Transforming Social Services through Community Analytics:
Can this be done in Singapore?

Presenter: Professor Paul Cheung

Date: 24 March 2015

Time: 3pm to 4.30pm

Venue: FASS Faculty Lounge

Presenter's profile:
Professor Paul Cheung is Professor of Social Policy and Analytics at the National University of Singapore. He returned to Singapore in January 2013 after serving for 9 years as the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York (2004-2012). At the UN, he facilitated the development of the global statistical system and coordinated the work of the United Nations Statistical Commission. He supervised a programme of work that included the development of international statistical standards, the dissemination of global statistical data, the provision of technical advice to member states in the development of national statistical systems, and the coordination of international statistical activities. Professor Cheung also had the responsibility of implementing UN mandates on geospatial information, cartography, and geographic names. In 2011, his initiative of establishing an inter-governmental platform to address issues on Global Geospatial Information Management was endorsed by the UN. This global multilateral mechanism explores all issues on geospatial information and a series of high level meetings have been held.

Abstract:
This seminar will discuss community analytics as an emerging area of research in the improvement of social service planning. Community analytics utilizes community information to assess, predict, and evaluate community behaviors, vulnerabilities and well-being. It pools community information from a variety of sources, both structured and unstructured. Structured data come mostly from official or administrative sources, while community sensors are used to source unstructured, real-time information from Twitter, Facebook, or even VGI (Volunteered Geographic Information). Pooled community information could be used for analysis in real time or post-facto through a variety of techniques, from 3-D modeling to story maps to public information portals.

The intention of community analytics is to assess and understand the current reality, to predict future trends, and to offer mitigation and adaptation strategies, so as to improve lives across social boundaries and generations. Our current social service protocol focuses largely on individuals or families, from problem identification to intervention strategies. An extension of this protocol to include community assessment may bring forth new insights. Could we incorporate such an approach in planning our social services? Could we develop robust analytics to measure community behaviors and vulnerabilities? This seminar will discuss these issues.