

**EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY OF RESPONSE  
BY THE MINISTER-IN-CHARGE OF MUSLIM AFFAIRS  
AT THE COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY DEBATE  
ON 7/ 8 MARCH 2011**

**MEDIA UPDATE**

**STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS**

The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis) will continue in its efforts to enhance the socio-religious well-being of the Singapore Muslim community. Muis will strengthen key religious institutions through various programmes such as building the capacity of our mosque befrienders, empowering the next generation through the Progress Fund, providing social assistance at the doorstep and optimising mosque building and upgrading efforts.

***NURTURING A CARING COMMUNITY***

2 The Mosque Befrienders Scheme was launched in 2008 as a pilot programme under the purview of the Enhanced Mosque Clusters (EMCs) scheme. Currently, 344 befrienders work closely with the Social Development Officers (SDOs) at mosques, to provide emotional support and mentor families who are in financial difficulty. The befrienders also look after the welfare of lonely elderly and the physically immobile clients.

3 Muis plans to strengthen this group of befrienders by developing a comprehensive Befrienders Management Framework. The Framework aims to provide befrienders with relevant training to further enhance their skills. Last year Muis completed two runs of customised basic training (Level 1) for 50 befrienders, conducted in collaboration with the Social Service Training Institute (SSTI). These trainings will be extended to the rest of the befrienders, including new recruits. . Muis will continue to increase the pool of volunteers for better and more personal care for zakat recipients and their families. **Please see Annex A for a profile of Mosque Befriender.**

4 Muis will organise a Befrienders' Seminar in October this year, in conjunction with Mosque Convention 2011. We can expect befrienders, zakat recipients as well as social service professionals to come forward and share their experience as well as challenges at the Seminar. **Please see Annex B for profile of a family assisted by the EMC.**

### ***EMPOWERING THROUGH PROGRESS FUND***

5 Muis recognizes the importance of education for social mobility. Hence, Muis encourages zakat recipients ensure that their children continue both their academic and religious educations. To achieve this objective, a \$2.5m Progress Fund was launched in April 2010.

6 To-date, \$487,030 has been expended from the Fund in the form of subsidies for school fees and other school-related expenses for aLIVE classes, mosque madrasah as well as full-time madrasahs. About 1,300 students have benefitted from these subsidies.

### ***ENHANCED MOSQUE CLUSTERS (EMCs): ONE-STOP CENTRE FOR ASSISTANCE AT YOUR DOOR STEP***

7 The South East Enhanced Cluster (SEMC) and the North East Enhanced Mosque Cluster (NEMC) were set up in February and November 2008 respectively. Mosques are well-placed to empower and support zakat recipients through holistic intervention. EMCs were established to improve the synergy and collaboration among mosques in a wider area. The EMC model also facilitates the sharing of best practices and resources among mosques to tackle community issues effectively. With the EMCs, the social assistance function previously done by MUIS was devolved to the clusters, hence becoming more accessible to the needy.

8 The EMCs have established strengthened networks with various agencies such as the CDCs, Mendaki, FSCs as well as community & national institutions like the Health Promotion Board (HPB). These networks are crucial in ensuring that zakat recipients receive appropriate assistance through the right channels.

9 Since 2008, both mosque clusters have provided more structured and holistic assistance to some 1,857 zakat-receiving families from the North Eastern and South Eastern parts of Singapore. More than 90% of these cases were referred to CDCs/ VWOs for some form of assistance. Individualised plans were also drawn up for more than 90% of these cases to provide customized intervention and closer monitoring by the befrienders. To date, 653 families were able to overcome their hardship and no longer receive financial assistance. In addition, out of the total number of families with children that were assisted by

the EMCs, more than 60% of them attend Islamic Learning in the mosques and 10% actively participate in mosque activities.

10 In sum, a total of 1,853 families were assisted in 2010 as compared to 2,122 in 2009, likely due to Singapore's speedy recovery from the global recession of 2009. In addition, 172 out of 210 families (82%) graduated from the third intake (2008) of Muis Empowerment Partnership Scheme<sup>1</sup> (EPS).

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**MAJLIS UGAMA ISLAM SINGAPURA  
3 MARCH 2011**

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<sup>1</sup> The Empowerment Partnership Scheme (EPS) is a signature programme of Muis' Disbursement & Empowerment Strategic Unit which is a targetted and holistic assistance programme for zakat-receiving families to assist them to become self-reliant. Through partnerships with private social service providers, participants undergo training in financial management, family planning, health promotion activities over and above skills upgrading and start-up grants for small business enterprise. Since its inception in 2004, a total of 403 out of 610 families have graduated from the scheme and no longer received Muis monthly zakat assistance.

## ANNEX A

### **HUMAN INTEREST STORY – “Befriender of Darul Ghufuran Mosque”**

**Name of Organisation:** Darul Ghufuran Mosque (NEMC) c/o Muis  
**Programme:** Mosque Befriender Scheme

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S/N	Items	Details
1	Name of befriender	Siti Ah'esah Binte Salleh
2	Age	59 years old
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mdm Ah'esah is an active befriender to the poor and needy elderly clients from the Muis Zakat Assistance scheme managed by the Darul Ghufuran Mosque under the Northeast Mosque Cluster (NEMC). She also participates actively in the mosque's programmes and activities, since 2007.</li><li>• Mdm Ah'esah is a widow with 4 children. Her children support her with some monthly financial contributions. She is a part-time seamstress, taking orders from her neighbours and friends.</li><li>• She was first introduced to the roles of befriender and the Muis Social Development (SD) agenda during the first orientation conducted by NEMC.</li><li>• Subsequently, NEMC had sent her for trainings such as 'Family Violence Workshop' by Dr Khatijah Dawood and 'Follow-up Befriender Session' by Mdm Maimunah Rosli from As-Salaam Family Support Centre. She will be attending the "Customised Befrienders Training" on 5 March 2011, in joint collaboration between Muis and Social Service Training Institute (SSTI).</li><li>• NEMC connected Mdm Ah'esah to the mosques' Social Development Officers (SDOs) so that they can work in partnership through discussions and debrief sessions on clients after Mdm Ah'esah's home visits.</li><li>• Mdm Ah'esah has gone the extra mile to accompany sickly zakat recipients for medical appointment with doctors.</li><li>• During the visits to hospitals with zakat recipients, Mdm Ah'esah has helped some single elderly / illiterate female clients secure appointments with Medical Social Workers so that they could be considered for medical subsidies.</li><li>• She actively conducts home visits and volunteers in Ramadan projects like Porridge &amp; Iftar on Wheels, Home Delivery Assist to deliver groceries &amp; sundry to elderly and donated computers to selected chronically ill children.</li></ul>		

## Annex B

### **HUMAN INTEREST STORY - “Upskilling to beat the odds”**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Details</b>
1	Name of client	Samsaimon Bin Sarpani
2	Age	45
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mr Samsaimon is the sole breadwinner in the family. He provides for a family of seven, including four children now aged between 12 and 18 years old, as well as an ailing mother-in-law. His wife, Mdm Alinah, age 44, is a full-time homemaker. Mr Samsaimon only had secondary school qualifications. With this, he was only able to bring home barely \$1,000 every month as a courier staff.</li><li>• Al-Ansar Mosque in the South East Mosque Cluster took over Mr Samsaimon’s case in 2007 Three of his children, who are suffering from thalassaemia, were studying full-time in a local madrasah while the other was studying in a primary school.</li><li>• An Individual Client Plan (ICP) was further updated for the family by the Social Development Officer of Al-Ansar Mosque in consultation with Mr Samsaimon. The family was provided monthly Zakat assistance as well as study grants to assist with madrasah expenses. Befrienders also visited the family either at their home or at the mosque, to explain about the kind of programmes they could participate at the mosque, as well as to provide constant motivation and support to the family.</li><li>• Mr Samsaimon’s children were enrolled into the Mendaki Tuition Scheme (MTS) as a bid to support and improve their academic performance. Mr Samsaimon’s wife also completed cake-making and decoration course, which was fully funded by Muis’ zakat funds, at Al-Ansar Mosque. She is currently running a small home-based business, selling homemade cakes and pastries to help supplement their monthly household income.</li><li>• Mr Samsaimon on the other hand has successfully completed a skills upgrading programme, Certificate in Workplace Safety &amp; Health at the Singapore Polytechnic. This programme is fully funded by the Singapore Workforce Development Authority and Mr Samsaimon’s enrolment into the training programme was also facilitated by the South East Community Development Council.</li></ul>

- Despite their struggles, Mr Samsaimon and his family have shown perseverance and determination to overcome their financial problem.
  - Mr Samsaimon is currently continuing with the next stage of his training programme and he hopes to find a better paying job, perhaps at supervisory level, upon graduation.
  - Mr Samsaimon and his family have been actively participating in Al-Ansar Mosque programmes, from religious workshops like *Bengkel Keluarga Islam*, financial workshops like Yayasan Mendaki's *Bengkel Bijak Belanja*, to community-based activities such as packing and distributing food during break fast in Ramadan.
  - Mr Samsaimon's children have also done reasonably well in school. His second daughter for example, attained 7 Credits in GCE 'O' Level last year, with two As, three Bs and two Cs.
  - Even with his busy schedule juggling between studies and work, Mr Samsaimon still finds the time to actively volunteer as a member of a *Qaryah* team, a neighbourhood committee, where he assumes the position of an honorary secretary.
  - Mr Samsaimon and his family are recently enrolled into the fourth intake of Muis' Empowerment Partnership Scheme (EPS). They have been assigned to Ain Society, who is currently looking at helping Mr Samsaimon's wife to market her home-based business to help augment their total household income.
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