

# SSR's 2025 Year in Review

KEY HIGHLIGHTS AND EVENTS OF THE YEAR



# FOREWORD BY SSR CO-DIRECTORS

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Since 2015, SSR has championed bold social innovations — bringing together researchers and practitioners to build inclusive, resilient communities through evidence-based research and cross-sector collaboration.

The **NUS SSR–TOUCH Conference** was a notable milestone, gathering over 300 participants and more than 60 speakers to examine how communities can prepare for emerging social challenges.

Our **Research Capability Development** work continued through our partnership with Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities on the Our Keluarga programme, where we co-developed tools to strengthen documentation and evaluation processes. The collaboration helped build internal research capacities and refine programme practice.

Through **Research Training**, we conducted five workshops for 150 participants, covering areas such as participatory methods, data collection with children, realist evaluation, and theory of change. New training offerings are in development for AY2026/27.

Four issues of **SSR Snippet** were published this year, highlighting research on the experiences of young people and families.

We also hosted a series of **seminars and a public lecture**, which drew consistent attendance and addressed topics including housing instability, trauma-informed interventions, and bullying among youths with disabilities.

Progress across our **research projects** included completing the fourth wave of the **In-Work Poverty** study and releasing two reports; generating new insights into the needs of **sandwich-generation caregivers**; advancing work on **youth reintegration** through EPYC and the GRYT evaluation; completing data collection for **Hunger Report III**; and examining **practitioners' transitions into technology-related roles**.

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We are grateful for the continued support of our partners and collaborators. Their contributions have enabled the work reflected in this report. As we celebrate ten years of advancing research and practice in the social services, we look forward to building on these foundations in the coming year.

– Associate Professor Lee Jungup and Associate Professor Ong Ee Cheng



*SSR's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner on October 10, 2025*

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# CORE ACTIVITIES OF SSR

Here are some highlights of our activities this year.

## 01 NUS SSR-TOUCH CONFERENCE 2025 SUSTAINED WELL-BEING IN FUTURE-READY COMMUNITIES

SSR and TOUCH Community Services jointly organised a conference titled “Sustained Well-Being in Future-Ready Communities” at the NUS Shaw Foundation Alumni House on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> November. The conference featured more than 60 speakers and comprised keynote presentations by Dr James Riccio (MDRC) and Professor John Wong (Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine), two panel discussions, two dialogues, six breakout sessions, seven masterclasses, and ten presentation booths.

Each conference session focused on one the following themes: (i) Building Strong Communities of the Future; (ii) Evidence-Informed Practice for Effective Change; (iii) Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Social Service Planning and Delivery; and (iv) Collaborative Efforts for Sustainable Change. These sessions focused on equipping communities with the resources and skills they need to manage stressors and prepare for the future.

The event was graced by Mr Eric Chua, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Social and Family Development and Ministry of Law. More than 300 attendees from social service agencies, academic institutions, philanthropic organisations, and government bodies participated in the conference. The conference was supported by our strategic partner, the National Council of Social Service, and the Ministry of Education Tier 1 Grant.

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*NUS SSR-TOUCH Conference 2025*

*From left to right: A/P Noor Aisha Binte Abdul Rahman, A/P Ong Ee Cheng, A/P Lee Jungup, Prof John Wong, SPS Mr Eric Chua, Mrs Anita Low-Lim, Prof Irene Y.H. Ng, Ms Stella Teo*

## 02 RESEARCH CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT (RCD) SERVICE

Over the past year, our centre's Research Capability Development team, comprising Dr Seah Lay Hoon and Mr Tan Zhi Han, continued its collaboration with Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities (THKMC) on the *Our Keluarga (OK)* programme. The OK team of social workers delivers community-based support aimed at breaking the cycle of intergenerational drug use by fostering a strong sense of community and social support among individuals with a history of drug use and their families through targeted group activities. As part of our consultation work, we co-developed programme-specific observation rubrics and curated relevant pre- and post-intervention survey items with the THKMC researchers and the OK team. These tools help the team to document processes and track progress across group sessions and programme cycles, providing insights into outcomes, strengthening practice, and informing ongoing improvements.

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*"Our collaboration with NUS SSR since 2023, specifically our consultants Lay Hoon and Zhi Han, has brought about impactful change to how we conduct programme evaluation and understand practice research.*

*After months of consultation sessions for one of our groupwork programmes, Our Keluarga (OK), SSR has equipped us with the necessary skills and tools to dissect, evaluate and improve our existing programme. The knowledge acquisition was further amplified throughout our organisation as we transferred and applied the skills and tools for the development of new programmes.*

*We also gained awareness of practice-oriented research and its impact on social work clinical practice. Coming from a quantitative background, I was able to better understand the value of qualitative methods: written documentation, observations and practitioner inputs that can provide the context absent from numbers. Looking at both quantitative and qualitative data has enabled us to provide more clinically aligned improvements for our programme participants.*

*We greatly appreciate the timely constructive feedback provided by Lay Hoon and Zhi Han and hope to continue our partnership."*

Serena Lon – Research Officer for Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities (THKMC)



### 03 RESEARCH TRAINING

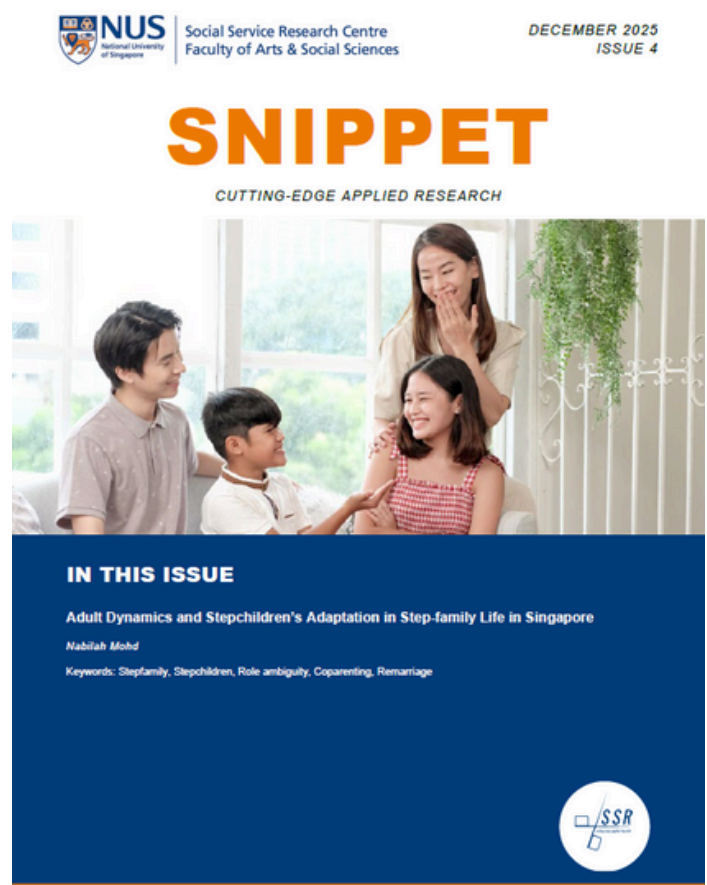
In 2025, SSR successfully conducted five one-day workshops, training a total of 150 participants. The SSG-subsidised workshops – “Participatory Research for Social Services”, “An Introduction to Diverse Methods for Collecting Data from Children and Adolescents”, and “Introduction to Realist Evaluation for Social Services” – were well received. In addition, SSR held two corporate classes on “Effective Use of Theory of Change”. Looking ahead, SSR is preparing to launch a range of new course offerings in AY2026/27, designed to further strengthen research capability across the social services sector.

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### 04 PUBLICATIONS

SSR disseminated four issues of SSR Snippet in 2025. These publications offer a multifaceted understanding of the diverse and complex realities faced by young people and families in Singapore. From youths navigating work expectations and street-involved adolescents carving out social identities in public spaces, to children with adverse childhood experiences forming therapeutic alliances, and stepchildren adjusting to parental re-partnering, these studies collectively illustrate how societal forces, relationships, and life circumstances shape individual experiences. Together, the research underscores the need for more contextually grounded, empathetic, and differentiated approaches in research, policy, and practice to more effectively support young people and families.

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*Image of SSR Snippet Publication*

## 05 SEMINARS AND PUBLIC LECTURE

In 2025, SSR continued to organise seminars and a public lecture to promote knowledge sharing within the social service sector. These seminars spotlighted a range of issues, including housing challenges (such as relocation for public rental flat residents and housing support for youths ageing out of care), trauma-informed interventions for foster parents, and childhood bullying among young persons with disability. These in-person events were well received, consistently attracting 50–80 participants each session, with the majority rating the seminars as ‘useful’ or ‘very useful’.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2025, SSR organised a public lecture by Professor Julia Henly, Samuel Deutch Professor at the Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice at the University of Chicago. Professor Henly spoke about her research on public investments in childcare and early education programs in the United States.

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### SSR Seminar Series and Public Lecture

Top left image: Ms Anisha Drall, Dr Ad Maulod, Dr Tan Shin Bin

Top right image: Dr Hana Alhadad, Mr Javiar Lim, Ms Diong Zoe Yi, A/P Lee Jungup

Bottom left image: A/P Lee Jungup, Ms Chong Ning Qian, Ms Cindy Ng-Tay, Ms Soh Ying Si

Bottom right image: Prof Julia Henley, Prof Irene Y.H. Ng

# RESEARCH PROJECTS

## In-Work Poverty and Challenges of Getting by Among the Young [Phase 2] (IWP2)

Funded by the Social Science Research Thematic Grant (SSRTG) amounting to about S\$1 million, IWP2 builds on Phase 1 in examining the challenges faced by low-income young workers aged 21–44 and their efforts toward advancement.

In 2025, we concluded the fourth wave of the survey, reaching 1,365 young workers. The survey tracked their experiences and challenges related to employment, meeting financial needs, managing family responsibilities, and pursuing personal and family aspirations. We also conducted Wave 4 in-depth interviews with about 40 participants and 15 couple pairs to gain qualitative insights into their work experiences and how they balance these demands with family and life.

On 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025, we organised a symposium to share findings from the study. More than 170 participants attended the symposium, which featured presentations by the co-investigators as well as by two students who shared insights from their master's and undergraduate theses. Two research reports, one looking at Employment, Wages, Job Quality, and Well-Being among Young Workers (Report 2) and another on Work-Family Interface, Family Aspirations, and Cost of Living among Young Workers, were launched at the symposium.



IN-WORK POVERTY AND THE CHALLENGES OF GETTING BY AMONG THE YOUNG: REPORT 2

**Employment, Wages, Job Quality, and Well-Being among Young Workers**

Irene Y. H. Ng, Tan Zhi Han, Asher Goh, Mathew Mathews, Gerard Chung, Vincent Chua, Xi Wen (Carys) Chan

June 2025

IN-WORK POVERTY AND THE CHALLENGES OF GETTING BY AMONG THE YOUNG: REPORT

**Work-Family Interface, Family Aspirations, and Cost of Living among Young Workers**

Tan Zhi Han, Tao Yu Cheng (Benwei), Nguyen Duc Thinh, and Irene Y. H. Ng

September 2025

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*In-Work Poverty and the Challenges of Getting by Among the Young Symposium*

*From left to right: Dr Gerard Chung, Ms Amalia Ariffin, Mr Tan Zhi Han, Prof Irene Y.H. Ng, Mr Asher Goh, Dr Mathew Mathews, A/P Vincent Chua*



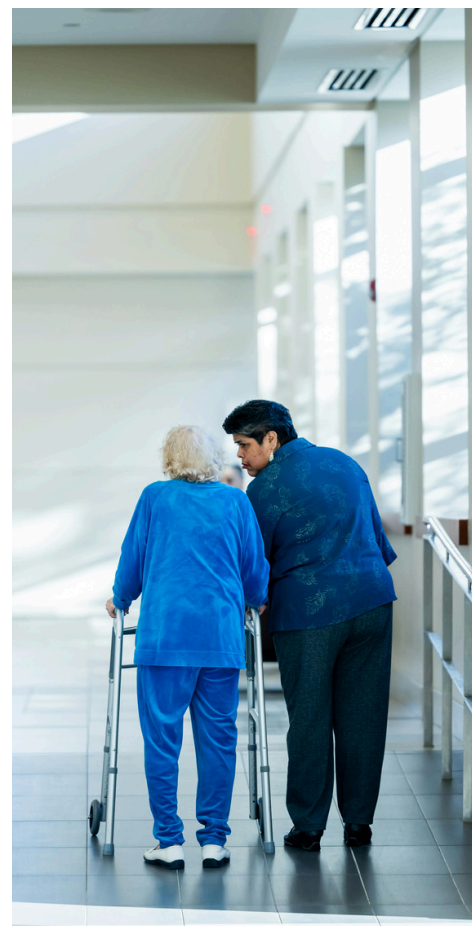
## Sandwich Generation of Malay Women Caregivers in Low-Income Families in Queenstown Health District: Needs and Access to Services

In Singapore's rapidly ageing society, sandwich-generation caregivers — predominantly women — represent an often invisible workforce supporting both younger and older care recipients. This ground-up qualitative study examined the needs and challenges of Malay sandwich caregivers in low-income families, along with their support ecosystem in the Health District @ Queenstown, where multi-stakeholder rejuvenation efforts aim to enhance residents' health and well-being. The study provides insights into the impact of caregiving on the health and well-being of both caregivers and care recipients; how these experiences intersect with structural determinants of health such as housing, education, and employment; and the accessibility, adequacy, and relevance of existing caregiver support systems.

Six interconnected priority areas emerged: (i) expanding financial and employment support tailored to caregivers' circumstances; (ii) enhancing services and programmes to improve health literacy for both caregivers and care recipients; (iii) strengthening opportunities for social participation; (iv) improving the quality and accessibility of caregiver support services and care coordination centred on caregivers' needs; (v) supporting children's basic health and developmental outcomes, particularly in families living in rental housing; and (vi) promoting shared caregiving roles and expectations within families. Addressing these priorities requires comprehensive, culturally congruent interventions delivered through a coordinated, cross-sectoral approach that prioritises family-centred, community-based systems responsive to the socio-economic realities of sandwich caregivers.

Although the study focused on Malay caregivers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, insights gained through an intersectional lens suggest that many of their experiences and needs are not unique to the community. The study's findings have informed a larger grant proposal submitted to the Social Science and Humanities Research Thematic Grant (SSHR-TG), involving multiple workstreams within the Health District and collaborations with community partners.

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*Image from Canva*

## Enhancing Positive Outcomes in Youth and the Community (EPYC)

EPYC (Enhancing Positive Outcome in Youth and the Community) is a long-term study headed by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and the National Council of Social Service (NCSS). The project focuses on crime prevention and the reintegration of youths in Singapore. The project has completed fieldwork data collection as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. The last cohort for collection (Cohort 4) has concluded the wave with data from 228 respondents. Data collected for the project have been analysed and results have been published - including papers and book chapters.

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*Image from Canva*

## Evaluation of Growing Resilient Youth in Transition (GRYT) Programme

Working on this project has deepened our understanding of the challenges that youths from children's homes face when reintegrating into the community, as well as the targeted and sustained support that can benefit them. As part of the evaluation of the GRYT programme, we have submitted a progress report summarising initial insights from interviews with various stakeholders, including programme staff, childrens' homes' staff, and findings from youth surveys. We will continue to engage additional stakeholders to further refine our understanding of GRYT's role in supporting youths from childrens' homes during their transition back into community life.

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*Image from Canva*





Image from Canva

## Hunger Report III

With strong support from the sector, we collected over 50 survey responses from organisations and community groups providing food support services. We also conducted interviews with 25 of them for the latest instalment of the Hunger Report series commissioned by Food Bank Singapore (FBSG). As data collection concludes, we are analysing the findings and writing the report, which we aim to share with the sector in the first half of 2026. Keep an eye out for its publication on the FBSG website.

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## Social Service Practitioners in Digital Transformation: Challenges and Strategies During Role Transitions

Singapore's social service sector is undergoing significant digital transformation, with increasing recognition that social service practitioners are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between technology and practice. Despite a growing trend of practitioners taking on technology-related roles, there remains a critical research gap in understanding how they navigate these transitions. This study addresses that gap by examining the experiences of social service practitioners transitioning to technology-focused positions. The study employs a mixed-methods approach to gather comprehensive data on participants' experiences and contexts. Participants comprise trained social service practitioners currently performing duties related to digital or technological tools, innovation, or project implementation within Singapore social service agencies or social work-related agencies (e.g., medical social workers). By identifying the challenges faced by practitioners when transitioning to technology roles and highlighting effective support strategies, the study aims to help organisations better prepare their staff for these positions. Additionally, the research will offer practical insights for practitioners considering similar transitions, including guidance on navigating potential conflicts between their professional identities and the requirements of their new roles.

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