

**WRITTEN RESPONSE TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION BY
MINISTER CHAN CHUN SING, DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF PEOPLE'S
ASSOCIATION ON MONDAY, 5 APRIL 2021**

**CDCs' Role in Singapore's Ecosystem of Building a Cohesive
Society**

Question

Mr Leong Mun Wai: To ask the Minister for Culture, Community and Youth (a) in the last five years, what is the amount of corporate donations received by the Community Development Councils (CDCs) collectively; and (b) of this amount, how much has been passed on to its partners that are Social Service Agencies.

Response

Minister Chan Chun Sing, Deputy Chairman of People's Association (PA), on behalf of the Ministry for Culture, Community and Youth:

1 To Mr Leong Mun Wai's question, let me clarify that the work of the CDCs goes beyond the delivery of social services and the raising of funds.

2 The CDCs mobilise time, talent and treasures for many causes for the good of our community, including encouraging the more able in society to help the less able. They champion the culture of contributing to our society by individuals, private and public organisations.

3 From financial years 2015 to 2019, the CDCs raised an average of almost \$12 million every year with the help of corporates, individuals and partners. All these donations go towards funding community programmes and local assistance initiatives that we develop with our network of

partners and is not limited to the SSAs. Members can check out the CDC websites for their various programmes.

4 It would be incorrect to reduce the role of CDCs to that of a fundraiser, transferring donations raised by CDCs to our partners or SSA. The CDCs work closely with many partners to identify emerging needs in the community and support them with the necessary resources to execute programmes and schemes. Besides customising assistance schemes to support the less able, the CDCs co-create and co-develop with various partners on community programmes revolving around building social capital and social resilience. For examples, programmes related to providing employment and employability, giving care to vulnerable residents and caregivers, promoting health and wellness, and protecting the environment.

5 These initiatives require more than just money. More importantly, we need volunteers who are willing to contribute their time and talent in the area of leadership and expertise into helping the community.

6 Each year, the CDCs mobilise about 11,000 active corporate and community volunteers who each serve no less than 16 hours. Together, we have been able to help over 780,000 beneficiaries in response to COVID-19 last year. Beyond volunteering in community programmes, our volunteers also help us identify emerging needs in the community and work with our partners to design and execute their own projects to help residents. This is the sort of active citizenry that exemplifies our commitment to creating a democracy of deeds.

7 Our social service and community causes ecosystems must remain nimble while achieving economies of scale. Nationwide policies are by design broad based, which may not be as targeted and localised enough for certain needs. On the other hand, local efforts are much more targeted but find it harder to achieve economies of scale, and to mobilise resources.

8 The CDCs play a unique role in the Singapore's ecosystem of building a cohesive society; mobilising volunteers and resources for diverse causes at the regional level. It seeks to balance customisation for local needs in a targeted way while achieving economies of scale. It gives us flexibility in using a wider range of models beyond the binary options of the national and local schemes.

9 When we measure the impact of CDCs, we must go beyond the figures and numbers of resources as inputs or beneficiaries as outputs. More importantly, it is about the outcomes: how cohesive our society is, the people we've brought together, the beneficiaries' lives we have touched, and the leaders we have nurtured. Ultimately, it is also about the spirit of being Singaporean, where we seek to pay forward what we have benefited from the past. We must look at all these indicators holistically when assessing the effectiveness of CDCs.

10 I must take this opportunity to thank all the contributions of our District Councillors, partners and volunteers; it is with their continued passion, hard work and leadership that CDCs are able to sustain the partnership and programmes to help the vulnerable amongst us and impact the larger community.