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# More support for children of offenders from charity fund

Revamped fund will reach out to more children and offer more programmes

Malavika Menon

Children of offenders will get more support from a revamped charity fund which will now offer more programmes including free tuition, mentoring, art therapy as well as family bonding sessions.

NeuGen Fund, which used to be called Iscos ReGen Fund, is the charity arm of the Industrial & Services Co-operative Society (Iscos), which helps offenders and their families.

The charity announced its new name and initiatives at a launch event at VivoCity yesterday attended by volunteers, sponsors and beneficiaries.

With the revamp, it now plans to reach out to more children in need through existing programmes like after-school activities as well as new initiatives such as counselling.

The revamp comes on the back of a strategic review conducted by the charity last year to tackle emerging challenges in a post-pandemic world.

A study by the Ministry of Social and Family Development and National Council of Social Service in 2020 found that children whose parents were convicted of offences were almost three times more likely to have brushes with the law than other children.

NeuGen Fund chairman Joshua Tay said yesterday: "Our charity currently reaches out to about 400 children every year, but we estimate there are 10 times more children



Minister for National Development Desmond Lee speaking at the launch event of NeuGen Fund yesterday. He said former offenders and their families often face multiple stressors and challenges, and no one organisation serving just one specific need can address all these challenges holistically. PHOTO: NEUGEN FUND

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He added that from the charity's experience working with such children since 2011, the good news is that the chain of "intergenerational offending" can be broken.

"But we need to change our approach to win this," he stressed.

For security officer Evayanti Sahabudin, who is raising her daughter

alone, the charity's programmes have been a good source of support.

The 40-year-old attends a monthly support group for mothers each month to share her experience raising her 13-year-old and get advice from her peers. Madam Evayanti's ex-husband was jailed for drug-related offences after the couple divorced.

"Before I joined, I felt as though

the weight of the world was on my shoulders. But now I have a safe space where I can share my problems and seek advice," she said.

Madam Evayanti added that the support group has helped her form a close bond with her daughter, who has also received help from the charity's bursary schemes to purchase school materials.

During his address at the event,

Minister for National Development Desmond Lee said: "Ex-offenders and their families often face multiple stressors and challenges that can complicate one another and weigh the family down, and no one organisation serving just one specific, specialised need can address all these challenges holistically."

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Text:

## **Children of offenders to get better school and mental health support**

By Malavika Menon

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With the revamp, it now plans to reach out to more children in need through existing programmes like after-school activities as well as new initiatives such as counselling.

The revamp comes on the back of a strategic review conducted by the charity last year to tackle emerging challenges in a post-pandemic world.

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NeuGen Fund chairman Joshua Tay said on Wednesday: "Our charity currently reaches out to about 400 children every year, but we estimate there are 10 times more children with a similar profile out there in Singapore requiring help."

He added that from the charity's experience working with such children since 2011, the good news is that the chain of "inter-generational offending" can be broken.

"But we need to change our approach to win this," he stressed.

For security officer Evayanti Sahabudin, who is raising her daughter alone, the charity's programmes have been a good source of support.

The 40-year-old attends a monthly support group for mothers each month to share her experience raising her 13-year-old and get advice from her peers. Madam Evayanti's ex-husband was jailed for drug-related offences after the couple divorced.

"Before I joined the support group, I felt as though the weight of the world was on my shoulders. But since I joined, I have found a safe space where I can share my problems and seek advice. I no longer feel like I have to overcome my challenges alone," she said.





Madam Evayanti added that the support group has helped her form a close bond with her daughter, who has also received help from the charity's bursary schemes to purchase school materials.

During his address at the event, Minister for National Development Desmond Lee said: "Ex-offenders and their families often face multiple stressors and challenges that can complicate one another and weigh the family down, and no one organisation serving just one specific, specialised need can address all these challenges holistically."

Such challenges include difficulties in securing employment for the parents, problems at school for the children, and different sources of stress both within and outside the family, he said.

Mr Lee added that efforts by the NeuGen Fund would complement the efforts of other agencies to support the children of incarcerated parents.