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BEFRIENDING MR. DE SILVA – A STORY OF BUILDING COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS FOR RESILIENCE, FROM SINGAPORE RED CROSS

Singapore Red Cross, Sondra Foo <sondra.foo@redcross.sg>

"After their first visit last Thursday, the Red Cross volunteers came again when they knew I had fallen down. They are really helpful and I am thankful for their constant encouragement," said Mr De Silva Petiyaga Arther Bernard, 74, a beneficiary of the program.

"With Community Led Action for REsilience (CLARE), the Singapore Red Cross' services and volunteers are now geographically-based. Volunteers who might previously not be aware of people needing help in the same neighbourhood are now connected with these groups. CLARE provides a platform to connect volunteers and beneficiaries living within close proximities, allowing a more efficient community service network. I believe this would create a more caring and cohesive society,"- Mr Mohamed Nasruddin Bin Roslan, 24, a Singapore Polytechnic student and a CLARE volunteer.

Befriending Mr. De Silva – Singapore Red Cross
All photo for this story © Singapore Red CRoss

THE PROBLEM

An essential part of community, senior citizens often face heightened vulnerability caused by health conditions and isolation (a result of reduced social networks after retirement). Frequently, among other factors, this is exacerbated by poverty and cognitive impairment

As the population ages, it is essential that every section of the community comes together and works collectively to enhance resilience, especially for senior citizens and the disabled.

Building a connected community is key to sustained resilience.

THE ACTIVITIES

The Singapore Red Cross launched Community Led Action for REsilience (CLARE) in January 2015.

CLARE mobilises and empowers volunteers to provide first response, first aid, eldercare and befriending services to vulnerable groups in their community. CLARE volunteers are trained in areas such as standard first aid, first aid for the elderly, the use of the automated external defibrillator (AED) and befriending. They also receive training to assist those with chronic diseases, especially the elderly.

As part of the befrienders programme, CLARE volunteers are familiarised with the various assistance schemes available in the neighbourhood to better serve the beneficiaries.

Very different from the common approach of centralised aid and reducing the reliance on social workers, CLARE provides a robust neighbourhood-based network of first response and community support that is sustainable on the basis of localised aid and resilience-building.

Through this network and partnership with community organisations, Singapore Red Cross will identify gaps to fill and complement existing services with its local community services. While strengthening community resilience, CLARE opens the door for the less privileged to access signature Red Cross services such as Community FirstAid, TransportAid and FoodAid, thereby providing neighbourhoods with a 'one-stop' support framework.

Volunteer training – Singapore Red Cross

THE OUTCOMES

Singapore Red Cross aims to recruit and train 200 CLARE volunteers, and extend training to 400 caregivers.

With the launch of CLARE in Tampines West, the elderly in the area can look forward to better quality of care and making many more new friends.

The enthusiasm of the program is obvious from the newly trained volunteers who have already visited Jamiyah Home for the Aged for community service, and conducted house visits to elderly beneficiaries.

Community Outreach – Singapore Red Cross

WAY FORWARD

Singapore Red Cross plans to establish three first aid posts in Tampines. These posts will house critical first aid equipment such as the automated external defibrillator (AED), stretcher, and first response bicycles to be used by volunteers and the public in times of need. These would be rolled out progressively. Singapore Red Cross will monitor the effectiveness and make refinements to achieve a robust and effective working model that will be replicated in other districts throughout Singapore.

Source: http://www.redcross.sg/press_releases/singapore-red-cross-launches-community-led-action-for-resilience-clare-in-tampines-west