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**SPEECH BY MR MASAGOS ZULKIFLI,  
MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT AND SECOND MINISTER FOR  
HEALTH  
AT THE NCSS VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP SERIES,  
ON 29 MAY 2023, 3.00PM AT SMU ADMIN BUILDING**

1. Good afternoon. I am pleased to join you for the NCSS Volunteer Management Leadership Series and to be in the good company of many social sector leaders here today.
2. The theme of today's event 'Increasing your Volunteer Partnerships by Improving The Volunteer Experience' is apt as social service agencies seek to partner better with volunteers to amplify the impact in the communities that they work in.

**The evolution of volunteerism**

3. We have made progress in partnering with volunteers over the years. Compared to a decade ago, SSAs today place more emphasis on volunteer management practices. We see more SSAs hiring a full-time volunteer manager and putting in place a volunteer management system. With these dedicated efforts, SSAs have been able to partner with volunteers to extend their reach and amplify their impact.
4. Nevertheless, the volunteerism landscape is changing.
5. There is a rise in skills-based volunteerism. Today, many companies and individuals want to use their professional and specific skills to assist SSAs and better serve beneficiaries.

6. In addition, volunteers today want to be meaningfully engaged and wish to see impact. As a society, we are moving away from ad-hoc volunteering to more deliberate and sustained efforts to uplift those in need.
7. Many individuals are purpose-driven and seek to bond with others with a shared vision through volunteering. Besides having values that resonates with the organisation, volunteers also care about the environment they volunteer in, and the community that they are volunteering alongside.
8. Volunteer management is thus more important than ever. We need to better match volunteers and their skills and the needs in the community, ensure meaningful engagement, and harness their energies effectively. Good volunteer management can have an enormous impact on the work that we do – it can enable SSAs to scale up their programmes, sustain their efforts and serve many more beneficiaries.

### **First Volunteer Experience Research Study**

9. Many SSAs want to be able to better partners with volunteers. But just as there are many roads to Rome; there are many ways in which agencies can implement volunteer management strategies. Not all would be as effective. Many may wonder how they can best go about this in our Singapore context.
10. I'm glad therefore to see Institutions of Higher Learning like SMU conducting analysis and generating insights to support SSAs. On this specific area of volunteer management, SMU's Lien Centre for Social Innovation, worked together with NCSS to conduct the first ever Volunteer Experience Research Study. The study seeks to understand the perspectives of volunteers and volunteer managers in the sector, and has recommendations on how we can enhance the volunteer experience to better engage and retain volunteers.

11. For example, the study identified key reasons that motivate individuals to volunteer. Many continue to volunteer because they are aligned to what the organisation stands for and because of the difference that they make through volunteering. This can inform organisation's retention strategies. Organisations can better communicate with volunteers to share the impact that these volunteers make in the community, and consistently convey their organisation's ethos to maintain volunteers' sense of purpose.
12. Beyond generating findings, The Lien Centre for Social Innovation and NCSS have translated the study into a useful resource for SSAs. They have developed a framework on the key elements of a quality volunteering experience and have provided practicable and actionable steps that SSAs can adopt. I hope that many SSAs will find these research findings and resources useful.

### **Enhancing the volunteer experience; strengthening the social sector**

13. We can achieve more when we work together than when we go at it alone. Volunteers bring their unique skillsets and energies; SSAs have deep knowledge of the communities they serve in and understanding of the needs in these communities. It is better to work together to ensure meaningful and sustained impact.
14. To enable better partnerships, the Government wants to support SSAs in volunteer management. I would like to mention a few of these initiatives. NCSS provides resources to support SSAs in improving their volunteer management strategies through the Volunteer Resource Hub. SSAs can tap on toolkits to identify their strengths and gaps in volunteer management, and reference resources to develop better practices. Beyond matching volunteers to various opportunities, SG Cares Volunteer Centres provide training on volunteer management strategies to help SSAs better recruit, engage and retain volunteers. There are also various platforms that bring partners together to learn from one

another, such as the SG Cares Community Networks and NCSS' Volunteer Management Network.

15. I'm glad to know that several SSAs have benefitted from these resources and are implementing good practices to improve the experience for their volunteers. One such entity is New Life Stories, an agency that supports families with a loved one who is incarcerated. NLS has leveraged technology to support their volunteers in their work with families. Volunteers are equipped to use the Family Advocacy Support Tool (FAST) to assess the reading skills of children, and develop activities to help improve the literacy abilities of these children. In addition, to facilitate mutual support and camaraderie among volunteers, NLS organises regular Sharing Circle sessions. During these sessions, volunteers discuss how to better support the children, sharing best practices and providing suggestions for each other. The volunteer management team at NLS also conducts check-ins with their volunteers and makes an effort to regularly appreciate them. With these efforts, volunteers know that they are part for the New Life Stories community and are inspired to sustain their efforts.

16. We encourage all social service agencies to strengthen volunteer management within your various agencies.

## **Conclusion**

17. Today, we are gathered across different sectors – researchers, social service agencies, practitioners, and the Government. It is unique picture of various partners in the social sector coming together to help one another. It is a reflection of the types of partnership that we want to celebrate in this Year of Celebrating Social Service Partners.

18. This afternoon, let us put our minds together to learn from one another. Let us discuss how we can enhance volunteer management and bring more onboard the meaningful work of uplifting individuals and families in our society.

19. I wish everyone a meaningful session and fruitful dialogue ahead.