

Second Family Research Network (FRN) Forum: *“Empowering Vulnerable Families”*

**Second  
Family Research Network (FRN)  
Forum:  
*“Empowering Vulnerable  
Families”***

**Wednesday, 25 February 2009**

**Seminar Room 2, Level 4, Civil Service College**

**Family**  
Research Network



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# Challenges Facing the Vulnerable and Policy Responses

**Presentation at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Family Research Network Forum  
25 Feb 2009**



# Who are the vulnerable?

- Those who are permanently unable to work and have little or no family support
- Those who are just able to cope in good times but are thrown into great difficulties when times are bad
- Those who are faced with a multitude of family problems which are often compounded by financial difficulties



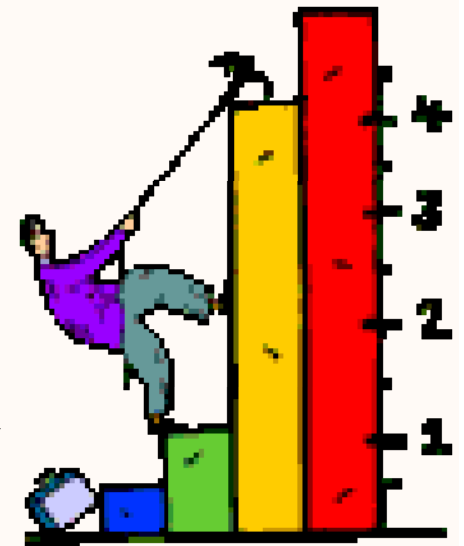
# Principles of Singapore's Social Safety Net

- A sustainable social safety net which is viable in the long run
  - No permanent, unconditional welfare
- Principles
  - Self-reliance and mutual obligation
  - Encourage individuals to work
  - Family as first line of support
  - Many Helping Hands



# Policy Challenges

- How to create opportunity but not engender dependency?
- How to be a caring society, and still have a sustainable social service system?
- How to build the most efficient delivery system, and still involve and engage the whole community?





# Creating opportunity/ preventing dependency

- Assistance is always targeted, and focused on mutual obligation.
- Emphasis on work.
  - Workfare Income Supplement
  - SPUR
  - Work Support



# Work Support

- Helps the work-capable find jobs and gives them financial assistance in the interim.
  - About 64%\* of job seekers found employment within six months of being on the programme
- Also helps low-wage workers
  - 55%\* clients achieved an increase in net gain between their household income and expenditure

\* Of clients who left the programme between Apr – Sep 08



# Caring society/ sustainable system

- ComCare Fund- final safety net for the financially needy.
- Launched in June 2005. Targeted to reach \$1 billion over time.



## ComCare Self-Reliance

- Help the needy with their basic living expenses, and to achieve self-reliance



## ComCare Grow

- Help the children from needy families with their developmental needs



## ComCare Enable

- Help the needy who require long-term assistance (e.g. needy elderly and disabled persons) to integrate into the community



## Supporting the Community

- Empowering the community to do more for the needy in their midst



# COMCARE

## ENABLE



Permanently  
unable to work

**Public  
Assistance**

**\$360-  
\$1,150/mth**

Free Education  
Free Medical  
Rental Subsidy

## SELF-RELIANCE



Temporarily  
can't work

**ComCare  
Transitions**

Cash  
Utilities/S&CC  
/rental assistance

Education  
Assistance  
Assistance with  
Medical Fees

Unemployed /Low-  
skilled Employed

**Work  
Support**

Cash  
Utilities/S&CC  
/rental assistance

Employment  
Assistance  
Education  
Assistance  
Assistance with  
Medical Fees

## GROW



Children

**Childcare  
Asst.**

**\$200 –  
\$340/mth**

**Kindergarten  
Asst.**

**\$55 –  
\$98/mth**

**Studentcare  
Asst.**

**\$54 –  
\$160/mth**

## COMMUNITY



Urgent interim  
help

**CCC  
ComCare  
Fund**

## WORKFARE & OTHERS



Low wage worker

**WIS**

**\$90 –  
\$2,400/yr**

**SPUR**

**Subsidized  
Education**

**Medifund**

**Subsidized  
Housing**

**VWOs**

2009 Budget Payments



# ComCare Spending



## ComCare Self-Reliance

- \$12.9 mil in FY08
- About 4,160 cases helped as at end Dec 08



## ComCare Grow

- \$20.5mil in FY08
- About 16,500 children helped as at end Dec 08



## ComCare Enable

- \$11.9mil in FY08
- About 2,900 cases helped as at end Dec 08



## Supporting the Community

- Citizens' Consultative Committee ComCare Fund
- April 2008 - December 2008: About \$1.57 million disbursed to about 8,900 residents



# Efficient delivery/ Many Helping hands

- Meeting expectations of a better-educated and vocal public (clients as well as larger public)
- In gaining efficiency, we might lose the passion
- How to maintain the MHH yet ensure no one falls through the cracks?
  - ComCare Local Networks
  - ComCare Database
  - ComCare Call



# Economic Outlook

- Forecasts for 2009 GDP Growth : -5.0 to -2.0 %
- Employment growth slowed significantly in 4Q 2008
- Prelim estimates show 7,000 workers retrenched in 4Q 2008, up from 2,346 in previous qtr
- Seasonally adjusted unemployment rate : 2.6% (Dec 08)



# Government's Focus

- Low-skilled, low-wage worker
- MCYS' focus
  - Those who are currently on financial assistance schemes but find it hard to regain self-reliance
  - Those who were retrenched
  - Children from vulnerable families



# Government's Response

- Stay focus on encouraging people to work
  - SPUR, WIS Special Payment
  - Work Support will provide more flexibility to help those at the margins
  - Extension of duration of assistance under Work Support
- Ensure that children from low-income families do not drop out of pre-school/school
  - Enhanced Grow schemes
  - Additional help for children on PA



# Helping those with multiple problems

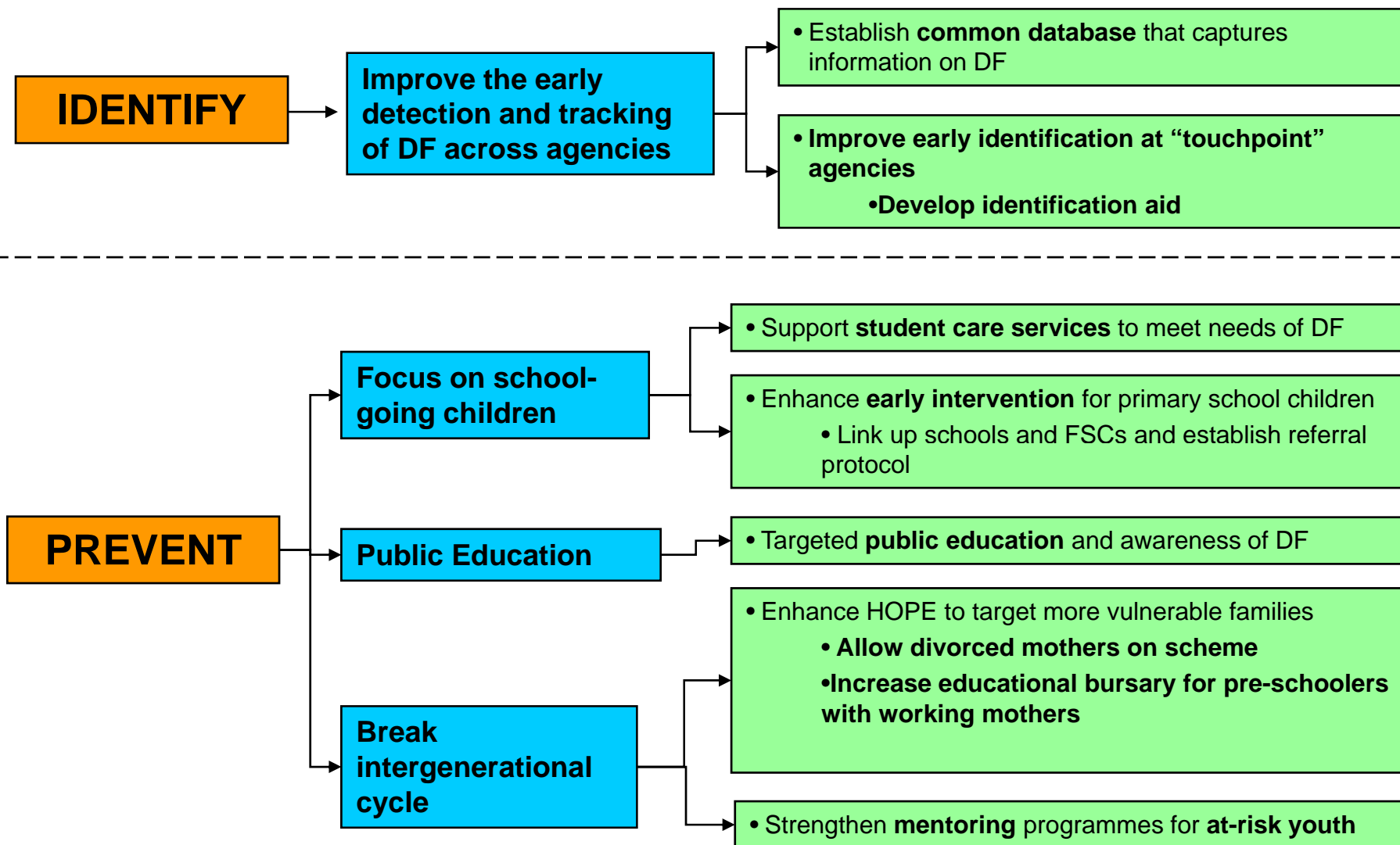
- Inter-Ministry Committee on Dysfunctional Families (completed its work in 2008)
  - ❖ **Identify** at-risk families that need help
  - ❖ **Prevent** at-risk families from deteriorating further
  - ❖ **Intervene** to strengthen resiliency of dysfunctional families
  - ❖ **Resource** the community to better help at-risk and dysfunctional families

# Overview of Recommendations

## STRATEGIES

## SUB-STRATEGIES

## RECOMMENDATIONS





**STRATEGIES**

**SUB-STRATEGIES**

**Workgroup Prelim Recommendations**

**INTERVENE**

**Enhance existing services for dysfunctional families and children**

**Invest in intervention for those who need it**

Greater support for **children in homes**  
▪ **Strengthen aftercare support**  
▪ **Increase psychological services**

Greater support for **minor marriages and reconstituted families**  
▪ **Marriage counselling, parenting skills training**

• **Provide better training and employment opportunities for at risk youth**

• **Intensive case management at 1:10 caseload for highly dysfunctional families**

**RESOURCE**

**Improve quality of social work intervention**

**Increase supply of social workers**

• **Review NUS Social Work Curriculum**

• **Increase pathways to social work e.g. diploma courses**

• **Professionalise social workers**  
• **Re-scope social service jobs**  
• **Accreditation leading to licensing**  
• **Compensation and benefits package**



The End  
Thank you!