

# For stronger social service, use data and analysis to measure performance

FROM KWAN JIN YAO

I refer to the report “Social service professionals to receive 3% to 19% pay hike” (March 14).

The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) has decided to earmark S\$12 million to support voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) in raising salaries, years after the Singapore Association of Social Workers had asked for a comprehensive pay review.

Though it has been argued that social workers should not be motivated by the remuneration they receive, some pragmatism could encourage well-qualified professionals to enter and stay in the industry.

Even more encouraging was the announcement that the MSF will increase professional development opportunities and strengthen corporate capabilities and governance among VWOs.

Around the world, performance measurement and management for non-profits and charities has gained traction, wherein organisations use data and analysis to measure their impact.

The concept challenges traditional means of evaluation, such as the rudimentary use of feedback forms or key performance indicators of attendance, so as to hold VWOs more accountable for their effectiveness.

A move towards this in Singapore, besides the present empowerment of social service professionals through the Government, should be considered.

Already, the national charity portal provides key information of the charities — including annual reports and

“Performance measurement and management ... challenges traditional means of evaluation, such as the rudimentary use of feedback forms or key performance indicators of attendance, so as to hold VWOs more accountable for their effectiveness.”

# Proper materials management key to tackling rail hitches

FROM DAVID CHONG CHEE MING

I refer to the letter “Take holistic approach to improve rail reliability” (March 16). Having worked in multinational companies as a materials manager for 20 years, I recognise the importance of production control, materials requirement planning, stock handling, contract strategy, price monitoring, tender valuation, vendor rating, incoming inspection, et cetera, as industry concerns.

Regrettably, however, these aspects of materials management are not well regarded by top managements here. This could cause problems. For example, the incorrect identification of a power cable or cable tie can bring a train to a standstill.

I hope that SMRT Corporation can adopt a multidisciplinary approach to tackling its operational hitches.

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statements of accounts — which also adhere to the Code of Governance.

And the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre has its independent charity analyses, gathering quantitative and qualitative data on leadership, programmes/results, finance and organisational impact.

Yet, the scope of this useful research should be extended to more non-profits and charities. These processes may seem demanding and tedious, but these expectations will make for a stronger social service.

Performance measurement and management complements the existing regulatory infrastructure, and as mindsets of organisations and individuals shift, there would be demand for higher standards and more rigorous outcomes.

In the long run, donors and volunteers could be more discerning when deciding between organisations, supporting those that yield the greatest benefits in the areas of impact, beyond the mere alignment of interests.

Ultimately, we would be all the better for it. Public trust in the social sector remains high, and if its organisations strive for higher standards in accountability and ascertaining their impact, this would bode well for their beneficiaries.

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