

## MEDIA RELEASE

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## PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE EMPOWERING FOR LIFE FUND WILL EXTEND ITS FUNDING PERIOD TO THREE YEARS

- *President's Challenge 2019 will raise funds for 67 organisations*

**SINGAPORE 30 JANUARY 2019** – The **President's Challenge Empowering for Life Fund (ELF)** will ramp up support for vulnerable groups, and will fund each approved project for up to three years, instead of the initial one year. This is to recognise that new models of support will need time and space to develop and grow. This was announced by President Halimah Yacob at the launch of President's Challenge 2019, held in conjunction with the Singapore Mental Health Conference.

“President's Challenge will continue to broaden access to skills and resources to support self-reliance and a sustainable recovery for vulnerable groups. By extending the period of funding support for the Empowering for Life Fund, and giving our VWOs the assurance and certainty of funding support over a longer period of time, I hope that more will be open to try out new approaches that may prove to be more effective in supporting the vulnerable in our midst”, said President Halimah Yacob.

An example of an ELF programme is the **Transitional Employment and Work Integration Programme (TEWIP)** by **Singapore Anglican Community Services (SACS)**. This pilot programme prepares persons with mental health conditions to re-enter the workforce. Service users receive real world work opportunities in SACS's internal work units and social enterprises, which helps them to build job stamina and get ready for open employment. Successful graduates from the TEWIP will be connected to respective employment opportunities and job placements.

One of the service users who will benefit from TEWIP is Li Hee Meng, 52. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia after the closure of his fish business and was referred to Anglican Care Centre (ACC) (Hougang), a service of Singapore Anglican Community Services, for psychiatric rehabilitation. At ACC (Hougang), Hee Meng received vocational rehabilitation services within the centre, including job matching support by his Employment Specialist. Hee Meng was able to successfully transit from vocational training to part-time employment as a dish collector, and he will be starting in a new job as a storekeeper at a supermarket.

“The closure of my fish business had a significant impact on my mental health, self-image and confidence. As a person in recovery from schizophrenia, I had to work extra hard to rebuild my life. With the supervision and encouragement of my Employment Specialist, I benefitted from on-the-job training and coaching. Since being successfully employed, I’ve also benefitted from gained confidence and built new bonds with my colleagues. I am looking forward to being financially independent and to purchase a flat on my own”, said Li Hee Meng.

The TEWIP is one of 11 programmes that will be supported by ELF in 2019. Each programme will look into empowering a different disadvantaged group in our society, including low-income families, seniors and persons with disabilities. One other innovative pilot is the **Inclusive and Inter-Generation Work Team programme** developed by **Centre for Seniors** in partnership with private companies. Under this programme, senior employees and retirees act as mentors and job coaches to youth with disabilities, to support their transition into the workforce.

Beyond supporting vulnerable groups in the area of skills training and employability, the 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 67 benefitting organisations.

At the event, **President Halimah Yacob** also spoke about the importance of a community approach in helping persons with mental health conditions. According to findings from the second Singapore Mental Health Study, one in seven people in Singapore have experienced a mood, anxiety or alcohol use disorder in their lifetime, with three quarters of whom not seeking help. President Halimah Yacob emphasised the need for the community to help those with mental health conditions feel comfortable in coming forward to seek help, as timely interventions facilitate better recovery outcomes.

In October 2018, President Halimah Yacob had announced that mental health has been designated as the focus area of President’s Challenge 2019. By spotlighting on mental health, she hopes that the community will be more aware of the needs of persons with mental health condition and can better support them and their caregivers.

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**About President's Challenge**

The President's Challenge is an annual community outreach and fund-raising campaign for beneficiaries selected every year 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 those who are less fortunate, and is a call to all Singaporeans to do their part to build a more caring and inclusive society. 100% of donations raised under President's Challenge go to charities, causes and social service organisations supported by President's Challenge.

President's Challenge was established in 2000 by the late Mr S R Nathan to bring the community together to help the less fortunate. In 2012, Dr Tony Tan expanded the areas of focus to include Volunteerism and Social Enterprises. In 2018, President Halimah Yacob refocused the effort of President's Challenge towards the empowerment of vulnerable groups with skills and employability. An Empowering for Life Fund was set up to support programmes in skills upgrading, capacity building and employment of vulnerable groups. President's Challenge aims to raise \$10 million for the Empowering for Life Fund over the next 5 years, and the Government will provide dollar-for-dollar matching.