

SINGAPORE TOGETHER EMERGING STRONGER CONVERSATIONS REPORT: SINGAPOREANS' ASPIRATIONS TO CO-CREATE A CARING AND RESILIENT SINGAPORE

More than 16,900 Singaporeans involved in the Singapore Together Emerging Stronger Conversations (ESC)

15 themes emerged from 88 ESCs organised by the government and the community
Four new Singapore Together Alliances for Action (AfA) to co-create solutions

The Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) today published the Singapore Together Emerging Stronger Conversations report. The ESCs are still ongoing and this report takes stock of more than 16,900 Singaporeans' reflections on their COVID-19 experience, and their aspirations for emerging stronger as a nation, shared during the ESCs conducted between June and December 2020, and through surveys and other platforms. These conversations were launched by Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Mr Heng Swee Keat in June 2020. He had launched Singapore Together a year prior; it is a governance approach for Singaporeans to partner with one another and with the government, to shape and act on our shared future together.

2 The report, in the form of a website, covers 15 key themes that have emerged through the Singapore Together ESCs. A number of ESCs were also conducted in Mother Tongue Languages (MTL), and a special effort was made to reach out to people with disabilities. The views were diverse, and the report describes both areas of convergence and divergence. The themes include social support; national identity and shared values; jobs and economy; digitalisation and technology; and family.

3 Said Minister for National Development and Minister-in-Charge of Social Services Integration Mr Desmond Lee, "We don't just want to survive this pandemic, but to come out of it a better, stronger nation. Over the last six months, Singaporeans from across diverse backgrounds came together to share their views on how we might emerge stronger. I hosted several of these conversations and heard first-hand the stories and challenges of our fellow Singaporeans, and also the depth of passion to turn this crisis around for good. This report presents the views and aspirations of the thousands of Singaporeans who took part, their hopes for a society that is inclusive and caring, and an economy that is thriving and globally competitive. Our commitment is to work with Singaporeans to translate these aspirations into action. In the past months, we have embarked on new Alliances for Action and other partnerships to address pressing issues. There will be more Alliances for Action formed. Singaporeans can look forward to the opening up of policy spaces so we can work with Singaporeans to drive positive changes in Singapore. This is our commitment to work better for Singapore, together."

4 Government agencies are already tackling some of these areas in partnership with stakeholders. Some examples include the Tripartite Workgroup on Lower Wage Workers, the Third Enabling Masterplan, the Conversations on Women's Development, and the Taskforce on Family Violence. There will be more opportunities for Singaporeans to play a part in addressing these themes.

5 Minister in Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Finance, Second Minister for National Development Ms Indranee Rajah said, "The pandemic surfaced concerning issues and difficult realities confronted by everyday Singaporeans. Some of these include domestic violence, mental wellbeing, and digital inclusiveness and literacy. Our conversations show that there is increasing awareness of these and other social issues, and that Singaporeans place high

importance on being an empathetic and caring society. There are many unsung heroes that emerged during the COVID-19 period – contributing their time and energies selflessly to help our migrant workers for instance, or to give support to the seniors among us who were socially isolated. The crisis is far from over, and much work lies ahead for Singapore to recover and strengthen. I encourage Singaporeans to continue to step forward, listen and play a part.”

6 The Singapore Together Alliances for Action (AfA) are action-oriented, cross-sector collaborations on significant areas to build Singapore’s future; these AfAs will develop and deliver solutions for our future. There are currently 11 Singapore Together AfAs¹ to tackle socio-economic issues. Four new Singapore Together AfAs will also be formed over the next few months, bringing the number of AfAs to 15.² The new AfAs are:

- a) **AfA on Work-Life Harmony** – The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and tripartite partners will launch a new AfA comprising employees, employers and key stakeholders to take ownership of and take action on work-life harmony in Singapore. The AfA will grow a community of Work-Life Ambassadors, provide tailored resources to companies in specific sectors that face greater challenges in implementing work-life practices, and spearhead initiatives to strengthen work-life harmony in Singapore.
- b) **AfA on Corporate Purpose** – the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) will launch a new AfA comprising businesses and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) leaders on 9 February 2021 to develop a national framework and blueprint for corporate purpose and social impact.

In addition, the Ministry of Communications & Information (MCI) and the Smart Nation Digital Government Group (SNDGG) are working together to form new AfAs which support the Digital for Life movement. For a start, some of these initiatives will include:

- c) **Enhance Digital Readiness Skills and Literacy For Daily Living** – for example, the **Digital #SmartNationTogether online channel** will bring onboard community partners and expand relevant programmes to Singaporeans.
- d) **Enhance Digital Access for Needy Beneficiaries** – for example, a collaborative portal will match beneficiaries with community, government and corporate partners who are providing digital devices to seniors and low-income groups.

7 There are also many opportunities in addition to the AfAs for Singaporeans to get involved to take action and co-create the Singapore we aspire to, from volunteering, participating in conversations on issues, and starting their own ground-up initiatives for causes they are passionate about. These opportunities will be dynamically updated on www.sg.

8 Said Ms Kris Tay, Representative Director, Rasmussen Consulting, who recently initiated a series of ESCs, “We noted the aspiration for the ESCs to be an inclusive process, which would

¹ The current 11 AfAs are: 1. Beyond COVID-19 Taskforce; 2. UPLIFT; 3. SG Cares Community Networks; 4. Youth Mental Wellbeing Networks; 5. Securing our Economic Future through Supply Chain Digitalisation; 6. Building Singapore as a Little Green Dot through Sustainability; 7. Digitalising Built Environment to Build Tomorrow’s Cities; 8. Bringing Singapore to the World through Smart Commerce; 9. Breaking the Productivity Frontier through Robotics Solutions; 10. Reconnecting with the World through Safe and Innovative Visitor Experiences; and 11. Reaching the World’s Learners through EduTech.

² As at 9 Feb 2021.

enable different segments of Singapore, including low-income families, seniors, and those who speak in vernacular languages, to be well-represented. As a response to this, we initiated 'Emerging Stronger Conversations using the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® (LSP) Method'. This ground-up citizen participation initiative stems out of our belief that every voice should be heard, and we care deeply to enable this. The sessions conducted so far have been really fulfilling. We got to understand concerns and aspirations of different segments of society, and the confidence we have in Singapore. Participants also shared ideas on how they would work with the government, private sector and one another, to create a more resilient post-COVID-19 Singapore."

9 Singaporeans can read more about the themes and what Singaporeans have to say during the ESCs, as well as in the surveys conducted online and on-ground, via the full report. The full report is accessible online at www.sg/emergingstrongerconversations and will be updated dynamically as the ESCs continue.

**QR code to the
Singapore
Together ESC
full report
online**



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9 February 2021

- End -

Annexes

Annex A: Singapore Together Emerging Stronger Conversations – A Summary - *attached separately*

Annex B: Four New Singapore Together Alliances for Action (AfA)

Annex C: Factsheet on the Alliance for Action on Work-Life Harmony

About Singapore Together

Singapore Together is about the Government working with Singaporeans, and Singaporeans working with one another, to build our future Singapore. The Government will open up more partnership opportunities for Singaporeans to participate. The Government also hopes to support more citizen-led efforts. Whatever our background or interests, we can each step forward to contribute in areas that we care about. By working together, we can turn diversity into strength and transform challenges into opportunities, to build a Singapore that present and future generations of Singaporeans will be proud of. For more information, visit www.sg.

ANNEX A

Singapore Together Emerging Stronger Conversations – A Summary is attached separately.

NEW SINGAPORE TOGETHER ALLIANCES FOR ACTION

The Singapore Together Emerging Stronger Conversations (ESC) series have surfaced concerns and aspirations by Singaporeans. Currently, **four new Singapore Together Alliance for Action (AfAs) will be formed in 2021** between the government and community partners to look into co-creating solutions in areas ranging from work-life harmony, to digital inclusion and strengthening social support for vulnerable segments.

1. [New] Alliance for Action on Work-Life Harmony

The tripartite partners – Ministry of Manpower (MOM), National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) – have been progressively enhancing efforts to support work-life harmony (WLH) in Singapore.

The COVID-19 pandemic has since generated added impetus to strengthen WLH. During the outbreak, many companies adapted quickly to work-from-home (WFH) arrangements for business continuity and the safety of their employees. Emerging Stronger Conversations participants also highlighted that the widespread adoption of WFH arrangements demonstrated its feasibility as well as benefits. For instance, employees can spend more time with their families and less time commuting to work. Employers found that some employees could still work effectively while working from home. However, WFH arrangements also led to an increased blurring of work-life boundaries for some who found themselves working longer hours than usual. Employers also found that not every employee wants to WFH all the time and it may not be suitable for every job role. These demonstrate why employers need to move beyond flexible work arrangements such as WFH, which has already seen wide adoption, to implementing WLH measures.

In this opportune window of transformation, we need to find ways to entrench and enhance good work-life practices in the new normal and beyond. Fundamental shifts in societal mindsets and workplace norms as well as sharing of best practices and practical guidance on implementing WLH measures will be needed to spur provision and take-up of work-life practices. This is an opportunity for a whole-of-society effort, where members of our community come together to lead initiatives to achieve our common goal of WLH for all.

Lead agency: MOM

2. [New] Alliance for Action on Corporate Purpose

The National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) will be launching a new AfA comprising businesses and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) leaders on 9 February 2021 to develop a national framework and blueprint for corporate purpose and social impact.

This AfA arose from ESC sessions organised by NVPC, where participants collectively envisioned a business ecosystem that supports and enables corporates to effectively align

purpose and profit to become a force for good in Singapore. Participants at the ESC identified gaps and opportunities in the ecosystem that could foster closer partnership between the private, public and people sectors, and shared feedback on ways to make corporate giving more accessible.

The Alliance for Action on Corporate Purpose will be rolled out in phases with the first phase focused on studying the factors that affect the integration of purpose and profit in corporates. Results of the study will be shared in the second half of 2021.

One of the key objectives of this alliance is to evaluate various local and international standards related to corporate purpose and social impact and recommend a harmonised framework that guides corporates to do good strategically, sustainably and impactfully.

Organisations interested to participate in the design and development of the national framework and blueprint may contact the Company of Good at contact@companyofgood.sg.

3. [New] Enhanced Online Learning Opportunities on Digital (#SmartNationTogether)

To help Singaporeans learn more about digital initiatives and emerging technology, the Smart Nation & Digital Government Group will expand the offerings on its online live learning platform, known as #SmartNationTogether or #SNT. #SNT, which was started in June 2020, is an online engagement platform that provides free learning opportunities for Singaporeans to broaden their digital awareness and skills, and help narrow the digital divide. From June to December 2020, more than 12,000 people participated in #SNT's programmes. #SNT has also built a growing subscriber base of more than 3,000. The free programmes are curated by Smart Nation Ambassadors who come from more than 50 business and community organisations. Together, they have launched various programmes, including 101 tech series for working adults, webinars on tech issues (e.g. Smart Nation: In Conversation), and lessons for seniors on using digital government tools, and lifestyle apps (i.e. Live Smart). This year, SNDGG will partner even more business and community organisations on a range of programmes to help older workers upskill, and to remain employable and adaptable. More details will be available on #SNT in March 2021. SNDGG is also exploring partnerships with community partners interested to bring #SNT onto an app interface with gamification features, so that learning about digital can be made fun and engaging.

Lead agency: SNDGG

4. [Upcoming] A collaborative portal to supply smart devices to needy beneficiaries.

To help more people benefit from the opportunities provided by technology, SNDGG is working on developing a portal to match beneficiaries with community, government and corporate partners who are providing digital devices to seniors and low-income groups. With this one-stop portal, users can easily search and apply for digital devices, and agencies will be able to list their digital device schemes to reach a wider group of

beneficiaries. There will also be a notification service to provide updates on the user's application status. These features will help ensure that the application process is seamless and that the digital devices are efficiently distributed, to better serve those in need.

Lead agency: SNDGG

FACTSHEET ON ALLIANCE FOR ACTION ON WORK-LIFE HARMONY**1. Background**

The tripartite partners – Ministry of Manpower (MOM), National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) – have been progressively enhancing efforts to support work-life harmony (WLH) in Singapore.

The COVID-19 pandemic has since generated added impetus to strengthen WLH. During the outbreak, many companies adapted quickly to work-from-home (WFH) arrangements for business continuity and the safety of their employees. Emerging Stronger Conversations participants also highlighted that the widespread adoption of WFH arrangements demonstrated its feasibility as well as benefits. For instance, employees can spend more time with their families and less time commuting to work. Employers found that some employees could still work effectively while working from home. However, WFH arrangements also led to an increased blurring of work-life boundaries for some who found themselves working longer hours than usual. Employers also found that not every employee wants to WFH all the time and it may not be suitable for every job role. These demonstrate why employers need to move beyond flexible work arrangements such as WFH, which has already seen wide adoption, to implementing WLH measures.

In this opportune window of transformation, we need to find ways to entrench and enhance good work-life practices in the new normal and beyond. Fundamental shifts in societal mindsets and workplace norms as well as sharing of best practices and practical guidance on implementing WLH measures will be needed to spur provision and take-up of work-life practices. This is an opportunity for a whole-of-society effort, where members of our community come together to lead initiatives to achieve our common goal of WLH for all.

2. Launch of Alliance for Action on Work-Life Harmony

Tripartite partners will launch an Alliance for Action on Work-Life Harmony (“**Alliance**”) involving community stakeholders to co-create and co-deliver best WLH practices in Singapore. The Alliance’s Terms of Reference are to:

- i. Create a campaign of support to enhance WLH practices in workplaces and wider community

The Alliance will build a network of advocates for WLH in the community and workplaces. This includes growing a community of Work-Life Ambassadors and equipping them to raise awareness on and promote work-life practices to the wider public.

Members of the Alliance will also develop WLH resources and initiatives aimed at helping groups to sustain and enhance work-life practices in the new normal and beyond.

- ii. Support companies in specific sectors to overcome challenges and implement WLH practices

The Alliance will develop and run sector-specific Communities of Practice on WLH to provide tailored guidance and resources to companies in specific sectors that face greater challenges in implementing work-life practices including flexible work arrangements. The public may sign up to attend these sessions and more details will follow.

3. Members

The Alliance comprises all Work-Life Ambassadors and other key stakeholders:

Advised by tripartite partners

Co-Leads: Ms Gan Siow Huang (Minister of State for Manpower and Education), Ms Yeo Wan Ling (Director, Women and Family Unit & U SME, NTUC), Dr Bicky Bhangu (Council Member, SNEF)

Work-Life Ambassadors, Union Leaders, Parliamentarians, TAC Leaders and Progressive Employers, IHRP Certified Professionals, Grassroots Leaders, Family-Friendly Group Leaders etc.

As of 9 February, we have recruited over 100 members and will continue to expand the network as necessary. Interested members of public who wish to sign up as a Work-Life Ambassador can do so at <https://www.tal.sg/tafep/Employment-Practices/Work-Life-Harmony/The-Work-Life-Ambassador-Scheme>.

4. Format

Members of the Alliance will meet regularly to work on the focus areas, with WLH initiatives and resources targeted for completion by 1H 2021. In the long term, we envisage that the Alliance can transition into a self-sustaining action-oriented network that continues to achieve WLH outcomes.
