

## **International Day for Eradication of Poverty - Panel Discussion: Down But Not Out!**

Presenters:

A/P Irene Y.H. Ng, Director, Social Service Research Centre

Dr Mathew Mathews, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Policy Studies

A/P Ho Kong Weng, Singapore Management University

Adjunct Asst. Prof Caroline Brassard, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

Date: 17 October 2017

Time: 4pm to 5:45pm

Venue: School of Computing, Seminar Room 1 (COM1 #02-12)

Address: 13 Computing Drive, Singapore 117590

A/P Irene Y.H. Ng, Dr Mathew Mathews, A/P Ho Kong Weng - **Struggling yet Improving: Lessons from a Five-Waves Study of Financial Assistance Recipients**

### **Abstract:**

In 2007, the (then) Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports started the Work Support Program (WSP) to help low-income beneficiaries find employment and achieve financial independence through interim financial support and other assistance. This presentation will share findings from a longitudinal study that followed WSP beneficiaries over five waves, from 2010 to 2016. It will present trends in beneficiaries' employment, income, arrears, and psychosocial well-being, which suggest that beneficiaries are struggling yet improving. The presenters will propose policy and practice implications of the findings, for discussion with seminar participants.

Adjunct Asst. Prof Caroline Brassard - **Living on a Tight Budget in Singapore – A Study of 25 Malay Muslim Households**

### **Abstract:**

The presentation is based on the findings of the Mendaki report "Living on a Tight Budget in Singapore" on low income households in Singapore, by the lead researcher. The purpose of this research paper was to shed light in the lives of low-income Malay Muslim households in Singapore, in order to understand their vulnerability to shocks, their daily challenges and needs, as well as their aspirations and perceptions about the future. The research team interviewed 25 such households over the course of 15 months, in three rounds of in-depth interviews including a detailed household survey. Using both open-ended and closed-ended questions, we were able to triangulate qualitative and quantitative data to increase the reliability of our findings and obtain deeper insights unattainable through large-scale survey questionnaires. The richness of the narratives gathered as part of this research highlights the best and worse moments in the lives of these households, and consequently, demonstrates the complexity in addressing their diverse needs. From a policy perspective, the research aims to provide evidence on how to improve support and services offered to low-income Malay Muslim households, and initiate new ways to address their needs.

This research findings fills knowledge gaps in these key areas:

- The challenges encountered by low-income Malay Muslim households and their impacts;
- Their priorities, needs, aspirations and perceptions about the future;
- The vicious and virtuous cycles;
- Resilience, coping mechanisms and social capital

**Presenter's profile:**

Irene Y.H. Ng is an Associate Professor of Social Work and Director of the Social Service Research Centre in the National University of Singapore. She holds a joint Ph.D. in Social Work and Economics from the University of Michigan. Her research areas include poverty and inequality, intergenerational mobility, youth crime, and social welfare policy. Her research projects include an evaluation of a national Work Support program; National Youth Surveys 2010, 2013 and 2017; a study of low-income households with debt; and an evaluation of Social Service Offices. She is active in the community, serving or having served in committees in the Ministry of Social and Family Development, National Council of Social Service, Ministry of Manpower, and various voluntary welfare organizations. Her teaching areas include poverty, policy, welfare economics, youth work, and program planning.

Mathew Mathews is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies. While most of his research relates to societal cohesion and family issues, he has for several years been interested in social service utilisation and provision. His research has included evaluations of programmes for single mothers, low-income families and older persons. Mathew has taught courses related to social policy and has published in a range of academic outlets. He serves on various government and non-governmental boards and communities. He is President of Alive Community Network and is part of the VWOs-Charities Capability Fund Panel and the Families for Life Council.

Ho Kong Weng is Associate Professor of Economics (Education) at the School of Economics, Singapore Management University. He teaches Introductory Economics, Macroeconomics of Income Distribution, and Family and the Society: Economic Theories and Practices. His research interests include inequality and social mobility, wellbeing and sense of belonging, parental influence on youth, evaluation of programs to assist low-income families, and issues related to the Singapore economy and society at large. He has provided consultation service to NYC, MSF, and MCCY

Caroline Brassard worked as an economist for the Government of Ontario in Canada, and then undertook research and long term consultancy work on poverty reduction strategies for several international non-governmental organizations in developing countries, including United Nations Children's Fund in Madagascar, CARE in Bangladesh and Save the Children in Vietnam. She then went on to undertake a Phd in Economics at the University of London, where she taught empirical analysis for economics and management for two years, prior to joining the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

Caroline continues to consult with various international organizations including the United Nations Development Program and she teaches on aid governance, research methods, economic development policy, poverty alleviation strategies and empirical analysis for public policy. Her current research focuses on aid governance in Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia and Vietnam, comparing policies to alleviate poverty and reduce inequalities, Bhutan's development based on Gross National Happiness and the development policy lessons from the Post-Tsunami reconstruction in Aceh, Indonesia.

**Please note that there will not be media coverage for this event**