



SINGAPORE NEWS

NTUC's social enterprises contribute S\$107m in 2009 to help workers

By S Ramesh | Posted: 06 May 2010 1037 hrs

SINGAPORE: NTUC's 12 social enterprises contributed S\$107 million last year to help workers and their families manage the downturn, a 41 per cent increase from 2008.

It's the highest amount of assistance given out by the labour movement's social enterprises since they started operations in the 1970s.

Labour Chief Lim Swee Say adds that the movement's examining if new social enterprises need to be set up to meet new challenges like the silver industry.

Social enterprises like NTUC Foodfare and FairPrice are more than just household names.

They've helped workers and union members stretch their dollar during the economic downturn last year.

Close to S\$90 million was channelled to help members and their families manage the cost of living with rebates and discounts.

Mr Lim said: "Doing good is the core purpose of the organisation and doing well is the means to the end, because we can only do good unless we do well."

But Mr Lim adds that the social enterprises are not out to crowd out its competitors.

He said: "With 12 social enterprises it is impossible to try to be everywhere for everyone and get involved in everything.

"Secondly the concept adopted by NTUC's social enterprises is one of best sourcing and strategic partnership. So we recognise that it is not possible for us to have all the expertise in every area and yet at the same time we recognise that if we do not broaden and widen our products and services then our social impact will be limited."

For the long term, the aim is to look out for business partners.

One such project with collaboration with overseas bodies is the new Productivity and Innovation Institute.

Zee Yoong Kang, CEO, NTUC Learning Hub, said: "What Learning Hub will do is partner consulting companies, large and small, to really work with companies to see how to transform their entire operations so that they can focus on improving productivity.

"There are two main target groups that we have. First the workforce, giving them the skills that they need so that they can improve productivity in their daily work. The second target group is corporations, especially service sector, where we have many SMEs which are interested but do not know how to implement productivity improvement concepts."

For the longer term, NTUC's social enterprises say they want to make a bigger impact amongst workers and union leaders with a whole range of services they can provide.

These include NTUC FairPrice which plans to open its 100th store this year. And NTUC Foodfare which will introduce new value set meals at all its foodcourts for union members at ten to 15 per cent discounts.

The social enterprises have also collectively donated about S\$17 million to charitable causes.

S\$11 million went into the Labour Movement's U Care Fund which benefited more than 170 thousand Singaporeans last year.

NTUC Group Development Director, Adeline Sum said, "In a recession year in 2009, when many families were operating on a tighter budget, the NTUC Social Enterprises stepped up their social mission to Do Good and keep prices affordable.

"Customers recognised the value they are getting from the Social Enterprises, and more became loyal customers. This helped the Social Enterprises to Do Well, and be competitive, thus creating a virtuous cycle which allowed them to Do More Good and increase their social impact and touch the lives of more customers, members, workers and their families, more deeply".

- CNA/vm/jy

