

Collaboration. Cooperation. Inclusion

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Low wage workers

Study on in-work poverty (2020) shows that low educated young workers are disadvantaged by

- Age - leading to lower earnings than the general labour force on average
- Low education - The average earnings of respondents with ITE qualifications was no different from that of respondents with secondary and below qualifications.
- Lower psychological well-being in comparison to the Singapore Mental Health study (2020), and generally lower quality of job conditions than those found in the Eurofound study (2017).

Lived experiences of low wage workers

- **Vulnerabilities**

- Lower education
- Lower salaries / Multiple jobs to make ends meet
- Less social capital
- Family issues
- Lack of space – mental, emotional, physical – e.g. committing to training and keeping up is a challenge
- Lack of understanding and empathy – employers are not aware of the lived experiences

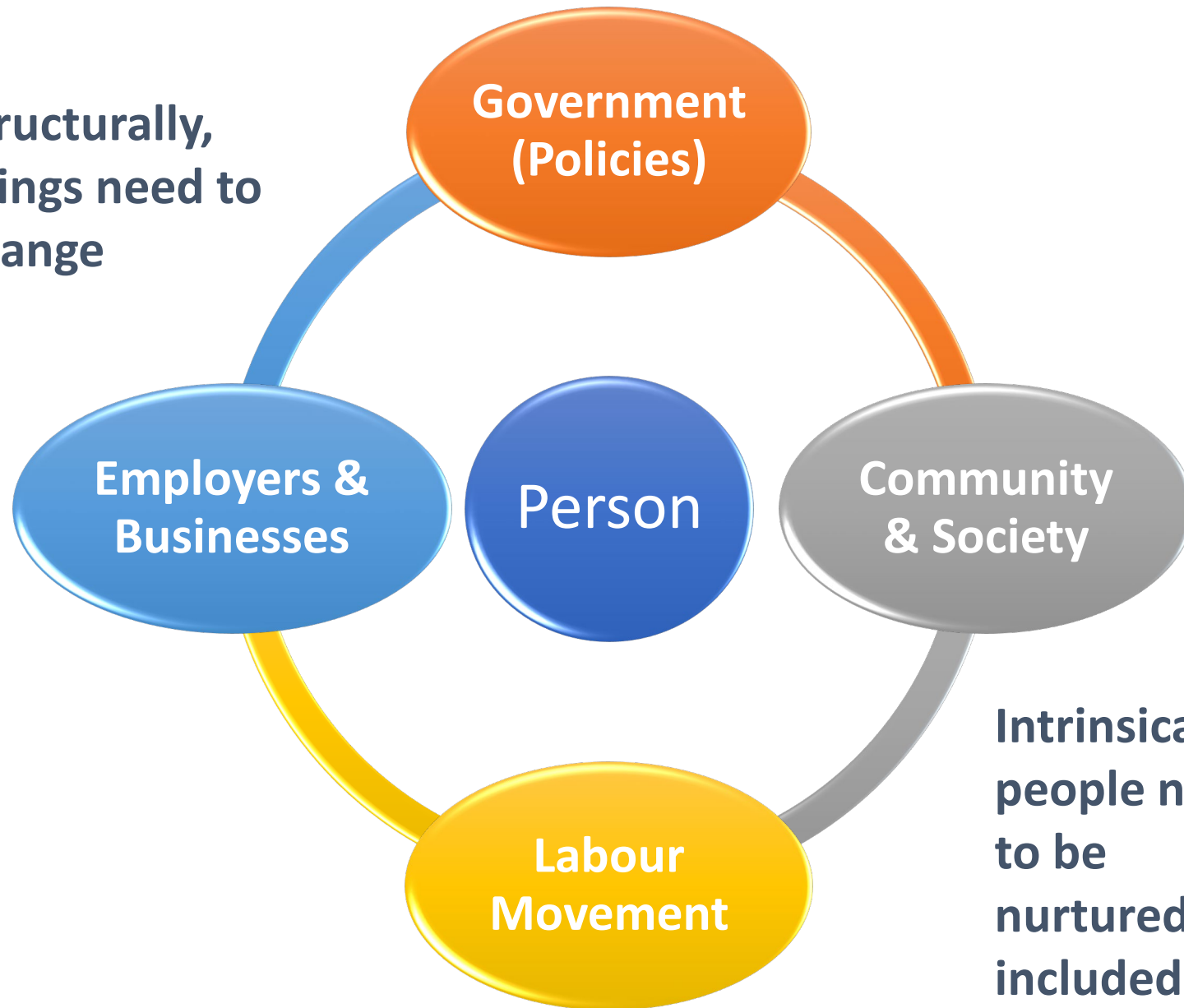
of the low income, at their job level it is hard to have flexible work arrangements or work from home.

- **Impact**

- **Psychological** - self image, hopelessness, caregiver stress
- **Physical** - Poverty of sleep, food and money lead to poor health outcomes,
- **Social** – reduced societal participation leading to isolation



**Structurally,
things need to
change**



**Intrinsically,
people need
to be
nurtured and
included**

Stakeholder responsibilities

- **Government**

- Social Protection - Social Insurance, Social Assistance and Labour Market Programs
- Decent living comes with decent wage, the Progressive Wage model is a first step, raising salaries to a liveable wage benchmark

- **Employers / Businesses**

- **Singapore Business Federation Foundation (SBFF) – an example**

- **Empower Circles** bridge the business community who hires and the social service agencies who support and nurture people in transition from challenging circumstances.
- **The Employability Fund** supports programmes that outreach to different population groups such as rough sleepers/homeless, and long-term unemployed parents and caregivers of at-risk children, and expanding to those with mental health conditions, and out-of-school youths and caregivers.



Stakeholder Responsibilities

- **Civil Society**

- **Workwell Leaders**

- Workwell Leaders is a non profit collective of CEOs and leaders focused on championing workplace mental health and well being as a strategic priority and Board agenda, beyond merely a HR responsibility.
- It is intended as a community of practice for leaders so that employee mental well being becomes foremost for employers



Stakeholder Responsibilities

- **Civil Society**

- **Beyond Social Services**

- Recognising strengths of members from a young age and creating spaces for community participation.
- We encourage our members to contribute and lead within their neighbourhoods – three projects : **Family Circles, Community Enablers, and Community Fellows**
- Members bring their strengths and also acquire skills through community participation → bringing resilience to their workplace
- When we acknowledge the natural leaders in our community – they become part of something bigger, expand their networks, get motivated and have more hope for themselves and their children



Community Enablers

- **Mother of 6, aged 33**, active in a Mother's Circle that is engaging neighbours towards building a safe neighbourhood for their children. She says, *"I realised that I still have the capacity to learn new skills. I learned to interact with people from different backgrounds. I earned the trust of neighbours and in turn, they took me seriously when I talked about sexual harassment. I managed to talk to neighbours I rarely talked to, especially the youth."*
- **Mother of 3, aged 42**, community enabler for a community matched savings programme. She says, *"I got to meet and know many neighbours, especially mothers in the community. I have become more open minded and brave and I am genuinely happy to help other mothers. Parents who are unable to attend due to work will contact me to help them by putting money for their children first on collection day. I am proud to help this community to grow their children's savings."*

Inclusion must be the hallmark of our society. To stay cohesive as one people, we must be a place where everyone has an opportunity to move up in life and everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We must lift our low-wage workers, sustain median wage growth, temper wealth inequality, and promote income mobility.

Mr Ravi Menon, MD of MAS and 9th S R Nathan Fellow, at the launch of The Singapore Synthesis: Innovation, Inclusion, Inspiration (2022)