

A Visioning Retreat

9 September 2013

CENTER FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (ASIA)

Purpose:

To examine how CSDA can play a more strategic role in applied research and social development in collaboration with the field.

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Welcome Remark

NUS' Centre for Social Development Asia (CSDA) organized a half-day retreat on 9 September 2013, which brought together professionals and practitioners from social work agencies, government, community agencies and academics, to discuss how CSDA can play a more strategic role in applied research and social development in collaboration with the field.

Chairman of the Advisory Council of the CSDA and Associate Professorial Fellow at the NUS Department of Social Work, Dr S Vasoo, in his opening address, reiterated the need for social service agencies to re-organise, re-focus and re-energise themselves so that innovative ways of service deliv-



ery can be developed to meet emerging needs of clients. He envisioned CSDA's role to examining trends, gathering research expertise and resources, and working in collaboration with the field to champion research in new frontiers to inform policy and practice.

Agenda

- Beginning the conversation at CSDA
- Introduction of CSDA
- Landscape Scanning
- Possibilities and Dreams
- Moving on Together
- Conclusion





“What is the current landscape in the conduct of applied research and social development programmes in the social services sector?”

Landscape Scanning

The retreat engaged participants in lively group discussion on various issues. The first session focused on identifying strengths and limitations in the landscape in the conduct of applied research and social development programmes in the social services sector.

Participants shared that many agencies were occupied with day-to-day operation and addressing issues of their beneficiaries. This left little room for them to conduct research. In addition, agencies found it challenging to balance between attaining KPIs and conducting research. As such, the culture for research in agencies is limited. However, one participant highlighted how one hospital made deliberate effort to integrate research into its work processes and this had helped raised the im-

portance of research to inform policy and practice.

Research culture is yet to be established amongst agencies though the importance of research to inform policy and practice has been raised. Relevance and application of research was also discussed as research quoted for application was mostly carried out in overseas context. There were calls for more local evidence-based researches. This is pertinent and critical for policy making as policy makers need evidence to

inform their decision-making.

Another concern raised was the lack of competency of agency staffs to undertake research. As such, experts and students from different fields and institutions could be called upon to work in collaboration with the agencies for high quality research to be produced. Collaboration and synchronization of cross-disciplinary research efforts would also help optimize resources and avoid duplication by different agencies.



Possibilities & Dreams

The next session provided the avenue for participants to discuss critical areas of social concerns and brainstormed for a research/social development agenda to be best carried out. The need of further research has been raised to address the following social-concerns:

- * Intergenerational dysfunctional issues in families
- * Addressing issues facing children in disadvantaged living context

- * Organizational issues: manpower and funding model in social service agencies
- * Concerns for the new poor in society
- * Asset building in the community and long term care for the elderly from a social development approach
- * Issues concerning children's well-beings
- * Providing assistance to low income families



It was suggested that CSDA take on the role of an incubator working closely with VWOs, MSF and NCSS to identify key social areas for research and forecast trends and challenges. On this basis, CSDA would be able to set out research priorities, review research done and match resources with funding. An annual brainstorming meeting to pick up feedback from the government and local agencies could be organized by CSDA



for reporting and planning purposes. While other institutions focussed on economic development policies, CSDA would bridge the gap between academic research and social policy development. In this regards, it was suggested that the Centre could focus on studies of social policies and their impacts, and implementation of social development innovations.

Participants commented that some agencies have implemented good local programs and were seeking research support to assess these programs and build up practice models for replication in various localities. CSDA could provide professional support on this.

“What are critical areas of social concerns for applied research?”

“Moving on Together” - Collaboration model

Under the proposed collaboration model, it was emphasized that CSDA would seek to work closely and complement other institutions without overlapping research aims. CSDA could also provide professional consultancy or advisory services to agencies in conducting practice-oriented research. CSDA would hold further dialogues and conversations with NCSS and relevant institutions to explore collaboration partnership model.

With a focus on practice-oriented research in collaboration with the

field, CSDA would need to build up its manpower structure to oversee project management and administration. It was proposed that steering/working committees be set up to provide advice and oversee the research progress of specific projects. There could also be separate structures for research collaborators and affiliates to come together to collaborate on specific research interest. CSDA could embark on comparative research with regional academic institutions and promote knowledge exchange between Singapore and the foreign countries and

possibly, pilot social innovative projects. Participants commented that countries would be keen to learn from Singapore’s social policies and creative strategies.

A yearly networking meeting would be held with stakeholders to discuss areas of research, priorities and strategies. Stakeholders were encouraged to surface emerging social issues so that we could collectively examine how best to study the issues.

“How should the research/social development agenda be best carried out?”



Center for Social Development (Asia) - A Visioning Retreat

A/P Ghoh expressed her gratitude for all the participants present. CSDA would review all the social concerns raised by participants and other discussed items in the retreat. Further conversations into the specific areas would be carried out with specific groups to clarify and explore collaboration possibilities. CSDA aims to value add to the sector's work. A group photo was taken as the concluding activity.



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Center for Social Development (Asia) - Department of Social Work

The Centre for Social Development Asia (CSDA) was launched in July 2007 by the Minister of Finance Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam. Located under the purview of the Department of Social Work, National University of Singapore, the Centre was established in collaboration with the Centre for Social Development, George Warren Brown School of Social Work, Washington University in St Louis.

The primary mission of CSDA is applied research

and knowledge building to inform policies and programs in social development, with a focus on Asia (including East, Southeast, South, and Central Asia). A subtext of this mission is to make Singapore's very innovative social policies and programs better known throughout Asia and the world.

Within this mission, CSDA emphasizes key themes that build on the strengths of Singapore and CSDA's principle staff. These themes would

include effective functioning of families and communities (with attention to gender equality and racial/ethnic/religious harmony), developing human capital (broadly conceived), policies and programs for an aging society, structure and organization of social services, conceiving and implementing social innovations, and social policy based on asset building.



<http://www.fsa.nus.edu.sg/swk/csdaf>

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

S/N	Names	Designation	Organisation
1	Agnes Chia	Vice President	Singapore Association of Social Workers
2	Audrie Siew	Deputy Director, Children In Care Branch	Ministry of Social and Family Development
3	Chan Whee Peng	Director, Membership and Advocacy Group	National Council of Social Service
4	Eunice Lin	Asst Director, Advocacy and Research	National Council of Social Service
5	Fazlinda Faroo	Centre Manager	PPIS Vista Sakinah
6	Ian Peterson	Centre Manager	Care Corner FSC (Admiralty)
7	Isabel Sim	Senior Lecturer	Business, NUS
8	Justin Lee	Research Fellow, Advocacy and Research	National Council of Social Service
9	Kevin Lee	Director, Capacity Building	National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre
10	Laurence Wee	Executive Director	Presbyterian Community Services
11	Lee Geok Ling	Assistant Professor	Social Work, NUS
12	Linda Auyong	Director, Social & Community Services	The Salvation Army Territorial Headquarters
13	Marcus Chiu	Associate Professor	Social Work, NUS
14	Ng Tzer Wee	Head, Social Work	Tan Tock Seng Hospital
15	Rahayu Buang	Deputy Director, Family Policy Unit	Ministry of Social and Family Development
16	Sharminee Naidu Ramachandra	Assistant Director	THK Family Service Centre @ Bukit Panjang
17	Tan Chee Hau	General Manager	Central CDC
18	Teo Tee Loon	Executive Director	Lakeside Family Centre
19	Tristan Gwee	Manager, Community Support	Presbyterian Community Services
20	Vasoo	Associate Professorial Fellow	Social Work, NUS
21	Wee Shiou Liang	Head, Research, Health Information Management and Evaluation Department	Agency for Integrated Care
22	Corinne Ghoh	Co-Director	CSDA
23	Truong Ngoc Linh	Research Assistant	CSDA
24	Ng Yong Hao	Honorary Programme Executive	CSDA
25	Yong Hui Hua	Executive	CSDA