



# “Inspiring Giving”

## Commitment for Good

Insights from the Temasek Trust Conversation on  
Corporate Giving 2017

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Developed by Stewardship Asia Centre CLG

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Audience Participation:

“What is the one word that you will associate with Corporate Giving”?

Heart, Impact, Money, Sustainability, Stewardship, Charity, Generosity and Philanthropy were key words that resonated with the participants. *(The size of the words in the word cloud reflects its popularity)*

The Temasek Trust Conversation on Corporate Giving was held on 19 September 2017 at the Shangri-La Hotel Singapore.

Themed “Inspiring Giving: Commitment for Good”, the conversation focused on sustainable, long-term commitment to corporate philanthropy. The conversation featured a lively panel discussion involving panellists from the corporate and non-profit sectors, as well as a rich dialogue with Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, Speaker of Parliament and Advisor to National Council of Social Service.

### **Programme:**

#### [Welcome Address](#)

Mr Ong Boon Hwee, CEO, Stewardship Asia Centre

#### [Keynote Address](#)

Mr Ng Kee Choe, Member of Temasek Trust Board of Trustees

#### [Panel Discussion](#)

- Mr Lim Ming Yan, President & Group CEO, CapitaLand Ltd and Board Director, CapitaLand Hope Foundation
- Mr Randy Jusuf, Managing Director, ASEAN and Hong Kong, Kimberly-Clark
- My Eric Teng, Advisor of Tan Chin Tuan Foundation & Tecity Group
- Ms Denise Phua, President, Autism Resource Centre (Singapore) and Mayor, Central Singapore District
- Moderated by Dr Fidah Alsagoff, Senior Managing Director, Temasek International and Chairman, T-Touch

[Dialogue with Mr Tan Chuan-Jin](#), Speaker of Parliament and Advisor to National Council of Social Service

- Moderated by Dr Gerard Ee, Chairman, Charity Council

#### [Summary and Closing Remarks](#)

Mr Ong Boon Hwee, CEO, Stewardship Asia Centre

## Inspiring Giving: Commitment for Good

The entire forum – from the keynote address to the panel discussion to the dialogue with the Speaker – was an engaging conversation that focused on a common theme with sharing of diverse perspectives from the speakers and the participants, covering the value chain of corporate giving from intent to action to impact.

**Setting the stage.** Mr Ng Kee Choe, Member, Temasek Trust Board of Trustees, started the conversation with his keynote speech that emphasised the importance of a genuine intention to create social value that should drive corporate giving. *“Giving is more than just the right thing to do. It must come from the heart. This genuine desire to give forms the essential foundation for a committed and sustainable approach to corporate philanthropy.”*

Here are some extracts from the keynote address:

- Besides fulfilling a moral obligation, corporate giving should be guided by a genuine desire to do good for wider society. The intent to contribute should come from the heart, and this passion to give back to the community should be consistently sustained.
- Corporates should be willing not just to commit resources, but also put in the time and effort to make sure that these resources are well spent and bring about the desired social impact. Corporate leaders should have the courage to initiate new projects and activities, as well as the passion to see these initiatives through to the end.
- At the same time, leaders should also monitor the progress of social investments objectively. There are inevitable times where outcomes are less ideal than hoped for – it is their duty as leaders to analyse, identify, and refine companies’ approach to corporate giving such that it reaps the most benefit to the wider society.
- In order to achieve effective philanthropy, corporates need to have a realistic and well-informed understanding of society’s needs. Corporate giving initiatives should be aligned with the needs of the target community, bringing about meaningful tangible outcomes and creating social value.
- By marrying a genuine desire to help with the expertise and resources at corporates’ fingertips, leaders can direct philanthropic efforts to needy sectors in society; initiatives can also be better designed to bridge gaps in societal welfare, thereby engineering effective corporate social responsibility.
- For corporate philanthropy to bring about long term social change, it should go beyond mere financial contributions. To uplift a wider community, corporates should be prepared to do more than donate to their preferred causes – rather, long term projects and recurring activities can be organised to allow more time for developing sustainable solutions.

- Not only does the continued commitment ensure that beneficiaries receive the help they require, it also facilitates the design and implementation of initiatives that give them a 'hand-up' instead of a hand out. For instance, beneficiaries' lives can be transformed with the inculcation of new skills, which allows them to be independent. Compared to a cash handout, which is usually only enough as a stopgap measure, long term commitment can engender much more positive societal outcomes.

### **Commitment for Good: in its three dimensions.**

Valuable insights and practical lessons were gleaned from the rich and meaningful sharing and discussion. These were summarized at the end of the forum, and the key points highlighted below under the three dimensions of: Purposeful Commitment, Sustainable Commitment, and Impactful Commitment.

**Purposeful Commitment.** Corporates should be very clear about why they give before they embark on their corporate philanthropy journey. Having the right intent and a genuine will to make a difference and contribute to society are important first steps and will help steer how and what corporates give. Corporates should never lose sight of this core purpose and allow their direction to be dictated by some key performance indicators that merely make the corporates "look" good rather than actually doing good. Therefore, it is essential that the intent underlying corporate philanthropy comes from the heart, instead of being done for the sake of recognition and publicity.

Effective giving is a result of the meeting of minds and hearts; while having the right heart is essential and a good starting point, it is not enough for optimal corporate giving. Applying the mind come about when corporates intentionally direct companies' resources into channels that best match their domain expertise and interests. For example, a construction company building shelters for the needy will likely serve a purpose that resonates with the company's core competencies and this would make for more effective philanthropic efforts and meaningful participation for employees.

**Sustainable Commitment.** Corporate giving initiatives that are insightful and well sustained have the best chance of fulfilling their original intent, stimulating positive social change and meaningful gains to the beneficiaries. Hence, businesses need to strategically consider the allocation of their available philanthropic resources so as to stretch them over longer commitment periods. While corporate philanthropy should be taken as a long-term commitment, corporates should also not shy away from initiating philanthropic activities on a

smaller, episodic scale. People and resources that are ready and willing should be assigned to such projects to allow the movement to gain momentum with the aim that a tipping point may be reached for the project to be sustainable and viable in the long run.

Besides looking to the companies to be more intentional about their long term commitment to philanthropy, a more structured, collaborative approach to corporate giving could be another lens to enhancing programme sustainability. Under the current climate, companies are going about their corporate philanthropy programmes in an isolated manner. On the other hand, information pertaining to where and how help is needed may also be relatively opaque to companies which wish to give too. In other words, the chance for a mismatch in terms of demand (needs) and supply (giving) is high and there is currently no central coordinator who helps to ensure that such mismatch is minimized. For example, the elderly population in one community segment might receive an oversupply of groceries while the same needy group in another location might be totally neglected. Hence, if suitable organisations can act as the conduit that help to coordinate and potentially map out philanthropic efforts, this would enable philanthropic resources to be more efficiently distributed and allocated to the multitude of needy causes in the community.

Overall, corporates should take the time to monitor the progress and results of corporate social responsibility programmes initiated, and be flexible to make adjustments to their approach as and when necessary.

**Impactful Commitment.** For corporate giving to be impactful, it goes back to corporates' clarity of purpose as the first step and ensuring that how they carry out the programme is in sync with the underlying purpose. Beyond "blindly" participating actively in corporate social responsibility, businesses should also be mindful that their activities match beneficiaries' needs – that is, making an impact that counts. In other words, corporate philanthropy should be needs-driven rather than project-driven. A thorough understanding and careful analysis of society's needs would help refine CSR approaches and achieve better social outcomes.

Also, not all activities will necessarily yield the same impact and corporate leaders might want to consider allocating more resources to activities that are of higher impact in the community – for instance, implementing reading programmes for younger children would bring about more benefits as the problem is being intervened at an earlier stage.

In addition, giving should be an inclusive endeavor, leveraging collaboration and partnership, that seeks not only to serve beneficiaries' needs but also inspire volunteers to do more and benefit more as well. In other words, while corporate giving should engender tangible gains for society, corporates should consider how best their philanthropic programmes can be designed to inspire in others a similar will to do good for society – this requires corporate giving

initiatives to be meaningful, not just in terms of benefits to beneficiaries, but for the many volunteers and staff members who participate as well.

The positive experience of volunteerism should be thoughtfully curated and if done right, corporate philanthropy will enable and empower both contributing and benefiting parties. The desired outcome will be, that volunteers will go beyond doing community work mandated by company policies and will contribute in a heartfelt manner, making a greater impact on society as a whole. Successful corporate giving can enhance staff recruitment, engagement and morale, creating a strong bond among all stakeholders in the process.

### **Moving Forward**

At the conclusion of the event, participants were asked to give their views on three questions:

- Identify one challenge that the social service sector will need to look into addressing in the near future.
- What is one key area where corporate givers could look into doing more?
- The Temasek Trust Conversation aims to be a platform that inspires, not only discussion but also action. After today's conversation, is there a particular cause, project or action that you hope to follow up personally, or hope to see others follow up?

### **The key points raised in the responses are summarised here:**

- On the one challenge that the social service sector would need to address in the near future, a common feedback from attendees was for the social service sector to look into issues pertaining to the ageing population in Singapore. The family of Temasek foundations (TF Cares, TF International, TF Innovates) are already looking at different aspects in Singapore's healthcare landscape including those concerning the ageing population. Hence, this is probably not so much a criticism of the lack of effort but rather a result of the growing structural demand due to Singapore's rapidly ageing population.
- Collaboration and impact remain the key areas where participants felt that corporate givers could look into doing more for future sessions. It is clear from the response that participants believe in the urgent need for greater collaboration between contributory and beneficiary organisations such that corporate giving can be more impactful (targeted needs based giving) and coordinated (resources can be more efficiently allocated and any overlaps minimized). The fact remains that the social sector is

fragmented with multiple organisations serving the same communities which resulted in unnecessary competition and distraction from their common intentions.

- The use and leverage of technology to advance social good is a potential topic that participants would like to have more discussion on at future sessions. With the national push for Singapore to be a smart nation e.g. digital literacy and rising awareness of technological impact in everyday lives, the suggestion from the audience that they would like to hear more about this area is aligned to the needs of the changing landscape.

## Conclusion

For a corporate philanthropy program to be considered successful and meaningful, it should be based on the strong Commitment for Good – which intricately spliced together its dimensions of: Purpose, Sustainability and Impact. Beyond just a good intention as well as the desire to do good and to do right, corporates that give need to ask themselves why they are doing so and be clear about the purpose of their commitment. Only when the corporate is clear about its purpose can it pursue corporate giving in a sustainable manner – that is, commitment for good for the long term. However, corporates should not be afraid to take the small steps to initiate programmes and subsequently curate them to more sustainable efforts over time. More collaboration among contributory and beneficiary organizations can also lead to more efficient use of resources and minimize overlaps. Having a clear purpose and a sustained programme are not nearly enough, there must also be meaningful impact. Impact is not measured by the number of projects undertaken or the amount of funding put into the programme, impact is all about creating meaningful experiences for all stakeholders involved, be it instilling dignity, respect or self reliance for beneficiaries, inspiring volunteers to do more or fostering employees' pride.

All said, inspiring giving is about a sincere and thoughtful *commitment for good causes and purposes*, well executed in a sustainable and impactful manner so that they would really be *commitment for good*.

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