Many of us donate to charity and likely want to do more but there is always one question eating away at us: ‘Which one really deserves our hard-earned money?’

If even a beneficiary in mind, there are the nagging doubts that your money will not really help those in need if a large portion of the donation will go towards the organization’s admin costs.

So wouldn’t it be great if there was an impartial and trusted service that lists many of these lesser-known charities deserving of your help?

This has led a group of six students from the National University of Singapore’s Faculty of Law to set up a social enterprise – Transparency for Good – aimed at helping the public get a clearer idea of how charities operate.

It provides a simple “transparency guide” of all the charities’ bookkeeping processes so that you can see a clear picture of how they raise funds and how they spend them.

Using a combination of fact-finding and accounting skills, the team examines the audited financial statements of charities and then presents the results in various charts and clear summaries that give donors a good overview of their operations and financial health.

The team behind Transparency for Good was initiated by a class project at the Faculty of Law, University of Singapore.

The team has their lecturer, Associate Professor Tan Ooi Boon, to thank for inspiring them to take on this project.

According to Ms Melisa Wong, executive director of Babes Pregnancy Crisis Support, which helps low-income teenage mothers, it is glad to be one of the pioneer members of this project. “This is something that we strongly believe in and I should be able to contrast from a managerial position as to the need for this knowledge to be shared or to develop the existing website into a better platform.”

Ms Ang knows she can continue with this project after the course because she has been a full-time lawyer for the past five years. “I believe that my experiences in corporate setting has been and will continue to be useful in providing the team with resources, contacts, and suggestions on how to move this project forward.”

The team’s examination of the six charities on the site has revealed five trends when it comes to bookkeeping processes.

- Some charities have declined to provide such a knowledge resource, we can help such donors make more informed decisions. Charities that are willing to transparent can attract donations from such donors.
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Tan Ooi Boon
Innove Editor

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Charities that need your support

From young women facing pregnancy crisis to kids from broken homes and victims of domestic violence – there are charities that can help them.

Here are some examples of the charities that a team of NUS law students reviewed in their Transparency for Good (TFG) project, which is designed to give donors a clearer picture of how their money is being used.

HAGAR SINGAPORE

An expert in care and recovery programmes, this charity helps those affected by trauma as well as the people around them.

More recently, Hagar has been offering programmes for women through its support office here and partnering with organisations in Myanmar to increase their capacity to provide trauma-informed care.

Donations are its main source of income. Its local programme expenses have risen in the past year due to its work helping migrant workers from going home to their families during festive seasons.

Last year, Hagar was still able to organise a Christmas party for its beneficiaries, with most participating virtually from their respective locations.

“The highly customised initiatives of Hagar Singapore make them a worthy charity to support,” the TFG team says. It notes that Hagar also needs volunteers to help run events for beneficiaries.

Go to hagar.org.sg to support them.

RED PENCIL

This effort does excellent work in providing art therapy to vulnerable groups, such as children, helping them verbalise emotions and improve social competency so that their emotional well-being improves.

But the pandemic has hit Red Pencil badly, resulting in a significant decrease in public donations. While it receives government grants, donations from the public are still an important source of funds.

Covid-19 has led it to develop online art therapy sessions for people in need. It has also provided mentorship, football coaching and financial assistance to disadvantaged children and youth.

Travel curbs have prevented foreign workers from going home to their families during festive seasons. Last year, Hagar was still able to organise a Christmas party for its beneficiaries, with most participating virtually from their respective locations.

“The highly customised initiatives of Hagar Singapore make them a worthy charity to support,” the TFG team says. It notes that Hagar also needs volunteers to help run events for beneficiaries.

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BABES PREMATURITY

CRISIS SUPPORT

They are the guardian angels of pregnant women below 21 by providing information and community resources that facilitate responsible decision-making.

Babes goes through the options with a soon-to-be mother with a view to helping her plan the next steps.

The group’s caseworkers meet the girl at a time and place she is comfortable with. The case worker will ensure she is well supported by her family, friends and wider community in her decision and can carry out her wishes as best as possible. She will also be linked to formal and informal community resources.

The charity is financially healthy. In the past three years, it has provided extra relief to government grants and more on public donations.

Despite fund-raising challenges brought about by the pandemic, the charity has continued to raise money to assist low-income teenage mothers and engage them through educational online activities.

“The charity will continue to require public donations to sustain its charitable programmes and support for teenagers and youth,” the TFG team notes.

Support them at babes.org.sg

FOOTBALLPLUS

Its football academy works with many young people from disadvantaged and low-income families. It provides scholarships to enable the most disadvantaged children to be involved in the weekly training. It also provides mentorship, football coaching and financial assistance to disadvantaged children and youth.

It relies on public donations for most of its events.

“Despite fund raising challenges brought about by the pandemic, the charity has continued to raise money to assist low-income teenage mothers and engage them through educational online activities.”

Support them at footballplus.org

The academy welcomes volunteers for football coaching experiences or youth mentoring experiences.

The academy welcomes volunteers with football coaching experience or youth mentoring experience. Selected coaches will also be given the opportunity to upgrade themselves through various training and developmental schemes, which include training courses and overseas attachment programmes.

Find out more about their work at footballplus.org.

Anyone donating to an approved institution of a Public Character before the year ends will enjoy tax deductions of 2.5 times the qualifying donation amount for the next tax year.

Tan Deo Boom

A boy practising in a FootballPlus programme last December. The academy works with youth from disadvantaged and low-income families. ST PHOTO: JOEL CHAN