** dedicated to fighting elder neglect and abuse, the primary causes of depression and suicidal tendencies. NCSS will also work with existing community-based mental health service providers such as the counselling centres and hotline services to provide **early detection and intervention for mental health issues** affecting individuals of different age groups.

10 *School social work service for youths* – NCSS will work towards **extending school social work services** to more schools island-wide, and enhancing the levels of these services to provide early detection and intervention in schools, bearing in mind issues facing youths and delinquents. NCSS will actively promote the development of youth programmes for premature school leavers and youth-at-risks. NCSS will also work with the Inter-Ministry on Youth Crime and the National Crime Prevention Council on initiatives to develop upstream preventive programmes to address the youth crime situation in Singapore.

11 *Advocacy for marginalised groups* – NCSS will also need to consider how to enhance its advocacy role. In addition to advocating for the underprivileged and the disadvantaged, the scope of advocacy should be expanded to meet new non-traditional needs brought about by changing social trends. NCSS needs to consider how to enhance advocacy efforts for **for marginalised groups** such as single parents, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infected persons and those with mental health problems. NCSS will also continue to work with the relevant government agencies and VWOs to explore the development of a **Universal Design for transportation to benefit the elderly and persons with disability**. This would enable these two groups to be better integrated in the work and social aspects of life through seamless and accessible transport services.

**(B) Higher service standards – ultimately leading to accreditation of services and social service professionals**

12 *Higher service quality & standards* - With higher levels of affluence and education, society will have higher expectations and demands for better quality and higher standards of social services. NCSS has all along paid special attention to promoting and enhancing the quality and standard of services. The **Programme Evaluation System (PES) and the Best Practice Guidelines (BPG)** are specifically designed for this purpose. NCSS will periodically review the effectiveness of these systems in serving their objectives. The Social Service Training Institute (SSTI) was set up to perform a strategic leadership role in training and development for the social service sector. In the years ahead, NCSS expects greater demand for even higher standards and quality of services.

13 *Sustainability of service quality* - To ensure sustainability of quality and standards of services to meet increasing expectations of the public, there is a need for **accreditation of services**. Donors, volunteers, service recipients and the public will expect VWOs to attain high standards of professionalism and organisational excellence. NCSS has also begun considerations for an **outcome-based planning and funding model** that will establish an explicit focus on the achievement of results in the sector, and will pursue this initiative towards the end

of further enhancing the quality of social services. In addition, VWOs will also be expected by the public to deliver programmes and services that adhere to excellent standards. In this regard, the roles and functions of SSTI will be further developed, and the institute will collaborate with relevant professional associations to provide continuing education programmes to prepare for the eventual **accreditation of social service professionals**.

### **(C) Optimisation of social service delivery**

14 ***Better service integration & differentiation of services*** - The increasing affluence of the clients of social services will also call for a review of service provision modes. Not only are clients demanding better quality services, there are also more people who can afford and willing to pay for such services. Hence, provision of social services should not only be confined to welfare relief for the disadvantaged, but also to cater for the social needs of those who can pay for the services. There is a growing need to consider **segregating services from charity**. Increasingly, the social service sector will have to provide services not just for charitable causes, but also to meet a pure and simple social demand. Such services can aim to have the highest possible quality standard that will come at a price for those who can afford to pay.

15 NCSS will continue to develop the concept of **integration of services** and service hubs to extend the depth and reach of services to service users. This will enhance service quality with optimisation of resources.

### **(D) Technology for human services**

16 ***Improvement to service delivery with technology*** - Rapid technological advances will continue to have a significant impact on information sharing and service delivery in social services. To further enhance the info-communications technology (ICT) capabilities of VWOs, NCSS will embark on the implementation of **social service-wide systems**. Such systems will allow VWOs to reap the benefits of ICT systems cost effectively. The development of the following service-wide systems has recently been initiated – the electronic Case Management System (eCMS) which will enable VWOs to manage their case management processes with greater efficiency, and the electronic Volunteer Management System (eVMS) which will allow VWOs to better profile and manage their volunteers, thus further developing and maximising their contributions.

17 ***Structured information & planning system*** – To meet the expectations of the increasingly affluent and educated public, there is need to provide them with relevant, adequate and updated information on social services. The public needs to

be appropriately informed to make the right demands and choices on social services. There is a need to set up a system in collaboration with the government, such as the MCYS, Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) etc., to collect relevant and **structured information on social services** and make it easily accessible to the public via an information repository. Such information and other information from official sources will also be important for the sector to conduct relevant research for the purpose of social service planning and advocacy. NCSS will also develop an **electronic social service mapping system** to aid service planning efforts – this system could be used to plot demographic data, mark out service boundaries and could highlight areas of duplication or where services are inadequate. With a more structured information and planning system in place, the social service sector will be able to respond more effectively and swiftly to social service scenarios and trends.

#### **(E) Exemplary levels of accountability and transparency – leading to excellence in non-profit governance and management**

18 *Non-profit excellence* - Along with the call for higher standards and quality are the corresponding demands for higher **accountability and transparency** of the sector. The Code of Governance & Management for VWOs drawn up by NCSS for the sector was an important first step towards the right direction. Public expectations on VWOs will continue to grow high, and NCSS should play the role to facilitate the capability building of VWOs not just to meet such demands for accountability and transparency, but also for all aspects of management excellence.

19 To achieve management excellence, a **centre or NCSS department for Non-Profit Management** could be considered to coordinate efforts to ensure the sector will grow towards organisation excellence and accredited service provision.

#### **(F) Greater meaning and significance to social service volunteering and giving**

20 *Greater meaning in giving and serving* - To garner a greater voluntary and philanthropic spirit amongst Singaporeans, NCSS and the Community Chest will need to **‘revolutionise’ and redefine the experience of donors and volunteers**, infusing greater meaning and significance to social service volunteering and giving. Philanthropic contributions and volunteering will be more meaningfully defined to provide donors and volunteers with genuine heartfelt experiences and engagement. **Community Chest will also reach out to groups with untapped potential**, including the Chinese-speaking community which, has been contributing to charity but, presents significant opportunities and prospects for more involved partnerships. The growing number of foundations to be set up will pose as a new challenge. The Community Chest will work to continue to be the

‘primary depository’ for charity donations particularly in times of national or community emergencies, and to strive to be the major choice for foundations to channel their funds for worthy charitable causes and supportable services and programmes. Further efforts will also be made to **enhance volunteer training, development, management** and retention to foster substance and meaning for volunteerism. Further efforts will be made to develop and strategise the NCSS Volunteer Circle towards achieving its mission of enhancing social service volunteerism.

21 The Community Chest will turn 21 in year 2004, and it will be an opportune time to re-affirm its role as major fund-raiser for strategic partners, its growing emphasis on the meeting of programme outcomes through funding, and its strategic collaboration with corporate philanthropists, individual donors and VWOs.

**(G) Preservation and affirmation of the dignity of social service recipients to help them achieve their fullest potential within society**

22 *Social Entrepreneurship* – NCSS’ ultimate purpose is to ensure that every person has the opportunity to live a life of dignity to his or her fullest potential within society. While meeting their needs, NCSS will seek to **help social service recipients preserve and affirm their self-worth and dignity**. Towards this end, NCSS will assist MCYS in facilitating the **development of social enterprises** which will lead to the engagement of service users in productive employment, either in providing services or manufacturing products of value to society, thereby reaffirming the self-worth and dignity of social service recipients.

**(H) Organisational excellence for NCSS**

23 *Vision & Mission* – NCSS must prepare itself for the formidable task of leading the sector in the years ahead when the public will have higher demands for quality, standards, accountability, transparency, professionalism and integrity in the sector. It is of utmost importance that NCSS focus on a dedicated mission, possess the appropriate values and work together within a shared culture. The NCSS Mission Statement was recently reviewed in year 2002, highlighting the **core businesses** for NCSS, and for the first time drawing up the corporate **core values** for NCSS. The **culture statements** that will be commonly and passionately shared by all staff have also been drawn up.

24 *Organisational excellence* – NCSS will have to continue to strive for organisational excellence in order to lead the sector. The Council has implemented the **Net Economic Value (NEV)** and the **Balanced Scorecard**

(BSC), and will also be implementing the **People Developer Standards (PDS)** while aiming to achieve the standards associated with the **Singapore Quality Class (SQC)**. NCSS will also embark on efforts to **further harness ICT** in the Council's work and in the provision of its services to VWOs. In the longer term, NCSS may consider **bringing the expertise it has developed in areas such as enhancing service standards and manpower training and development to the region.**

## **MAJOR INITIATIVES TOWARDS ACHIEVING VISION 2008**

25 With these social changes and drivers for change, the Vision 2008 can be translated into major milestone initiatives for the 4 years leading to 2008. These initiatives are all aligned to the SS21 Vision. The possible major milestone initiatives to be considered are as follows:

### **(A) New services to meet emerging needs**

- i Develop quality, effective and more integrated community-based and caregiver services
- ii Promote active ageing and develop the concept of the "third age"
- iii Embark on initiatives to help new disadvantaged persons
- iv Promote good mental health among Singaporeans
- v Enhance school social work programme in particular to prevent delinquency
- vi Develop effective measures to improve employment for persons with disability
- vii Improve transportation system for persons with disability
- viii Advocate for marginalised groups (e.g., single parents, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infected persons)
- ix Suggest new developmental projects to improve the quality of special education curriculum and pedagogy

### **(B) Higher service standards**

- i Implement Programme Evaluation System (PES) and Best Practice Guidelines (BPG) and progress towards accreditation of social services
- ii Develop and implement an outcome-based planning and funding model
- iii Further develop SSTI and provide continuing education programmes for professionals to prepare for eventual accreditation of social service professionals

### **(C) Optimisation of social service delivery**

- i Develop service hubs

- ii Formulate concept of funding by partnership amongst VWOs
- iii Examine differentiation of services for niche client groups

**(D) Technology for human services**

- i Develop and implement social service-wide services (eg. electronic Case Management System, electronic Volunteer Management System)
- ii Develop an electronic social service mapping system
- iii Set up a social service information repository

**(E) Exemplary levels of accountability and transparency**

- i Set up a centre/NCSS department for non-profit management
- ii Ensure VWO compliance of priority guidelines in the Code of Governance

**(F) Greater meaning and significance to social service volunteering and giving**

- i Formulate initiatives to infuse greater meaning and significance to social service volunteering and giving
- ii Develop and strategise NCSS Volunteer Circle towards achieving its mission of enhancing social service volunteering
- iii Solicit greater support from groups with untapped potential including the Chinese-speaking community
- iv Re-affirm the role of Community Chest, especially in national or community emergencies

**(G) Affirmation of the dignity of social service recipients**

- i Propose new initiatives to involve social service recipients in projects to garner resources for social services
- ii Facilitate the development of social enterprises which will lead to the engagement of service users in productive employment

**(H) Achievement of organisational excellence for NCSS**

- i Develop an NCSS service quality pledge
- ii Achieve Singapore Quality Class (SQC) standards
- iii Implement People Developer Standards (PDS)
- iv Implement Net Economic Value (NEV) and Balanced Scorecard (BSC)
- v Formulate NCSS Info-Communications Technology (ICT) Masterplan II (development of e-services & e-philanthropy initiatives)

- vi Bring NCSS expertise to the region (expertise in areas such as enhancing service standards, manpower training and development, etc.)

## **CONCLUSION**

26 The Vision 2008 exercise is undertaken to examine prevailing social trends and identify major drivers for change to shape considerations for work priorities leading up to year 2008 in support of the SS21 Vision. It aims to further define the strategic focus and direction for NCSS and social service sector towards year 2008 and beyond. It is envisaged that the Vision 2008 can serve as a guide for the NCSS and VWOs, working with government ministries, to develop major milestone initiatives to meet emerging needs, address service gaps, and enhance service delivery towards better service provision for social service users.

## **NCSS Initiatives and Achievements in Support of SS21 Vision Since 1999**

### Social Service Areas

1 The SS21 Vision envisages an integrated community-based approach to service planning and delivery. There will also be wider accessibility, stronger outreach and greater professionalism of services.

2 The initiatives of NCSS since 1999 have been in support of the SS21 Vision in the Social Service Areas. Firstly, funding was given to new programmes such as Early Intervention Programme for children with autism and special needs, School Social Work, Cyber Counselling for Youth, Assistive Technology Centre for the Disabled and Dementia Day Care. In addition, social service networks for VWOs were established. They include the Mental Health Network, Special Education Network, and Training and Employment Network. Thirdly, the Economic Crisis Monitoring System was implemented to identify and track significant social trends. The Programme Evaluation System and Best Practice Guidelines (BPG) were also developed and implemented. Finally, the Social Service Training Institute (SSTI) was established for greater professionalism of services.

### Volunteerism

3 The vision for Volunteerism under SS21 Vision includes greater efforts towards enhancing volunteer recruitment and management. The promotion of corporate volunteerism will also be another primary focus. The NCSS initiatives and achievements in support of the vision for Volunteerism include the launch of the NCSS Volunteer Circle in September 2003 and the development of the Volunteer Management Programme.

### Funding & Accountability

4 In the SS21 Vision, the vision for the social service sector under the category of Funding & Accountability includes the enhancement of funder-funded strategic partnerships and efforts by social service agencies to work towards greater cost effectiveness and the optimal use of resources.

5 NCSS has supported this vision through its initiatives. These include the implementation of the MOF requirement for VWOs to disclose key financial information and other essential information on the NCSS website and the revision

of the budget cycle for VWOs to a two-yearly basis. In addition, NCSS is also currently studying how to enhance PES to outcome-based funding and how to fund VWOs by partnership for greater cost effectiveness.

### Governance & Management

6 The SS21 Vision also envisages certain directions for the social service sector in the area of Governance & Management. Firstly, there will be visionary boards that will provide leadership and assume ultimate responsibility of the organisations. In addition, the management of structures of agencies will facilitate the work of both staff and volunteers.

7 The initiatives of NCSS have worked towards the realisation of this vision. Firstly, the Code of Governance and Management for VWOs in Singapore was developed and implemented. Secondly, NCSS also launched the Senior Management Programme for Social Service to develop core competencies of executive heads of agencies.

### Strategic Partnerships

8 Finally, the SS21 Vision also maps out a vision for the social service sector in the area of Strategic Partnerships. The SS21 Vision envisages that the social service sector will work in partnership with the public sector, the private sector and the community. In addition, NCSS will continue to strengthen its partnership with social service agencies and provide consultancy services to enhance their effectiveness.

9 Since 1999, NCSS has worked towards the enhancement of strategic partnerships for the social service sector. The Corporate Community Involvement Programme (CCIP) was successfully implemented and is currently ongoing. Secondly, the Community Chest, which has completed its rebranding, continues to raise funds through strategic partnerships.

10 NCSS has also embarked on initiatives to strengthen its partnership with social service agencies and provide consultancy to enhance their effectiveness. Firstly, two NCSS Members Conference have been conducted. The Management Enhancement Consultancy Programme was also launched for VWOs to develop organisational management capabilities. In addition, the \$30 million VWO Capability Fund (VCF) was rolled out to strengthen and equip VWOs with the necessary resource and expertise. Lastly, NCSS appointed desk heads to CDCs to facilitate collaborative efforts between VWOs, CDCs and NCSS.