

Increase size of fund-raising pie

FROM KWAN JIN YAO

I refer to the report, “NCSS wants to help charities with weak or no fund-raising capabilities” (June 17).

This move by the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) is well-intentioned, especially as 85 per cent of funds raised in 2012 went to large charities with annual receipts of above S\$10 million.

In the short term, smaller organisations may benefit from its services. But in the long term, the NCSS should look to increase the size of the fund-raising pie.

Besides that, Singaporeans should be encouraged to donate based on the charities’ effectiveness, the performance results they can show, and the sustainable impact they may have on their beneficiaries.

The number of charities grew from 2,028 in 2010 to 2,142 in 2013, but tax-deductible donations fell to S\$970 million in 2013, down 6 per cent from S\$1.031 billion in 2012. Quantitatively, the challenge is obvious for all charities.

The “silent sufferers” notwithstanding — those who may not have the same public support — it is not necessarily fair to criticise the fund-raising disparities between small and large charities without considering the number of beneficiaries in each of these organisations.

The quality of assistance can be further evaluated, too. In some sense, the organisation’s growth or size may be evidence of that quality.

Employers have part to play in empowering workforce

FROM SANTI YEO HER CHUEN

I refer to the report, “Businesses here find it more difficult to hire workers: Poll” (June 23).

Uncertainty enshrouds the workplace, as Singapore businesses depend largely on the turbulent world economy to thrive. To a 47-year-old white-collar jobseeker, resilience is everything, though it does not hurt if there is empathy.

There is a growth of microenterprises started by graduate entrepreneurs, hiring five or fewer people. These employers are active online; they speak up and engage agencies that aid and spur their endeavours. These youngsters are better educated and may not settle easily for anything less at the workplace.

Regardless of age, though, Singa-

Distinctions should also be made between corporate and individual donations. The former can be boosted by strategic planning or consultancy; the same can be done for the latter only if the public is more cognisant of the work done by non-profits.

The NCSS’ undertaking to help smaller charities ramp up their fund-raising capabilities would count for little if the public is not in sync with these efforts.

Before donating, Singaporeans should look more critically at information provided by organisations, taking inspiration, for instance, from American charity evaluator Charity Navigator, which empowers donors to make well-informed decisions along three dimensions.

These are financial health, accountability and transparency, as well as mission-related results. In Singapore, the Charity Portal provides data for the first two dimensions, although more work can be expected for the final one.

Such outreach can start at a young age. Usually, community service in schools is pragmatic, or students complete projects without understanding their motivations or their organisations’ needs. Comparisons can be made across non-profits, based on their target audience and areas of influence.

The eventual intent is for corporates and individuals to contribute larger amounts sustainably and, armed with knowledge of charities here, to make wiser choices, funding the most effective ones in the process.

poreans are generally known not to rest on their laurels.

So take, for example, an employee at Giordano, a retail company with award-winning customer service, and one who works for a pushcart microenterprise. The two employees may view their employers differently. Compared with the Giordano staff, the pushcart employee is unlikely to hold high aspirations for his employer’s enterprise.

In terms of on-the-job training, Giordano can ask more of its employees than a pushcart employer can. Giordano is known for offering the so-called feel-good factor for their employees to go the extra mile in the retail service industry.

Thanks to tripartism, agencies such as the Employment and Employability Institute have been set up to ensure that the Singapore workforce can be a good match for employers. But it seems all that businessmen do is complain.

If the poll that TODAY reported on would separate microenterprises from the bigger small and medium enterprises, it may bring greater insights into why the working population is far from being the right match for them.

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