

Advertorial

An evolving view of giving – from ticking the box to creating ripples that change lives

Ms Pearlyn Phau's journey in philanthropy started abroad years ago. Today, as a donor of Community Chest's ONEfor10 x SHARE initiative, she's changing lives at home in Singapore.



A company team-building trip to orphanages along the Thai-Myanmar border inspired Ms Pearlyn Phau's journey of giving.

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Participating in charity fundraisers as a student left very little impression on Ms Pearlyn Phau. That might come as a surprise for some, as Ms Phau, group CEO of Singlife with Aviva, is known for her philanthropic efforts at home and abroad.

It was a company team-building trip to orphanages located along the remote Thai-Myanmar border that gave Ms Phau deeper insight into the power of giving.

“What started as a ‘tick the box’ trip ended up being one of the most meaningful journeys for me, where I got the chance to interact with stateless Shan refugees. The fact that they remained optimistic, resilient and positive really struck me. What these children need are opportunities.”

MAKING A DIFFERENCE, EFFECTIVELY

Children with special needs and youth-at-risk are the two groups closest to Ms Phau’s heart as a philanthropist. After her first trip to the Thai-Myanmar border, she returned repeatedly to the remote villages that had little contact with corporate social responsibility programmes apart from her own.

“Over the years, we saw the kids grow and their needs change,” she said. “As they grow, they need guidance in areas like dental hygiene, access to digital know-how and life skills – which, if not provided for, may result in them remaining in a cycle of poverty. This active involvement in their life journey meant that we could make a difference.”

In her opinion, organisations like Community Chest thus play an essential role in mobilising and directing resources to help solve these issues, as well as address other growing needs.

Ms Phau, who has been a Community Chest committee member since 2016 and is currently the vice chairperson, said that one major benefit of Community Chest is that it is an aggregator of social service needs, thanks to its unique position as the fundraising and engagement arm of the National Council of Social Service, which is the national coordinating body for social service agencies in Singapore.

Community Chest provides more than 100 social service agencies with a sustained source of funds to deliver critical services like special education, counselling services and caregiver support. These support the five causes of Community Chest: Children with special needs and youths-at-risk, adults with disabilities, persons with mental health conditions, and families and seniors in need of assistance. On average,

leading to abundance in some causes and severe shortages in others,” she explained, adding that she believes people generally want to help but do not know where their efforts can be channelled most effectively.

“Community Chest, through its network of social service centres, has a bird’s eye view of that and is in a better position to allocate funding most efficiently.”

While Ms Phau acknowledged that a one-off large donation is always welcome, predictable and sustainable funding is needed to better shape lives and plan futures.

In her personal capacity, she is a donor to Community Chest’s ONEfor10 x SHARE, an initiative that aims to connect those who have the resources and abilities to give, and communities in need of support in Singapore. Through it, philanthropists commit to fuss-free monthly donations of at least S\$1,000 to Community Chest. Donors who are interested in specific causes can work with Community Chest on personalised proposals to facilitate their giving.

100 per cent of donations to the Community Chest – which come with a 250 per cent tax exemption for donors – goes to its supported social service agencies, as the Tote Board covers a majority of fund-raising and operating costs. New and additional donations by individuals to SHARE are also matched by the Government, thus amplifying the impact of the original donation.

What Ms Phau also appreciates is that that ONEfor10 x SHARE donors are kept informed of the outcome of their giving, as Community Chest advises on the causes and impact of funded programmes. It also highlights worthy local causes that may not have gotten much attention as compared to those championed by more prominent international organisations.

“What we are propositioning to our high net-worth community is – let’s start looking in our own backyard and see how we can shape lives here first.”

BEING THE CHANGE SHE WANTS TO SEE

Ms Phau’s passion for driving change within the social service sector – whether in her professional or personal capacity – stems from a belief that those who have benefitted

An initiative like ONEfor10 x SHARE helps to bring the issue to the fore. It also helps to encourage future generations and the friends of donors to take that first step and contribute.”

As a parent, Ms Phau hopes that her son will understand that value of giving lies in one’s actions as well as donations: “Be the change we want to see, in order to make a difference to those around us.”

Looking back on her own philanthropic journey and its fateful start at a remote village orphanage, Ms Phau said she has realised that excessive wealth is not needed for happiness.

“Joy can be found in simple and small moments,” she said. “You don’t have to do a lot to bring a smile to others – a simple act of kindness creates a ripple. I am privileged to be able to help others and this motivates me to do more.”

[Kickstart your personalised giving journey](#) with the ONEfor10 x SHARE initiative by Community Chest.

Source: CNA
