

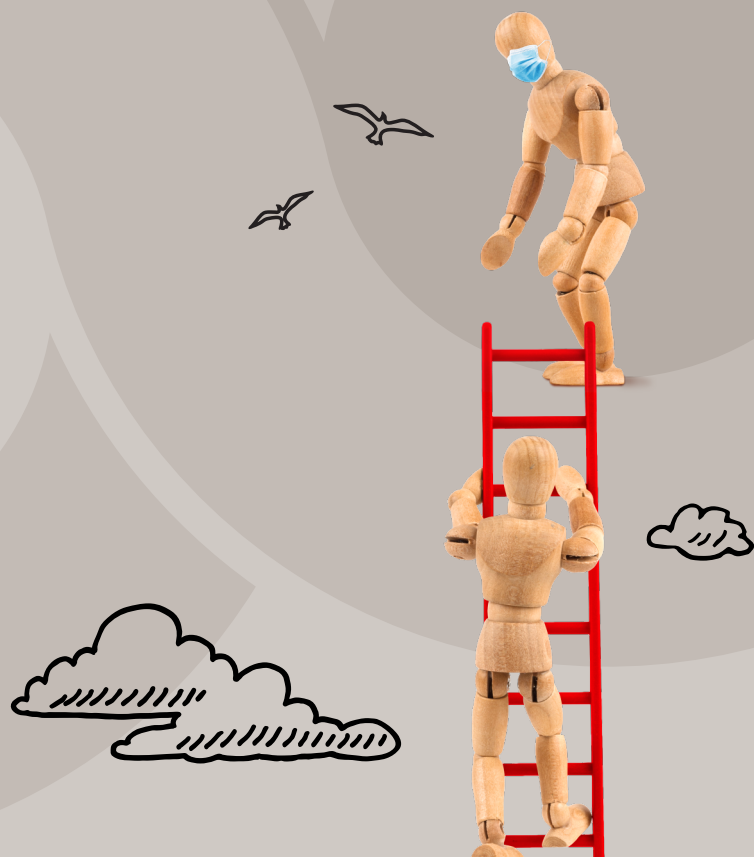
# NTUC ORDINARY DELEGATES' CONFERENCE 2021

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## COVID-19 Report

**DREAM • DARE • DO**

Act Now to Transform  
Our Labour Movement



This publication is brought to you by the NTUC Administration and Research Unit.  
If you have any feedback on the publication, please email [stratcomms@ntuc.org.sg](mailto:stratcomms@ntuc.org.sg).

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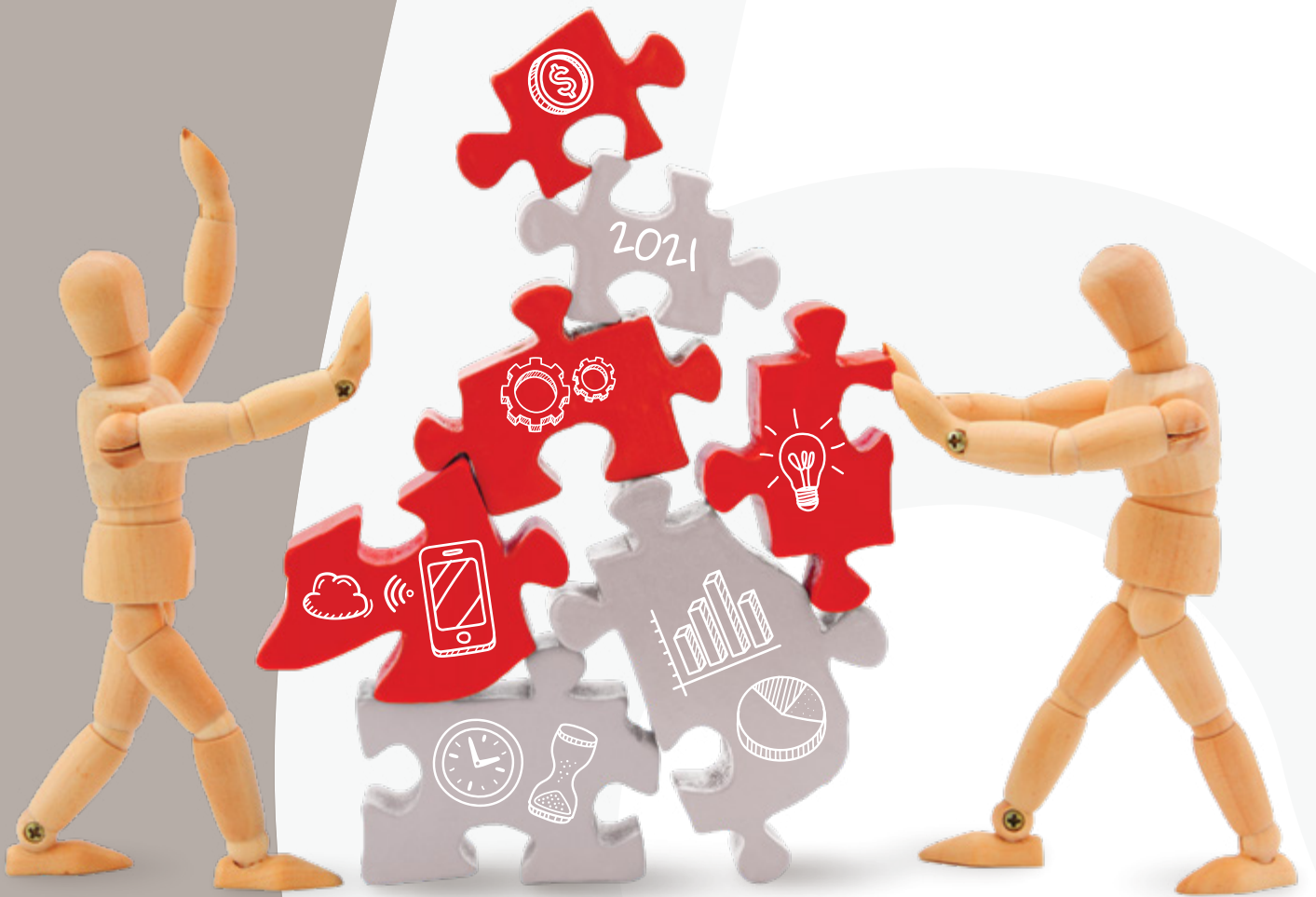
**#EVERY  
WORKER  
MATTERS**

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**MEMBERSFIRST  
WORKERSALWAYS**

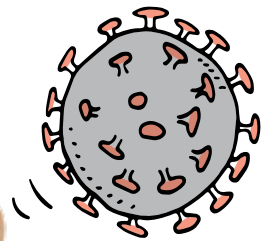
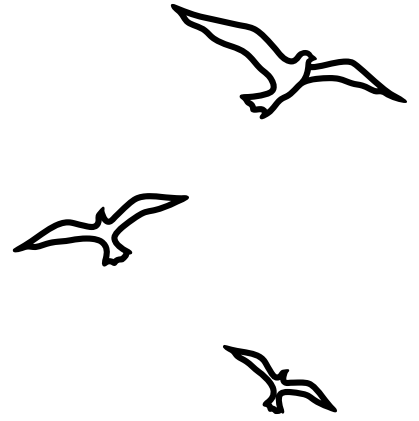
NTUC ORDINARY DELEGATES' CONFERENCE 2021

**COVID-19 REPORT**



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## PREFACE

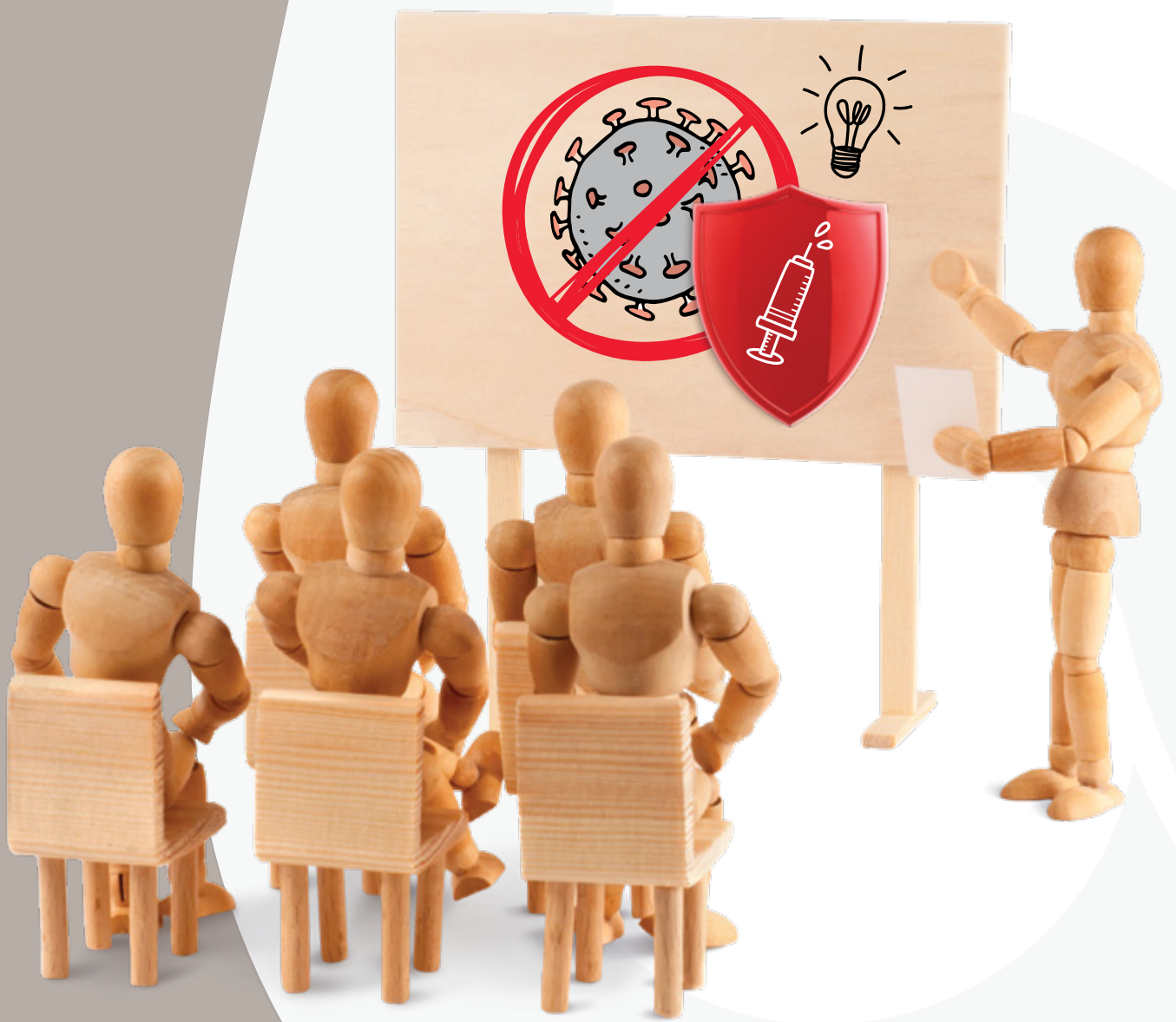
To date, COVID-19 has caused over 4 million deaths worldwide. The disruption the pandemic has brought to the global economy, with entire sectors coming to a standstill, puts the livelihood of every worker at risk.

At NTUC, our mission is to protect workers.

In the face of a global pandemic, jobs are as crucial as face masks. Saving jobs became NTUC's number one priority during the nation's fight against COVID-19.

How can we preserve as many jobs as possible? What can we do to cushion the impact of COVID-19 on our workers' well-being? How can we help the Labour Movement weather this storm?

The NTUC COVID-19 Report documents the various strategies and initiatives NTUC carried out during 2020/21 to preserve jobs and mitigate the various hardship faced by workers as Singapore grappled with COVID-19.





# INTRODUCTION

Every storm runs out of rain.

While the impact of COVID-19 has been devastating, NTUC believes that by providing sustained, all-round support to workers, all workers can emerge from this crisis stronger, and better-positioned for new opportunities when Singapore makes an eventual recovery.

# INTRODUCTION

## WORKERS FIRST

At the onset of COVID-19, NTUC's top priority was job preservation.

Making use of our unique tripartite model, employers responded to the unions' call for cost-saving measures in lieu of retrenchments. The Government also stepped in with grants to further encourage companies to take the long view and retain staff.

For sectors that faced severe disruption, such as aviation and tourism, training and support packages were introduced to encourage companies to retain staff by upskilling or retraining them in the interim.

NTUC understood that a continuous source of income was critical in ensuring that workers and their families face minimal disruption to their lives.



## PIVOTING

Due to the severity of the pandemic, retrenchments ultimately became inevitable. The Labour Movement proposed a Fair Retrenchment Framework to protect the Singapore Core, that is, safeguard the jobs of Singaporeans through job protection and re-deployment, with due considerations given to foreign workers who have special or critical skills.

The NTUC Job Security Council helped displaced workers pivot to new jobs in new industries, especially in roles that saw a surge in demand due to COVID-19, such as temperature screeners and contact tracers.

## BATTLING COVID-19 AS A NATION

In ordinary times, NTUC stands firmly in support of every worker. During a crisis, this role is further amplified.

As COVID-19 cases surged in the country, NTUC tapped on its network of social enterprises and partners to bring relief to workers and their families.

For instance, NTUC FairPrice froze prices and kept shelves well-stocked to allay fears of price hikes and panic buying. For seniors and vulnerable groups, FairPrice dedicated a 'Priority Shopping Hour' for such customers to shop safely and with ease.

As self-employed persons (SEP) was one of the groups hardest hit by COVID-19, NTUC took steps to provide them with integrated help. NTUC administered and guided SEPs on the application of the Self-Employed Person Income Relief Scheme (SIRS) and worked with tripartite partners to provide financial support to the largest group of SEPs – the private hire and taxi drivers – while LearningHub and the NTUC Training Fund gave SEPs learning opportunities with allowances, helping them to land on their feet.



With many of the dormitories gazetted as isolation zones to curb transmission of the virus, the Migrant Workers' Centre rallied partners and volunteers to distribute over 5 million sanitary and personal care items to more than 600,000 migrant workers.

In addition, the \$25 million NTUC Care Fund (COVID-19) was launched to provide financial assistance to lower-income union members.

Beyond these examples, many more funds and initiatives were launched to safeguard the welfare of all workers as the nation grappled with the height of the pandemic.



## THE NEW NORMAL

Gradually though, as the pandemic stretched on, it became clear that living with COVID-19 was the new normal. 'Work From Home' and 'Home-Based Learning' became words familiar to Singaporeans.

In step with the new normal, if NTUC services, job fairs, or training programmes could pivot to virtual platforms, they did.

For instance, NTUC LearningHub launched its online learning platform – LHUB GO Learn200 – to help workers upskill and keep pace with industry advancements.



Due to the protracted nature of COVID-19, salary and termination related disputes rose into 2020, particularly during the Circuit Breaker. TADM@NTUC helped workers and provided dispute resolution services for 3,786 cases.

## FORGING AHEAD

COVID-19 has been an extremely challenging time for all workers to this day.

The pandemic has underscored the importance of the urgent need for companies to implement the Operation & Technology Roadmap (OTR), to develop strategies and training plans to transform their businesses, and embrace digitalisation and automation.

Company Training Committees (CTC) that support workers in upskilling and achieving better work prospects are the workers' best form of defence against job threats caused by COVID-19 and potential global catastrophes in the future.

The pandemic has also demonstrated the crucial work of essential workers, some of whom are also lower-wage workers. NTUC has continuously shown care and appreciation for this group of workers and put in place plans to improve their work prospects.

At NTUC, we are grateful to the understanding of all workers and are heartened by their willingness to collaborate and seek win-win situations for all.

The Labour Movement will continue to do our best to champion workers' rights and help the nation weather the storm of COVID-19. We are not out of the woods but we are getting there.

Every storm runs out of rain.





## WORKERS FIRST

On 23 January 2020, Singapore reported its first case of COVID-19. In the months to come, safety measures such as border closure and Circuit Breaker staunched the spread of the virus but put sectors like aviation, F&B, accommodation and tourism under great strain. With a global downturn looming, workers across all industries grew concerned about job security.

# WORKERS FIRST

## LABOUR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS: AVOIDING RETRENCHMENTS

At NTUC, we are guided by the saying, “Jobs are the best form of welfare”.

In view of the scale of the pandemic, unions took a broader stance to support ALL workers, instead of their unionised members only. Saving jobs became top priority.

## COST-SAVING MEASURES: SHORTER WORK WEEK, WAGES, BONUSES

### Shorter Work Week

Unionised companies responded to the unions’ call for cost-saving measures in lieu of retrenchments. Retrenchment was to be the last resort, only after all other cost-saving measures have been exhausted.

In 2020, 35 unionised companies implemented a shorter work week. This affected 6,500 workers, almost a five-fold increase compared to 2019 numbers.

In the first half of 2021, four unionised companies reported implementation of a shorter work week. This affected 562 workers, with the measure expected to extend into the second half of 2021.

To give guidance to affected employers in the implementation of cost-saving measures, the Tripartite Advisory on Managing Excess Manpower and Responsible Retrenchment was updated, with emphasis on training and upskilling workers to position for eventual recovery.

### Wages Guidelines

The National Wages Council 2020/2021 Guidelines were issued on 30 March 2020.

The National Wages Council (NWC) called upon employers to take a longer-term view of their manpower needs.

#### March 2020:

The NWC encouraged businesses that performed well despite the economic situation to continue rewarding workers with variable payments and built-in wage increments.

For lower-wage workers who stepped up to assist employers during this challenging COVID-19 period, employers were encouraged to, whenever possible, provide special consideration for them in the form of ex gratia payments.

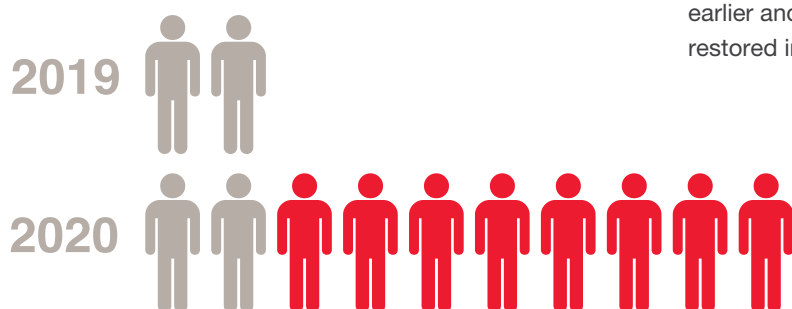
#### October 2020:

In the second half of 2020, when the pandemic worsened considerably in Singapore and globally, the NWC re-convened in August 2020 to review its earlier guidelines. As much as possible, the NWC hoped to sustain businesses and minimise retrenchments.

The National Wages Council 2020/2021 Supplementary Guidelines were subsequently issued on 16 October 2020, setting out key principles to guide employers on implementing appropriate wage cuts.

This temporary reduction of basic wages took into consideration the sector’s performance; the company’s performance; economic outlook; the level of government support; and other cost-saving measures that were implemented (e.g. allowances and commissions, shorter work week, temporary lay-offs, and no-pay leave).

Management was expected to lead by example with earlier and deeper cuts, only to have such wage cuts restored in tandem with future business recovery.



In 2020, 35 unionised companies implemented a shorter work week. This affected 6,500 workers, almost a five-fold increase compared to 2019.



In addition, companies were to implement a Flexible Wage System if they had not already done so. Employers were encouraged to pay workers' Annual Wage Supplement (AWS), as it helped workers with their seasonal expenses, especially for lower-wage workers.

#### May 2021:

The National Wages Council 2020/2021 Addendum was issued on 14 May 2021.

NTUC and its tripartite partners agreed that the National Wages Council Guidelines issued earlier in March 2020 and October 2020 remained relevant, and continued to provide guidance on how employers can sustain their businesses and save jobs.

The NWC urged employers who had experienced recovery or growth to reward employees fairly through variable payments; bring forward their hiring plans; and grant built-in basic wage increase.

NTUC also urged businesses that were recovering at a quicker pace than others to restore the wage cuts that were implemented earlier. Other cost-saving measures were also to be rolled back in tandem with recovery, followed by granting the Annual Variable Component (AVC).

For lower-wage workers in particular, NTUC highlighted its goal of wage convergence. The NWC called on all employers to give special consideration to lower-wage workers. The prolonged pandemic impacted lower-wage workers much more than other workers as they have little or no discretionary savings to fall back on.

To uplift the wages of lower-wage workers, the NWC recommended employers who have done well, or are recovering, to consider built-in wage increments. Employers who are implementing wage reductions should instead implement a wage freeze for lower-wage workers.

## Bonuses and Increments

The Singapore economy contracted by 5.4 per cent in 2020 due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, workers accepted lower bonuses in view of the pandemic. The average bonus, inclusive of AWS from the unionised companies surveyed dropped to an average of 2.83 months including AWS, compared to 3.10 months in 2019.

Similarly, unionised companies that were performing moderately to well continued to pay an average basic wage increase of around 2.18 per cent in 2020 compared to 3.49 per cent in 2019. A portion of these wage increments were paid in the first quarter of 2020 before the severity of COVID-19 set in. Companies also preferred to reward workers with more variable payment than built-in wage increases due to the uncertainty in the road ahead.

Close to 1 in 3 unionised companies froze wages in the first half of 2021 as businesses practiced caution and fiscal prudence in light of the evolving nature of the pandemic. Average basic wage increase in the first half of 2021 was around 1.57 per cent compared to 2.45 per cent in the same period in 2020.

Almost all unionised companies paid AWS in 2020. This is particularly useful for lower-wage workers as the payment of the AWS helps them with their seasonal expenses.

In the severely impacted sectors, the management led by example and took on earlier and deeper wage cuts. Workers also sacrificed their income and went on no pay leave ranging from one to four days in some months. Lower-wage workers were protected as much as the companies possibly could and cost-saving measures were progressively rolled-back in tandem with business recovery.



## RETAIN AND RETRAIN

Training and support packages were introduced to help companies retain staff by upskilling or retraining them during the downtime when COVID-19 brought business activity to a standstill.

Sectors such as aviation and tourism were particularly hard hit by COVID-19.

SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG), Workforce Singapore (WSG) and the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS), together with the NTUC Aerospace & Aviation Cluster, jointly announced on 2 March 2020 an enhanced training and support package to help air transport companies defray business costs and protect workers jobs. The initiative is part of the Stabilisation and Support Package that was announced by the Government during Budget 2020.

More than 8,000 workers across major air transport companies benefited from the enhanced training and support package.

NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) injected an additional sum of \$500,000 to help unionised companies in the air transport sector send their workers for training during the downtime. This is on top of the funding that air transport companies would receive under the NETF Collaborative Fund (NCF).

## \$1.5 million NETF Collaborative Fund (NCF)

In June 2021, to further encourage air transport unionised companies to send their workers for training, \$1.5 million was committed under the NCF. This initiative helped to boost the training capacity of unionised companies. The fund is a top-up on the \$3 million Singapore OneAviation Reskilling (SOAR) grant by CAAS and NTUC Aerospace & Aviation Cluster, which supports both unionised and non-unionised companies.



\$1.5 million was committed under the NETF Collaborative Fund (NCF).

## A WORKER'S VOICE

### Lim Swee Kim

After a three-year work hiatus due to family matters, NTUC member, Lim Swee Kim felt that it was time to re-enter the workforce to support her mother. Swee Kim signed up for a Project Management Virtual Live Classroom. Swee Kim found the class enjoyable as the trainer created a safe and comfortable learning environment for all the students. The Virtual Live Classroom gave Swee Kim the momentum to start her entrepreneurial journey. She is now halfway through the start-up programme with Enterprise Singapore to set up her own management consultancy firm.



NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) injected an additional sum of \$500,000 to help unionised companies in the air transport sector send their workers for training during the downtime.



## Transitioning to Virtual Live Classes

In April 2020, the increasing local spread of COVID-19 necessitated an elevated set of safe distancing measures, in the form of the national Circuit Breaker.

To ensure that learning did not stop during Circuit Breaker, NTUC LearningHub (NTUC LHUB) transitioned all in-person classes into Virtual Live Classes (VLCs) to make training accessible. Over 600 trainers were trained to be VLC-ready to meet the workers' demands of upskilling and staying employable during this challenging period.



### Union Steps In

Employees at Jurong Bird Park were affected when the park closed during Circuit Breaker. The Attractions, Resorts & Entertainment Union and management worked closely with NTUC LearningHub to provide virtual training and upskilling for the employees. Through this, management was able to secure funding and absentee payroll for employees who underwent training.

In June 2020, employees of Wildlife Reserves Singapore took up 386 training places for competency courses under WSQ and digital courses like SkillsFuture for Digital Workplace. Management took lead and implemented wage cuts from vice presidents and above. This gesture allowed rank-and-file workers to avoid wage reductions.

## Learning During a Pandemic

NTUC LHUB worked closely with SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) to be the only Continuing Education and Training (CET) provider amongst Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) to offer programmes that allowed companies from hard-hit sectors to utilise the Enhanced Training Support Package (ETSP).

The ETSP package provided course-fee subsidies and absentee payroll funding to over 5,000 companies, clocking over 183,000 training days. It also developed training pathways for self-employed persons (SEP) to leverage NTUC's training funds, clocking over 43,000 training days. Some examples of hard-hit sectors include tourism, air transport, aerospace, hospitality, retail as well as F&B.

NTUC LHUB offered 19 programmes in the technology sector and three programmes in the healthcare sector, enabling jobseekers to earn as they learn.

For individually funded learners, NTUC LHUB secured approval from SSG to allow trainees to utilise their additional SkillsFuture Credit top up on the courses.

To allow safe upskilling during the pandemic, NTUC LHUB also offered individuals 200 free on-demand online courses through the learning platform, LHUB GO in April 2020. LHUB GO eventually amassed over 100,000 learners by December 2020.

**183,000**  
training  
days



The ETSP package provided course fee subsidies and absentee payroll funding to over 5,000 companies, clocking over 183,000 training days.

## TRIPARTISM WORKS

Through the COVID-19 crisis, the Labour Movement maintained its collaborative stance.

Workers made sacrifices and accepted wage cuts and other cost-saving measures. As much as possible, workers in hard hit sectors were retained and sent for retraining and upskilling. Employers did their best to keep as many workers as possible, while the Government stepped in with support packages to stabilise the economy and relieve workers' anxiety.



Singapore's unique brand of tripartism has been key to Singapore's success.



## Kesavan Vasundran

Assistant Manager for Logistics, Suntec Singapore  
President, Building Construction And Timber Industries  
Employees' Union

COVID-19 hit the events industry hard.

As an assistant manager for logistics at Suntec Singapore, and the newly elected president of the Building Construction And Timber Industries Employees' Union (BATU), Kesavan Vasundran grew concerned about his and his colleagues' job security.

Working closely with the management, Kesavan and his fellow union leaders mapped out cost-cutting measures, such as having staff use up their annual leave or take unpaid leave, all to stave off retrenchment. However, the COVID-19 downturn was severe and impacted the events industry so directly, Kesavan's company had no choice but to retrench staff.

Before the company made the announcements, Kesavan and his branch chairman received the list of workers who were about to be retrenched. Kesavan recalls his experience negotiating with the management to keep more staff.

“ I know that's not a huge number, but that is still nine people whom we fought for and made sure they kept their job. ”

“At first, I felt like I had lost the battle. As much as possible, I wanted more people to stay. We tried our best. At the start, it was like 60 per cent and 40 per cent, not even 50-50. Then we negotiated and asked questions.

“If we didn’t negotiate, it would have stood at 60-40. We pushed, and pushed, and pushed. We asked the management, ‘Why can’t we go for a bigger pay cut? Let’s hold for few more months as the Government is giving subsidies and grants.

“We tried as much as possible, and we were able to save another eight or nine workers. I know that’s not a huge number, but that is still nine people whom we fought for and made sure they kept their job.”

For his colleagues who faced retrenchment, as a union leader, Kesavan worked with industrial relations officers and NTUC’s e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) to find at least three to four job opportunities for the affected workers.

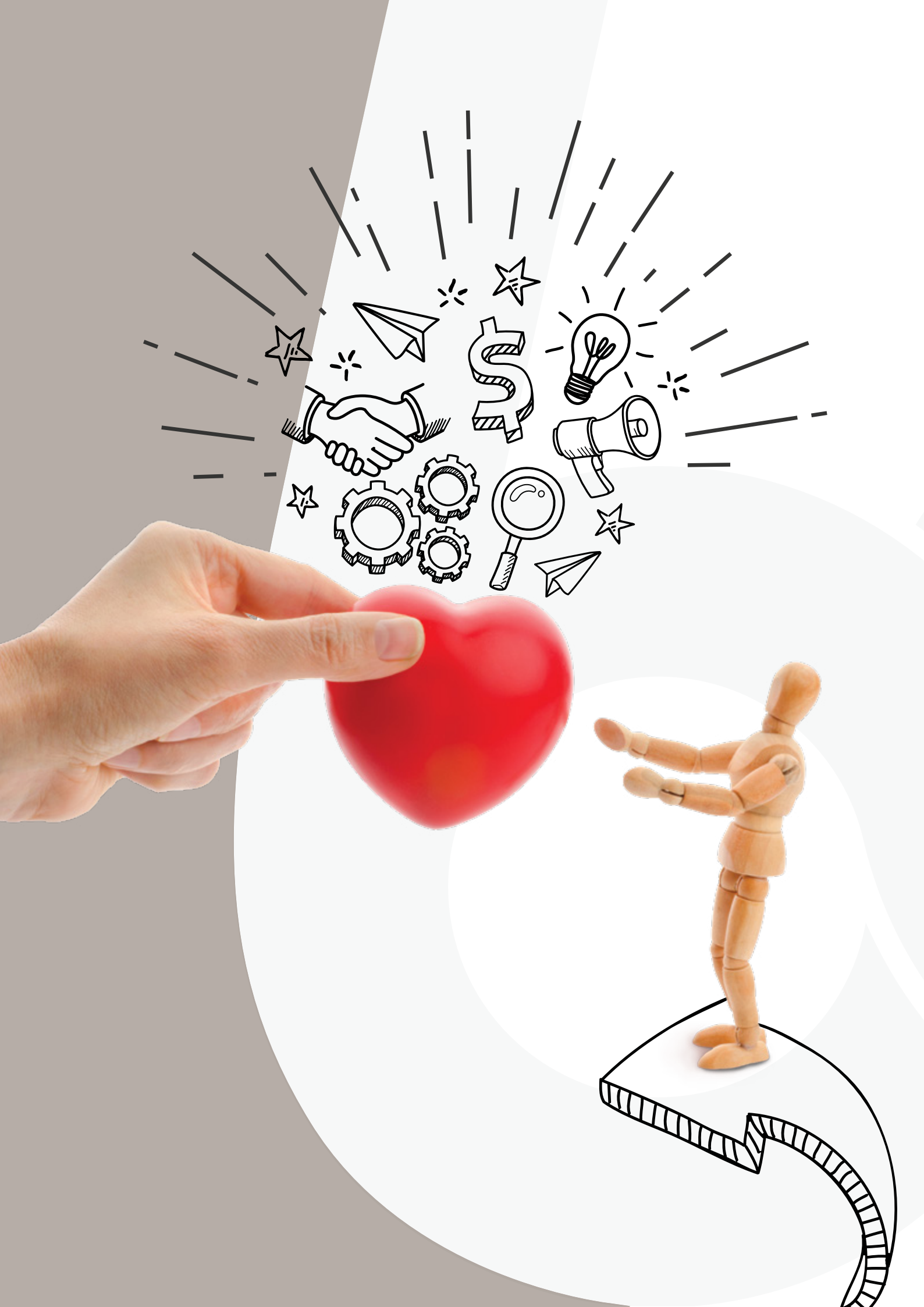
It helped that Kesavan, who used to organise events like durian party or movie screening for the union members, knew the members well personally and was aware of their needs. Kesavan also credits his Diploma in Employment Development, which prepared him on what to do during a crisis like this.

On why he stepped up to become a union leader, he said: “When I had problems, there was somebody to help me. It’s the same thing I’m doing for my other colleagues now – I want to help them settle their issues and pull them up to have a better future.”



“When I had problems, there was somebody to help me. It’s the same thing I’m doing for my other colleagues now– I want to help them settle their issues and pull them up to have a better future.”







## PIVOTING

The global impact of COVID-19 has led to Singapore's worst downturn since independence.

In 2020, with Singapore's economy looking uncertain and retrenchments becoming inevitable, unions grew concerned that workers could face unfair retrenchment practices.

In July 2020, the Labour Movement proposed a Fair Retrenchment Framework (FRF) to guide companies on responsible retrenchment practices.

The FRF ensured that retrenched workers were treated fairly and respectfully, with their sense of dignity protected.

To help at-risk or displaced workers, the NTUC Job Security Council (JSC) was launched in February 2020. JSC aims to provide pre-emptive retrenchment support to minimise unemployment duration amongst displaced workers.

NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute), as the programme manager of JSC, piloted new initiatives to match and place affected workers in temporary or secondary jobs. Its Lift-and-Place initiative was particularly effective. Affected workers trained and pivoted to new jobs, or additional roles that helped to supplement their income.

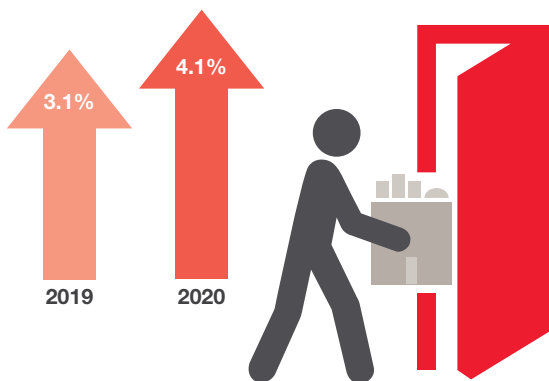
# PIVOTING



## JOB LOSSES

Due to the severity of the pandemic, retrenchments became inevitable. The 2020 annual resident unemployment rate rose to 4.1 per cent, up from 3.1 per cent in 2019.

### UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

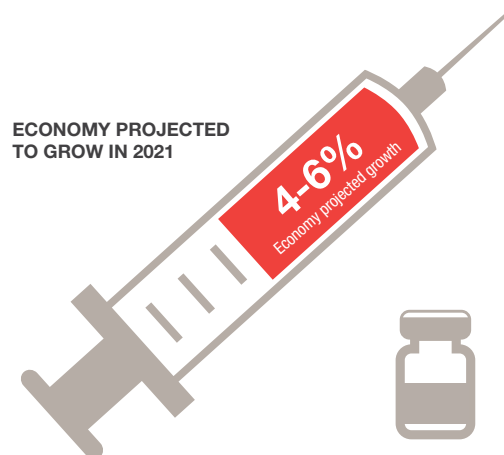


Some 11,859 workers from unionised companies had to be retrenched in 2020. This excluded workers who were unable to return to work due to border closure and the non-renewal of re-employed workers. The sub-sectors under duress – aviation, aerospace, accommodation and tourism – accounted for around 60 per cent of the unionised workers retrenched in 2020.

Workers who had full representation mostly received one month per year of service as retrenchment benefits.

While the number of job losses in the first half of 2021 (2,059) is 70 per cent lower year-on-year, it remained elevated when compared to pre-COVID years. Workers laid off in second quarter of 2021 was 8 per cent higher than the preceding quarter.

However, with the national vaccination drive progressing steadily and the economy projected to grow by 4-6 per cent in 2021, job losses are likely to stay moderately low for the remainder of 2021 if the economy gradually recovers.





## Union Steps In

When Singapore Airlines held its retrenchment exercise in 2020, the company openly engaged the unions early to discuss the impact retrenchment would bring to its workers. Singapore Airlines made sure that affected workers would be fairly compensated.

Beyond providing a fair redundancy package, the company used the Fair Retrenchment Framework as a guide, and worked closely with the unions and the NTUC Aerospace & Aviation Cluster to ensure that the retrenchment exercise was conducted in a dignified manner. Union representatives were on-site to assist members, while trained counsellors were also engaged by the company for any worker who needed further assistance.

## Providing Job Support

If retrenchments are inevitable, companies are to provide fair retrenchment packages and processes, to ensure that workers are treated fairly and respectfully.

Companies should also come onboard the NTUC Job Security Council (JSC) to provide support to workers who may be, or are affected by the retrenchments, and assist them in seeking employment and training for new skills necessary for new jobs.

The FRF helped ensure that despite the retrenchments, employees who were retained saw their companies acting fairly towards their colleagues and that retrenchments were a last resort. This ensured that morale at the company was not significantly affected.

For retrenched workers, the FRF ensured they were treated fairly, respectfully and with sufficient outplacement assistance. The FRF helped protect workers' dignity and eased the transition to their next job.

## FAIR RETRENCHMENT FRAMEWORK

To strengthen the protection and representation of workers, the Labour Movement proposed a Fair Retrenchment Framework (FRF) in July 2020.

The FRF complements the existing tripartite advisory and guidelines on managing excess manpower and responsible retrenchment.

The FRF sets out the following key guiding principles:

### Protecting the Singapore Core

If retrenchments are inevitable, companies are to implement a fair selection criteria to safeguard the jobs of Singaporeans, through job protection and re-deployment, with due considerations given to foreign workers who have special or critical skills.

Companies should ensure an ageless workplace, taking into account the keeping older employees who may possess skills, experience, knowledge, maturity and reliability, and evaluating these workers impartially.

### Preserving Jobs

Companies should work with unions and workers to find as many ways to preserve jobs, and ensure the company has adequate manpower to seize business opportunities when the economy recovers.

To this end, companies can tap on government assistance schemes to mitigate manpower costs, implement cost-saving measures or provide secondment opportunities for workers.



## RETRENCHMENT BENEFITS

A tripartite advisory on retrenchment benefit payable to retrenched employees as a result of business difficulties due to COVID-19 was developed to guide employers and workers.

The retrenchment benefits were pegged to the companies' financial position:

### Employers in Sound Financial Position

Should continue to pay retrenchment benefits according to their existing employment contracts or collective agreements.

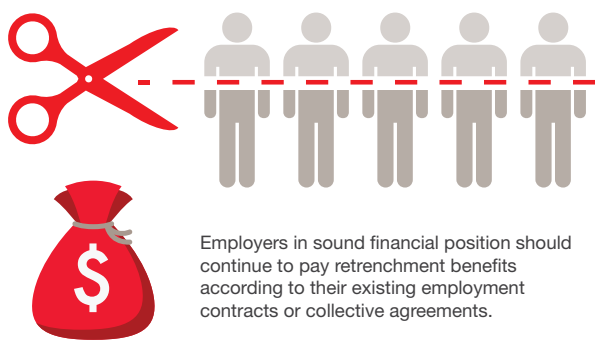
### Employers Whose Business Have Been Adversely Affected

Should work with the unions for a fair retrenchment benefit linked to the employee's years of service.

### Employers in Severe Financial Difficulties

Should negotiate with unions on a mutually acceptable retrenchment benefit package.

Non-unionised employers should provide a lump sum retrenchment benefit, and the amount could be between one and three months' salary, taking into consideration the Jobs Support Scheme payouts that the employers received and their financial position.



For non-unionised companies, employers should provide a lump sum retrenchment benefit, and the amount could be between one and three months' salary, taking into consideration the Jobs Support Scheme payouts that the employers received and their financial position.



## Union Steps In

In 2020, the aviation sector came to a near standstill when COVID-19 hit and border closures were implemented. Flight crew and pilots, whose wages are dependent on the amount of flight miles covered, were greatly affected. Ground handling companies too faced excess manpower issues when there were no airlines to service during the period. Workers' overtime earnings were also greatly reduced.

The NTUC Aerospace & Aviation Cluster mobilised the unions and worked closely with the NTUC Job Security Council and the Public Service Division to secure secondary employment opportunities for the affected workers. Close to 4,000 workers received assistance during this period and were redeployed to the public sector in jobs such as hospital Patient Care Ambassadors and swabbing assistants; and in sectors such as F&B, logistics and manufacturing.

## NTUC JOB SECURITY COUNCIL: PIVOTING

Set up in February 2020, the NTUC Job Security Council (JSC) was formed to minimise unemployment duration amongst displaced workers.

### Leveraging Partnerships

JSC leverages its partnerships with the Public Service Division (PSD), various unions, and Trade Associations and Chambers to harvest job vacancies and aggregate jobs for jobseekers.

Tapping on this strong employer and partner network, JSC is able to swiftly job-match affected workers into new roles.

This Lift-and-Place initiative – where temporarily displaced workers from releasing companies are matched or seconded temporarily to receiving companies – proved tremendously helpful. The initiative helped affected workers to quickly pivot to new roles that urgently needed manpower.

For example, more than 700 workers in the air transport sector were cross deployed into essential roles such as temperature screeners, contact tracers and safe distancing ambassadors.



## EXPANDING ROLES

When Singapore entered Circuit Breaker in April 2020, Singaporeans were advised to stay home as much as possible.

NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) noticed that taxi drivers were severely impacted during this period as the demand for point-to-point transportation dropped drastically.

Meanwhile, with no dine-in services allowed, the F&B industry was reliant on food delivery to sustain their businesses, but commission fees on food delivery apps affected their profits.

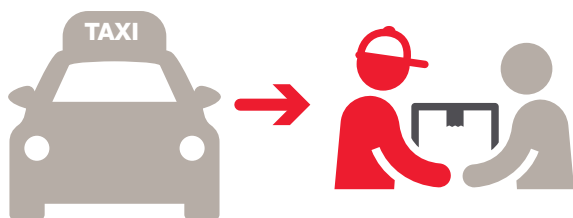
NTUC's e2i worked with the National Taxi Association (NTA) and the Food, Drinks and Allied Workers Union to connect taxi operators with F&B companies who were keen to expand their delivery slots.

This tie-up was made possible through NTUC JSC, which initiated sector-specific transition support and the cross-sharing of best practices amongst partners.

One example of such an arrangement was between ComfortDelGro Taxi, KFC, McDonald's and Pizza Hut. ComfortDelGro worked with KFC, McDonald's and Pizza Hut to provide food delivery from 36 outlets, with around 90 taxi drivers onboard this delivery arrangement.

Taxi drivers were thus able to expand their traditional job scopes to supplement their income during Circuit Breaker, while addressing the manpower crunch from F&B establishments with the increase in food delivery orders.

At least 1,000 taxi drivers were estimated to have benefited from the alternative delivery arrangements.



NTUC's e2i worked with the National Taxi Association and the Food, Drinks and Allied Workers Union to connect taxi operators with F&B companies who were keen to expand their delivery slots.



## A WORKER'S VOICE

### Cheryl Woo

Cheryl Woo, a former catering sales manager, was informed in early 2020 that she was to be furloughed for three months due to COVID-19's impact on the hotel industry. Concerned with the loss of income, Cheryl approached her HR for help. Thanks to JSC's Lift-and-Place initiative, her employer was able to secure a temporary job for Cheryl and other affected staff by working closely with NTUC's e2i. Cheryl attended training and soon started work as an assistant swabber with the Health Promotion Board.

With the help of JSC and unions such as Food, Drinks and Allied Workers Union, 2,000 hospitality workers like Cheryl were able to be redistributed to other essential roles at the height of the pandemic.

## NTUC JSC ECOSYSTEM

NTUC JSC was especially useful when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and workers were affected.

With the support of companies on board, JSC provided pre-emptive support to workers to shorten their unemployment duration and assist them in transiting to secondary jobs or move into growth sectors.

By the end of 2020, there were more than 10,000 companies on-board the JSC ecosystem, and more than 28,000 workers received assistance.



More than  
**10,000**  
companies on-board the  
NTUC JSC ecosystem

More than  
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assistance



## A WORKER'S VOICE

### Yasmeen Bibi Akram

When her contract as a project coordinator ended in August 2020, Yasmeen Bibi Akram had difficulty securing a job during the pandemic. After trying for five months unsuccessfully, Yasmeen came across the nine-month SGUnited Skills Programme to train as an associate project manager. With the monthly training allowance of \$1,200, the 46-year-old was able to tide through her unemployment and picked up new skills in project management. Having gained confidence through upskilling, Yasmeen continued applying for jobs while training, and eventually secured one with as a sales support specialist in June 2021.

## IMPROVING WORKERS' EMPLOYABILITY

To help workers acquire in-demand and emerging skills across sectors, particularly those with good hiring opportunities, NTUC LearningHub (LHUB) served as a partner in the SGUnited Skills (SGUS) programme.

NTUC LHUB offers over 23 programmes, with 1,800 trainees enrolled. As of June 2021, 771 trainees have completed the programme.

NTUC LHUB also directly helped 270 trainees secure employment. This was made possible through its partnerships with employers, and placement activities with NTUC's e2i, such as the Monthly Virtual Fairs, Career Resilience Workshops and Engagement with Employers placement activities within NTUC LHUB and the NTUC Ecosystem.

NTUC LHUB's close partnerships with SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG), Workforce Singapore (WSG) and companies also help trainees upskill and secure job placements through its Professional Conversion Programmes (PCP). A total of 132 trainees became qualified infocomm technology professionals through PCP for Infocomm Technology. In addition, 20 trainees have completed the PCP for Robotic Process Automation, and five others have completed the PCP for Professional Executives.



NTUC LearningHub also directly helped 270 trainees secure employment.

## BUILDING UP CAPABILITY FOR SAFE RE-OPENING

In June 2020, Singapore exited Circuit Breaker and embarked on a three-phased approach to resume activities safely.

NTUC LHUB helped strengthen Singapore's capability for a safe re-opening by working with unions and partners to train over 16,000 individuals to be competent Safe Management Officers.

This included training 2,827 workers for the Ong Teng Cheong Labour Leadership Institute (OTCi) and unions, 11,502 workers in construction companies for the Building and Construction Authority (BCA), and over 200 workers in events companies and the Singapore Association for Conventions & Exhibitions Organisers and Suppliers (SACEOS).

Together with the Ministry of Health (MOH), NTUC LHUB also supported the national COVID-19 testing efforts and trained over 4,000 swabbers.



**11,502**

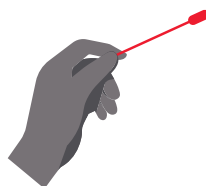
workers in construction companies for the Building and Construction Authority (BCA)



Over

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workers in events companies and the Singapore Association for Conventions & Exhibitions Organisers and Suppliers (SACEOS)



NTUC LearningHub also supported the national COVID-19 testing efforts and trained over

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swabbers



NPHVA piloted a Career Reinvention Workshop for private hire vehicle drivers.

## CAREER RE-INVENTION WORKSHOP FOR PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS

National Private Hire Vehicles Association (NPHVA) piloted a Career Reinvention Workshop (CRW) for private hire drivers who were keen to explore other career options and/or develop alternative income streams.

The CRW helps private hire drivers build confidence to venture into other careers and get advice on how to increase their employability.

Workshop attendees were introduced to various job or work options and relevant training courses. Some 43 drivers participated in the pilot runs of the workshop. The NPHVA is in the process of securing funding for the continuation of CRW.

## REDEPLOYING SQ CREW

In 2020, some small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly those in food services sector, needed additional frontline staff.

NTUC U SME facilitated this manpower request and connected SMEs with Singapore Airlines Staff Union (SIASU) to redeploy the grounded SQ cabin crew.

Through these arrangements, businesses were able to resolve manpower challenges and benefit from the high customer service level of the SQ cabin crew. Additionally, crew members could transfer their customer service know-how to the rest of the staff.

A total of 22 SQ crew were deployed to Gong Cha, Famous Amos and Paradise Group.

## INTERNSHIPS FOR STUDENTS

Due to COVID-19, many companies rescinded internship positions for students. ITE approached Young NTUC for assistance.

Young NTUC connected ITE to ComfortDelGro Group (a National Transport Workers' Union branch) and five internship positions were opened for the ITE students.





## Gina Ng

Senior Administrative Assistant, Fairmont Singapore & Swissôtel The Stamford

Gina Ng has always worked in an office environment in her 35 years at Fairmont Singapore & Swissôtel The Stamford. As a senior administrative assistant in the hotel's culinary department, she handled all banquet event orders and assisted with e-procurement. When the hotel occupancy rate plummeted and events were cancelled one after the other due to COVID-19, the hotel management asked Gina and her colleagues if they were willing to be seconded to NTUC FairPrice. The supermarket's manpower needs had surged during the pandemic while the hotel had hardly any guests.

Gina decided to give it a try. But adjusting to work as a retail assistant at FairPrice was not easy.

"I had to carry goods and restock shelves. I was on my feet for around seven hours a day. Even my younger colleagues found it tiring. And I had to get used to shift work. And during Lunar New Year, the crowd can get really crazy, over 10,000 people."

Gina is one of around 1,300 workers from over 30 hotels redeployed to companies in need of manpower.

“ I had to carry goods and restock shelves. I was on my feet for around seven hours a day. Even my younger colleagues found it tiring. ”



“I feel the work I’m doing now is meaningful and contributes to our community, as now supermarkets are the most important essential stores that stay open to cater to people’s daily needs.”

This was an initiative by NTUC Job Security Council (JSC) to support at-risk workers and match them into new jobs.

JSC worked with the Food, Drinks and Allied Workers Union (FDAWU) and RC Hotels, Gina’s employer, to redeploy her.

Gina understands the importance of her role during this pandemic.

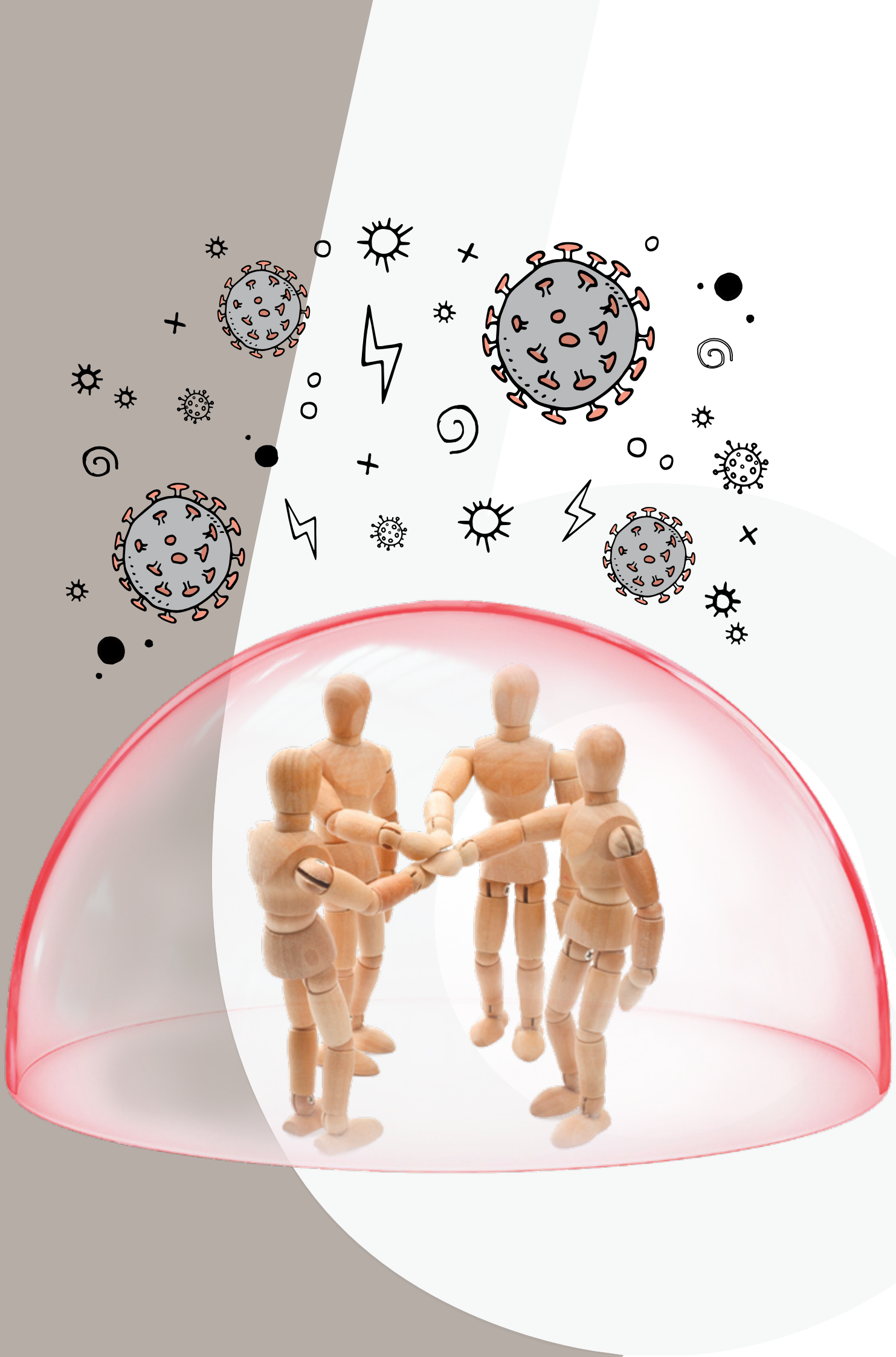
“I feel the work I’m doing now is meaningful and contributes to our community, as now supermarkets are the most important essential stores that stay open to cater to people’s daily needs,” she said.

Gina was also put in charge of ensuring customers conducted temperature scanning and Safe Entry before entering the supermarket. While most customers were co-operative, some found it troublesome and were unwilling. Gina took things in her stride and remained polite to all customers.

Today, due to the protracted nature of the virus, Gina is now into her 11<sup>th</sup> month of secondment.

“At first it was three months but now it’s 11 months. But I understand, the COVID situation is not in our control. Now I’m working as an usher at Fullerton Health, helping out with the vaccination drive. I do hope when the COVID situation improves, I can go back to the hotel.”





## BATTLING COVID-19 AS A NATION

Efforts to save jobs or help retrenched workers pivot to temporarily or secondary jobs helped to protect workers' livelihoods.

Still, many workers were affected by their companies' cost-cutting measures and consequent drop in income. Lower-income workers, or workers with heavy personal responsibilities such as caregivers, or those who have young and/or elderly dependants were particularly under pressure, as were freelancers and self-employed persons who lost much of their business.

To help workers cope, we launched initiatives to additionally support workers and moderate their cost of living, and show care for their health and well-being during a deadly public health crisis.

# BATTLING COVID-19 AS A NATION

## CARE FOR OUR FRONTLINE WORKERS

The NTUC Job Security Council (JSC) was especially useful when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and workers were affected.

With the support of companies on board, JSC provided swift support to workers to shorten their unemployment duration and assist them in transiting to secondary jobs or move into growth sectors.

By the end of 2020, there were more than 10,000 companies on-board the NTUC JSC ecosystem, and more than 28,000 workers received assistance.



NTUC Secretary-General Ng Chee Meng joining nEbO, U Live and volunteers from the Labour Movement to put together care packs for healthcare workers at NTUC's e2i on February 2020.

### Care Packs

In April 2021, Singapore's first hospital COVID-19 cluster emerged at Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

To show appreciation to healthcare workers during this trying period, NTUC U Care, NTUC FairPrice, and unions collectively came together to fund and prepare 12,000 care packs for our healthcare workers.

Each care pack contained a variety of items including isotonic canned drinks, Vitamin C pastilles, yogurt, lemon tea, biscuits and hand sanitisers.

Partnering the Healthcare Services Employees' Union (HSEU), National Taxi Association (NTA), National Private Hire Vehicle Association (NPHVA), Young NTUC, and OTCi Alumni, NTUC Club organised close to 20 care initiatives.

In total, over 50,000 care packs were prepared and distributed to frontline workers and food delivery riders in appreciation of their hard work.

In conjunction with International Women's Day 2020, NTUC's Women and Family Unit, the NTUC Women's Committee and the Education Services Union distributed 15,800 care packs to early childhood educators in all unionised preschools. The distribution was conducted to appreciate early childhood educators who had gone the extra mile to keep children safe daily so that working parents are able to have a peace of mind at work, knowing that their children are well cared for and protected.



nEbO member Danikh handing out care packs during Ramadan.



Riders Gathering at Jurong Point issuing delivery rider care package on 7 March 2020.



The Healthcare Academy (HCA) also partnered with Healthcare Services Employees' Union (HSEU) as part of NTUC's initiative to pack and deliver care packs for healthcare workers on 22 February 2020. In total, NTUC LearningHub contributed over 10,000 care packs for frontline workers across various industries, including cleaners and security officers.



NTUC LearningHub contributed over 10,000 care packs for frontline workers across various industries, including cleaners and security officers.

### Mental Wellness Clinic

To enable unions to help their lower-income members who face mental stress due to anxiety, worries of job loss caused by the pandemic, a new Mental Wellness Clinic, in partnership with Mind Culture, was launched in February 2021.

The clinic offers free one-to-one preliminary counselling for U Care beneficiaries, at no cost to the member. Each counselling session is worth \$200.



Mental Wellness Clinic helps lower-income members who face mental stress due to anxiety, worries of job loss caused by the pandemic.

## THE SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY

### Masks for Underprivileged Students

In collaboration with unions such as the Union of ITE Training Staff (UITS), and institutions like ITE, more than 800 students participated in initiatives for the community – including Masks for All, where the students hand sewed 700 masks for underprivileged students.



Students hand sewed 700 masks for underprivileged students.

### D'Resort as Government Quarantine Facility

To combat the spread of COVID-19, quarantine facilities had to be set up.

In February 2020, D'Resort was converted into the first government quarantine facility and subsequently a community care facility to alleviate operational pressure from hospitals. Since then, some 130 NTUC Club staff, healthcare workers, and security officers have been working tirelessly to service the facility.



Some 130 NTUC Club staff, healthcare workers, and security officers have worked tirelessly to service the quarantine facility.

### #Toast2U Social Media Campaign

In appreciation of the hard work and dedication of frontline workers, nEbO and Young NTUC kickstarted the #Toast2U social media campaign in December 2020. Every unique “thank you toast” to frontline workers on Facebook translated to a \$2 donation from NTUC Income. In total, the initiative saw over 450 participants and 3,500 shares. This included support from Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and other ministers, members of the Labour Movement, influencers, and celebrities in Singapore. The successful campaign raised \$15,000 in donations to help lower-income union members and their families.



Participants of the #Toast2U social media campaign which raised \$15,000 for lower-income union members.

### CARE FOR FREELANCERS AND SELF-EMPLOYED

#### Swab Tests and Vaccination Exercises for Drivers

As taxi drivers are frontline workers who play an important role in ferrying essential workers and Singaporeans every day, the National Taxi Association (NTA) swiftly worked with the tripartite partners to set up swab tests exercises for the taxi drivers for their health and safety.

Subsequently, when vaccine supplies arrived, NTA and the National Private Hire Vehicles Association (NPHVA) worked closely with the Government to mobilise point-to-point drivers to receive their vaccination as part of the national immunisation efforts.

The associations also gave out care packs containing surgical masks, disinfectants, sanitisers and information on personal and vehicle hygiene procedures.



Drivers to receive their vaccination as part of the national immunisation efforts.



The associations also gave out care packs containing surgical masks, disinfectants, sanitisers and information on personal and vehicle hygiene procedures.

## SIRS Appeals and Applications

The Freelancers and Self-Employed Unit (U FSE) assisted the Ministry of Manpower to manage applications and appeals of self-employed persons (SEP) with less means and family support who did not auto-qualify for the Self-Employed Person Income Relief Scheme (SIRS). Close to 200,000 SEPs benefited from SIRS.

More than 80 staff from NTUC Club staff at Downtown East and NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) stepped forward to help process SIRS applications from the period of April to September 2020.



NTUC Club staff helping out at the SIRS pop-up centre located at Begonia Terrace, Downtown East.



Staff involved in the backend processing of SIRS applications at NTUC Club's management office at Downtown East.

## Help for Private Hire Drivers

Many of the COVID-19 safety measures in place lead to a plunge in taxi and private hire car ridership, causing drivers' income to suffer severely.

The NTUC Driver Care Fund was launched in March 2020 to disburse cash relief to private hire drivers who did not qualify for the Government's Special Relief Fund (SRF) and were facing hardship. Some 3,717 drivers received \$300 each.

NPHVA and NTA worked closely with operators and stakeholders to extend vehicle rental rebates, as well as reduce commissions imposed on private hire drivers during the Circuit Breaker period.

In June 2021, NPHVA and the National Delivery Champions Association (NDCA) jointly rolled out the NTUC U FSE Relief Scheme to extend a one-time relief quantum of \$200 - \$650 to freelance combi bus, limousine and delivery drivers and riders whose incomes had been affected by COVID-19 and/or the petrol duty increase that took effect in February 2021.

To demonstrate care for workers during the Phase 2 Heightened Alert period when dining out was not permitted, U FSE, through NPHVA, NTA and NDCA, with the support from Labour Members of Parliament, rallied Mercatus malls, private businesses and various constituencies to provide a space for riders and point-to-point drivers to have their meals. More than 60 locations island-wide participated in this initiative.



The NTUC Driver Care Fund was launched in March 2020 to disburse cash relief to private hire drivers. Some 3,717 drivers received \$300 each.





“My motto in life is  
*‘Just keep driving’*. ”

## Toh Kian Seng

Taxi Driver

Toh Kian Seng has been a taxi driver for over 25 years.

When COVID-19 cases surged and Singapore went into the Circuit Breaker period, Kian Seng was inevitably affected.

“I remember, I started work and drove around for four whole hours, but there was not a single passenger. It was my first time experiencing something like that. I thought, ‘Wow, if that’s the case, really cannot survive.’”

That same day, Kian Seng heard about a new initiative. The Government was easing regulations to allow taxi drivers to participate in delivery service trials during the COVID-19 pandemic to give them an alternative source of income.

“My company asked us, ‘Who is interested to do food deliveries?’ I thought, since I can earn money and there are no passengers anyway, I said I want to do.”

With that, the 58 year old began delivering for KFC daily.

“KFC told us to come at 11am, but I always come early. We were given training, like how to do contactless delivery and that we must try to complete each delivery within 20 minutes. Some of the customers were quite surprised, like ‘Eh, you deliver by taxi?’”

But the job was not without its challenges.



Said Kian Seng with a laugh: “I slimmed down, you know. Because we earn \$4 per hour, plus \$4 per delivery, I tried my best to deliver as quickly as possible. Going to the HDB flats was straightforward but the condominiums were tricky. There’s security, and sometimes we have to change lift or buzz the owner, and still must do it within 20 minutes.”

While Kian Seng enjoyed the experience, he stopped delivering food after the Circuit Breaker when Singapore made inroads toward re-opening. Kian Seng also found relief with the Self-Employed Person Income Relief Scheme, which helped cushion him from the impact of COVID-19. However, there was a small hiccup with his application.

“I filled in my IRAS form wrongly. As a self-employed person, I should have filled it under Trade Income, but I did it wrongly. Luckily, I went to my MP and they referred me to NTUC for help. Later, I helped my fellow taxi drivers because they also did it wrongly. I always believe, if someone needs help, I help. I could help them because by then I understood how the process worked already.”

Today, Kian Seng continues driving the taxi.

“My motto in life is ‘Just keep driving’. Every day, I start driving at 5.30am. I have three daughters, all grown up already. So now I try to work hard because I want to save up for my retirement. I want to take care of myself.”

“ I remember, I started work and drove around for four whole hours, but there was not a single passenger. It was my first time experiencing something like that. ”

## CARE FOR OUR MIGRANT SISTERS & BROTHERS

### Distribution of Essential Items to Migrant Workers

Due to the rise of COVID-19 clusters in worker dormitories, many dormitories came under stricter movement control to staunch further the spread of the virus.

This meant migrant workers were unable to go out and had limited access to necessities like personal hygiene items, food and health protection equipment.

The Migrant Workers' Centre (MWC) acted swiftly and partnered with the Dormitory Association Singapore Limited (DASL), Temasek Foundation, MaskForce and other donors to distribute more than 5 million essential sanitary and personal care items to over 600,000 migrant workers.

The MWC also worked with other non-governmental organisations to provide emergency meals to workers staying in the smaller dormitory as the workers were unable to cook due to safe distancing measures and their employers were unable to provide meals for them in a timely manner.

In total, almost 1,000,000 meals were provided for over 10,000 workers.



**1,000,000**  
meals provided for over  
**10,000 workers.**



More than 5 million essential sanitary and personal care items were distributed to over 600,000 migrant workers.

### “Migrants We Care” Campaign

The MWC initiated the “Migrants We Care” fundraising campaign to provide an ex gratia token amount to migrant workers who were displaced or were unable to recover their salary.

The fund provided accommodations for displaced migrant workers as well as provide food and essential items to over 1,000 dormitories island-wide.

For migrant workers who contracted COVID-19 or were injured in other industrial accidents, the MWC also provided ex gratia support to their next-of-kin via the Migrant Workers’ Assistance Fund (MwAF), the humanitarian charity of MWC.



The “Migrants We Care” initiative provided accommodations for displaced migrant workers as well as provide food and essential items to over 1,000 dormitories island-wide.





LEAP2021-MWC MOU Signing Ceremony

### Care4MigrantWorkers (C4M) Insurance Programme

The MWC partnered venture philanthropy organisation LEAP201 to subsidise and make available a new insurance scheme “Care4MigrantWorkers” (C4M) to enhance protection for migrant workers.

“Care4MigrantWorkers” is a first-of-its-kind group term life and critical illness policy developed by NTUC Income that provides a lump sum payout to the insured worker in the event of accidental total disability or death (workplace injury or otherwise); and in the event the worker contracts one of its 37 listed critical illnesses.

To kickstart the initiative and encourage employers to sign their workers up for the “Care4MigrantWorkers” scheme, LEAP201 and MWC collectively raised \$600,000, to subsidise premium payments for the first 50,000 migrant workers insured under the scheme for 2021 and 2022.

With the subsidy, employers pay \$3 per year for each migrant worker insured. Even without the subsidy, “Care4MigrantWorkers” is kept at a affordable premium of \$9 per year for each migrant worker.



LEAP201 MWC collectively raised \$600,000, to subsidise premium payments for the first 50,000 migrant workers

### Leveraging on MWC’s Ambassadors Network

The MWC conducted outreach and rendered assistance to migrant workers by leveraging its grassroots network, which comprises some 5,000 grassroots ambassadors who are migrant workers themselves.

The ambassadors assisted in educating migrant workers on the COVID-19 virus and the precautionary measures; searched for and placed stranded Malaysian Work Permit holders with temporary housing; helped in the distribution of essential supplies in dormitories and provided timely ground feedback to the taskforce via MWC so that issues and problems could be rectified quickly.

In addition to MWC’s 24-hour helpline, the MWC initiated the Careline Project in April 2020 to proactively reach out to migrant workers staying in purpose-built dormitories, factory-converted dormitories, decant sites and construction temporary quarters.

Some 20 of the MWC’s most senior grassroots ambassadors, who are migrant workers themselves, made up to 1,000 video calls daily to follow-up on cases referred by the forward assurance and support teams, or enquiries from the MWC’s 24-hour helpline. Calls were made to check in on fellow migrant workers, lend them a listening ear and help surface concerns or issues they may face.

Employment-related issues, such as non-payment of salaries or unfair termination of work permit passes, were escalated immediately to MWC’s officers for follow-up.

## FUNDS & TRAINING

### NTUC Care Fund (COVID-19)

In response to the pandemic, NTUC and its affiliated unions and associations, partnered the Government to launch the NTUC Care Fund (COVID-19) – a \$25 million special one-off assistance programme.

Launched on 25 March 2020, applications were opened till 30 September 2020 to help union members whose incomes were affected by COVID-19. Eligible members received cash relief of up to \$300. A total of \$8 million was disbursed to over 32,000 members at the end of the programme.

Due to the protracted nature of the pandemic, the assistance programme was enhanced to assist more members in financial distress. The enhanced programme opened for applications from 23 November 2020 to 28 February 2021, with a revised eligibility criteria to provide further cash relief for union members. Successful recipients with valid memberships from the first exercise were also eligible for a second payout.

A total of \$18.2 million was disbursed to over 35,000 members.



**\$8 million**



Some 32,000 members had received cash relief of up to \$300.



**\$18.2 million**



A total of \$18.2 million was disbursed to over 35,000 members at the end of the programme.



The fund provides \$250 NTUC FairPrice vouchers per child to help families tide over their children’s basic nutritional and educational needs.

### CapitaLand-U Care Resilience and Enablement Fund

When workers’ incomes are affected, their families are affected as well.

The CapitaLand-U Care Resilience and Enablement (CAP+Ure) Fund also provided assistance to children of union members who were impacted by COVID-19. The fund provides \$250 NTUC FairPrice vouchers per child to help families tide over their children’s basic nutritional and educational needs.

### NTUC Care Fund (e-Vouchers)

To bring ease of convenience to union members, especially with the cases of COVID-19 in the community, previously successful recipients of the 2019 U Care Back to School and U Stretch Voucher programmes were automatically eligible for the 2020 NTUC Care Fund (e-Vouchers).

Some 17,500 union members were automatically eligible for the e-vouchers, which were sent to them in August 2020. The programme also re-opened in August 2020 to allow for new applications. The e-vouchers were disbursed in October 2020.

Some 17,500 union members were automatically eligible for the NTUC Care Fund (e-vouchers).





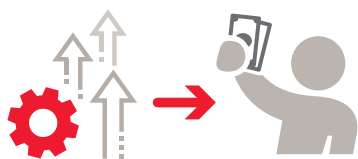
## NTUC Training Fund (SEPs)

Freelancers such as taxi drivers, property agents and tour guides were especially hard-hit by COVID-19 measures, with many experiencing a severe drop in income.

Working with the NTUC Freelancers and Self-Employed Persons Unit (U FSE), NTUC's e2i administered the NTUC Training Fund (SEPs) from April 2020 to May 2021.

The NTUC Training Fund (SEPs) gave hard-hit freelancers an opportunity to upgrade themselves during the lull period while earning an allowance at the same time. Non-unionised SEPs could claim up to \$10/hour while new union members were able to claim up to \$10.50/hour and existing union members could claim up to \$11/hour.

The NTUC Training Fund received an overwhelming response and officers tirelessly worked round the clock to ensure that freelancers received timely assistance.



The NTUC Training Fund (SEPs) gave hard-hit freelancers an opportunity to upgrade themselves.

## Increased UTAP Funding for Members Over 40

In June 2020, NTUC's e2i increased the funding for the Union Training Assistance Programme (UTAP) to \$500 for union members aged 40 years and above, up from the previous \$250.

The change was aimed at encouraging workers to upskill themselves and keep pace with changes in their industries, and at the same time incentivise them to become union members.

## Donation to NTUC-U Care Fund

NTUC LearningHub (LHUB) has continuously supported the NTUC-U Care Fund since 2014. In 2021, NTUC LHUB donated \$10,000 to the NTUC-U Care Fund in support of members affected by the pandemic.

## Learning Programmes for SEPs

NTUC LHUB collaborated with U FSE to curate special course bundles for SEPs impacted by the pandemic.

To ensure SEPs can access training information effectively, NTUC LHUB developed a dedicated website to present the courses and training bundles. To highlight the availability of such tools to SEPs, engaging video ads that featured the training bundles were broadcast through popular social media platforms.



### Alex Tan Ser Han

For the past seven years, NTUC member Alex Tan Ser Han has been working as a freelance fitness instructor. When gyms had to close during Circuit Breaker, Alex unfortunately lost his primary source of income. While searching for a new job, Alex decided to upskill to boost his employability. Alex took up multiple complimentary LHUB GO Learn200 courses related to workplace safety, and eventually landed a job as a Forward Assurance and Support Teams (FAST) Officer with Certis CISCO.

## Job and Training Fairs

NTUC LHUB also actively reached out to SEPs via job and training fairs. In total, 5,627 unique SEPs clocked over 62,856 training days with NTUC LHUB.

In August 2020, NTUC LHUB launched its online learning platform – LHUB GO Learn200. In partnership with Go1.com, LHUB GO Learn200 offered 200 complimentary programmes to NTUC union members for six months, catering to members who were keen to upskill to secure employment or those seeking skills to keep pace with industry advancements. By the end of the initiative, LHUB GO Learn200 gained 9,727 registered subscribers to the platform.



5,627 self-employed persons clocked over 62,856 training days with NTUC LearningHub. LHUB GO Learn200 gained 9,727 registered subscribers to the platform.

## NTUC SOCIAL ENTERPRISES DOING THEIR PART

The NTUC Enterprise group of social enterprises carried out a wide range of initiatives to provide care for the community amidst the pandemic.



The NTUC Enterprise group rolled out a \$50m package to help working families, seniors and union members.

### Priority Shopping Hour

To improve safe distancing measures for vulnerable segments of the community, in particular Pioneer Generation seniors, persons with disabilities and pregnant women, NTUC FairPrice implemented the “Priority Shopping Hour” at all FairPrice stores. This took place every Monday during the first hour of the store’s normal operating hours.

This dedicated hour allowed seniors and the vulnerable to shop at ease without having to jostle with the crowd and allayed fears of not being able to purchase daily necessities after reports of stockpiling and panic buying left shelves empty. Critically, the initiative minimised the chance of infection for seniors, who are most at risk of developing serious symptoms from the COVID-19 virus.

“Priority Shopping Hour” supported over 336,000 seniors, persons with disabilities and pregnant women. Priority queues for healthcare worker were also set up at selected stores.



“Priority Shopping Hour” supported over 336,000 seniors, persons with disabilities and pregnant women.

### Enhancing Accessibility of Daily Essentials

To give convenience to seniors – especially less privileged seniors without adequate family support – in obtaining daily essentials, the FairPrice on Wheels initiative was rolled out on 23 April 2020.

Specially outfitted grocery vans travelled to selected mature residential estates with a higher concentration of lower-income seniors. The vans carried basic grocery essentials such as rice, bread, cooking oil, canned food, toiletries, fruits and vegetables – allowing seniors to shop from almost their doorsteps.

FairPrice on Wheels was progressively phased out by October after having achieved its objective of providing daily essentials when movement was restricted during Circuit Breaker. As the initiative was very well-received by the community, the initiative was relaunched in November 2020 with a specially outfitted air-conditioned truck that was able to offer an even wider range of products, including chilled and frozen items.

### Six-month Extension of Housebrands Price Freeze

Due to the global impact of COVID-19, supply lines were affected which caused fluctuations in the price of food and other goods.

To protect customers against price fluctuations, FairPrice provided a six-month extension of a price freeze on 100 Housebrand items.

FairPrice also expanded its supply network to 100 countries and upgraded its supply chain infrastructure to better position itself from COVID-19 or future supply chain disruptions and ensure that customers are not impacted.



To protect customers against price fluctuations, FairPrice provided a six-month extension of a price freeze 100 Housebrand items.



NTUC First Campus launched a one-stop resource portal, KidzMatters, to facilitate children's home learning.

### Caring for Children During Circuit Breaker

NTUC First Campus supported parents working in essential services by continuing to operate centres to care for their children during Circuit Breaker.

As schools pivoted to home-based learning as a safety measure, NTUC First Campus launched a one-stop resource portal, KidzMatters, to facilitate children's home learning.

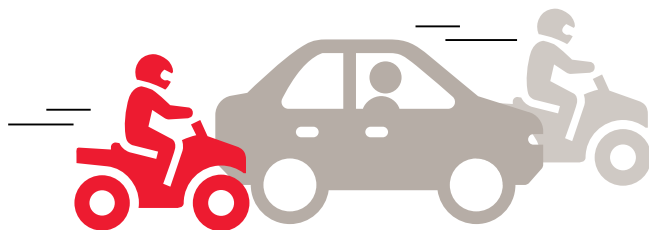


Close to **600** meals

### Free Beverages for Healthcare Workers

As a gesture of appreciation, Foodfare and Kopitiam distributed free Milo beverages and barley drinks worth \$138,000 to healthcare workers.

Close to 600 Shi Hui Yuan meals were also delivered to the underprivileged and elderly.



### Care Packs for Healthcare Workers

In May 2021, NTUC U Care worked with NTUC FairPrice and the Healthcare Services Employees' Union, with the support of the Food, Drinks and Allied Workers Union to present 12,000 care packs to our healthcare workers in appreciation of their dedication and hard work on the frontline.



### Care for Drivers and Riders

During Phase 2 Heightened Alert, which prohibited dining-in, Mercatus, NTUC Foodfare and Kopitiam opened up the food courts at AMK Hub, Jurong Point and Swing By @ Thomson Plaza for drivers and riders to have their meals.



Some of the food courts were opened for drivers and riders to have their meals.



## Ananthi Tharumarajoo

Facilities Management, Singapore General Hospital

Ananthi Tharumarajoo works in facilities management at Singapore General Hospital. Over the years, she has actively sought to improve herself by taking courses and upskilling herself. She has taken the Security Supervisor course and hopes to do the Senior Security Supervisor course soon.

“In the past, I used to also take security jobs to add to my income. But now, due to COVID, I stopped taking such jobs. It’s to avoid cross-deployment. It’s less money, but I understand, it’s a safety issue. Also, this gives me more time to take care of my mother who is in and out of hospital.”

2020 was a particularly difficult year for Ananthi as she finalised her divorce and her mother has been unwell. As a single parent of two teenagers, Ananthi was relieved to receive assistance from the NTUC-U Care Fund. Having been living from paycheck to paycheck, Ananthi was glad she could finally save more during the month she received the funds.

“ In the past, I used to also take security jobs to add to my income. But now, due to COVID, I stopped taking such jobs. It’s to avoid cross-deployment. ”





“ I used the vouchers from the fund to buy food, snacks for the kids and buy essential items. It’s \$300 but it covers my household expense for the month. Thanks to the Fund, finally I can save a bit more. ”

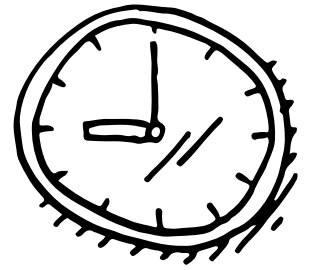
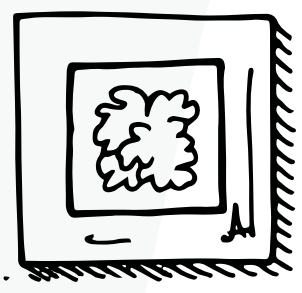
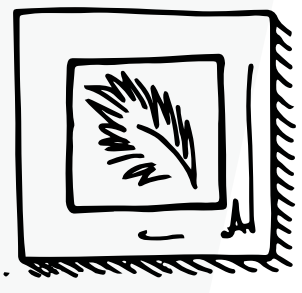
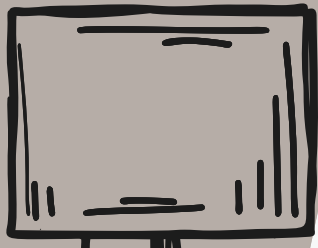
“I have two teenage children, a girl and boy, one 18 and one 16. I used the vouchers from the fund to buy food, snacks for the kids and buy essential items. It’s \$300 but it covers my household expense for the month. Thanks to the Fund, finally I can save a bit more.”

“2020 was not easy for my children. It was their major exams year and they were quite stressed out, with all the new changes like home-based learning. But I tell them, whatever it is, just do your part, put in effort, do your best. Then that’s enough.”

For Ananthi, she feels that every day is a learning day.

“My biggest ambition since I was a teenager is to get a Diploma in Business Administration. I didn’t get to do it because my studies were disrupted. But I hope to do it one day. My kids know about my ambition too but right now, I want to focus on my children first. I hope to gain new skills, get a better salary and one day be able to buy a home for me and my children.”







## THE NEW NORMAL

Gradually, Singaporeans grew familiar with mask-wearing and safe distancing measures. Workplaces and schools switched to hybrid work arrangements or new forms of learning. It was clear that living with COVID-19 was the new normal and for the long haul.

NTUC took steps to help workers adjust and cope with a long-drawn, still-evolving COVID-19 situation.

# THE NEW NORMAL

## SAFEGUARDING WORKERS' RIGHTS

### Dispute Resolution

While initiatives to safeguard workers' livelihoods helped a significant portion of the workforce, some workers had various employment issues and disputes.

In 2020, the Tripartite Alliance for Dispute Management (TADM) @ NTUC provided dispute resolution services for 3,786 cases, up 38 per cent of the caseload from the previous year.

The increase is attributed to queries and cases arising from COVID-19 measures, particularly during the Circuit Breaker.

On average, TADM@NTUC handled about 315 cases per month in 2020.

The top two types of cases were salary-related and termination/dismissal-related cases.

About 83 per cent of the cases received in 2020 were from members earning a monthly salary of below \$4,500. More members earning \$4,500 and above sought assistance from TADM@NTUC in 2020.

As of 31 December 2020, TADM@NTUC closed 93 per cent of all cases received. About 69 per cent of the total cases were expeditiously closed within four weeks.

### Tripartite Mediation Framework

In 2020, a total of 588 cases were lodged for tripartite mediation. About 57 per cent of the total cases were salary-related while 42 per cent were for wrongful dismissal.

Some 2 in 5 of the cases were filed by PMEs. In 2020, 229 tripartite mediation cases closed with tangible settlements of nearly \$1.08 million recovered.

In total, 57 per cent of the cases were resolved at mediation.

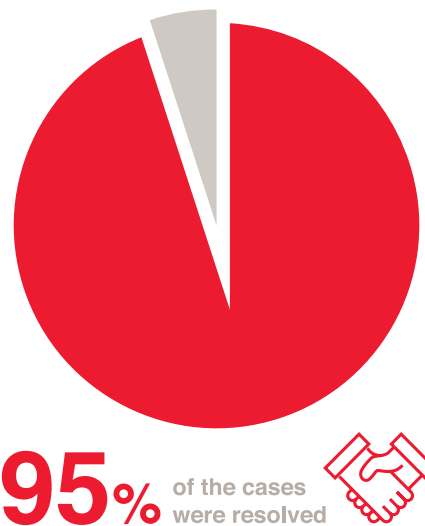
Moving forward, while the slowdown in caseload was observed, more cases are expected after cessation of the Jobs Support Scheme in March 2021.

### Industrial Relations Cases

In 2020, about 95 per cent of the 2,099 reported industrial relations cases were resolved at the company level. Only 5 per cent of the cases were escalated by the union to the Ministry of Manpower for conciliation.

This percentage reflects NTUC's stance in taking a collaborative and consultative approach when dealing with industrial relations matters. Union members working in unionised companies may seek advisory and representation from their respective unions when they encounter workplace issues and grievances. They can count on unions to seek fairness on their behalf.

In total, 35 per cent of reported cases were individual grievances relating to salary and benefits, termination of employment contract, dismissal, and work performance. One case on non-payment of annual wage supplement was filed by a union to Industrial Arbitration Court for hearing.



In 2020, about 95 per cent of the 2,099 reported industrial relations cases were resolved at the company level. Only 5 per cent of the cases were escalated by the union to the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) for conciliation.

## PRIORITISING THE WELFARE AND WELL-BEING OF WORKERS

### Protecting Our Essential Services Workers

As COVID-19 is a national health crisis, border closure and the stepping up of cleaning operations and safe management measures affected workers in the cleaning, landscape maintenance and security sectors.

The U Care Centre (UCC) issued joint letters, advisories, as well as co-organised webinars, to encourage service buyers to work together with firms to prioritise the welfare and well-being of workers in these sectors, especially during the height of the pandemic.

In March 2020, UCC issued a joint letter to appeal to service buyers to exercise flexibility in contractual obligations in view of Malaysia's Movement Control Order which had impacted cleaning and waste collection operations.

In April 2020, UCC issued a joint letter to appeal to service buyers to be reasonable and flexible in enforcing contractual obligations on their landscape companies in view of the COVID-19 situation. UCC encouraged service buyers not to pressure service providers to reduce contract fees without adjusting their expectations and deliverables.

In May 2020, UCC gave its input to the Tripartite Advisory on steps to ensure the sustainability of the cleaning sector in view of COVID-19. Recommendations include reprioritising and reallocation cleaning needs, remunerating workers and service providers appropriately and for service buyers to be reasonable and flexible in enforcing contractual obligations.

UCC also played a role in the issuing of the Tripartite Advisory on the Security Industry, which contained the recommended measures that service buyers and service providers should adopt during COVID-19.

In June 2020, UCC co-organised a webinar for the cleaning sector titled "Ensuring Sustainability of the Cleaning Sector in View of COVID-19". It also gave its input to the Tripartite Advisory on ensuring the safe operations of lifts and escalators, and sustainability of the industry in view of COVID-19.

In August 2020, UCC co-ordinated input from stakeholders and facilitated the issuance of a Tripartite Advisory on Ensuring Sustainability of the Landscape Sector in view of COVID-19.

### Showing Support for Essential Service Workers

UCC organised a two-month Appreciating U campaign to rally the public to thank essential service workers by penning thank you cards. President Halimah Yacob supported the campaign with a handwritten thank you message which was posted on her Facebook page. The campaign was also supported by several unions and social enterprises.

In February 2021, UCC also launched a special webtoon in collaboration with Johnny Lau (author of Mr Kiasu comic series). Titled Please Watch-over Me (PWM), the webtoon was aimed at raising awareness of the work of essential service workers. Shared on several social media platforms, the webtoon garnered over 20,000 views.

To express solidarity with Singapore's essential workers in energy, water, waste and environmental services, Sembcorp Industries partnered the NTUC-U Care Fund to reach out to union members in essential sectors. A total of \$500,000 was donated to the Fund. Each of the 2,500 union members in these industries received a \$200 token of appreciation.

### Pro-Welfare Initiatives for Lower-Income Staff

Noting that lower-income staff may face greater financial difficulties amidst the challenging COVID-19 situation, pro-welfare initiatives were introduced to safeguard workers' livelihoods and show care to their families.

The FairPrice Foundation donated \$500,000 to NTUC First Campus' Bright Horizons Fund and NTUC Health's Eldercare Trust to boost digital literacy and access among lower-income families and seniors.

NTUC First Campus launched the "\$500,000 Bright Horizons Fund for COVID-19" to ensure that children from lower-income families could continue receiving quality education if their parents were in financial distress.

## ADJUSTING TO THE NEW NORMAL

As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, the Labour Movement took steps to deal with a long-term crisis that potentially could last months, or years.

### “Together, We Can!” Relief Package for Tenants

In line with government initiatives to alleviate the financial burdens of affected retail tenants, NTUC Club committed over \$6 million worth of relief to its tenants between February to June 2020 through the “Together, We Can!” scheme.

Subsequently, another \$400,000 of rental relief was extended to affected tenants during the Phase 2 Heightened Alert between May to June 2021. NTUC Club remains committed to continuous engagement with its tenants to ensure their concerns are addressed.

### Rent Relief for Mercatus Tenants

During a year where footfall in malls was greatly reduced, Mercatus lent support to its partners and provided rent relief of \$74 million, of which an additional \$39 million was provided on top of government grants and property tax rebates. It also provided about \$2 million worth of free and discounted vouchers to help drive sales for its tenants.

### Developing New Technology

In collaboration with Smart Nation, Downtown East was designated as a government testbed for new technology aimed at improving Singapore’s public health response. Examples include SPOTON, a new system developed by GovTech Singapore to screen temperature efficiently, and the widely used SafeEntry Gateway for TraceTogether app and tokens. Such technology helped improve user experience and eased contact tracing.



Mercatus provided its tenants an additional \$39 million worth of relief, on top of government grants and property tax rebates.



U Care Back to School Fair was held virtually in 2020 and the e-fair had 11,000 visitors and generated \$39,000 of sales.

### Going Digital

In response to the disruptions and uncertainties caused by COVID-19, Young NTUC adapted its LIT (Learning is Triggered) series to the virtual space. Career programmes launched included its signature LIT DISCOvery Symposium; LITerally Online: Career Insights sessions; LIT Conversations; LIT Virtual Mentorships. These programmes help empower youths by giving them access to career resources and support through the LIT.sg microsite, a one-stop resource web portal launched in March 2020.

Likewise, MoneyOwl ensured continuity of its advisory services through teleconsultations and provided free financial workshops for all. To make investments accessible and more affordable, MoneyOwl absorbed its platform fees and lowered its advisory fees.

Similarly, the annual U Care Back to School Fair was held virtually in 2020, in partnership with Pacific Bookstores. The month-long fair allowed union members to enjoy exclusive discounts on school necessities. Successful recipients of the NTUC Care Fund (e-Vouchers) could also use their e-vouchers for the purchases. The e-fair had 11,000 visitors and generated \$39,000 of sales.

As the pandemic stretched on, another mid-year school e-fair was organised in June 2021 to give convenience to members who needed school necessities.





nEbO Alumni, Bryan Se To, sharing his personal feelings and ways to cope with stress during the COVID-19 period.

### Coping with Pandemic Stress

Mental wellness programmes were introduced to help workers and youths cope with pandemic stress. nEbO, the junior membership arm of the Labour Movement, recognised the need to prioritise mental wellness and self-care, particularly during the pandemic. In 2020, nEbO dedicated October as the month to spread awareness for mental health. As part of the campaign, seven nEbO youths participated in an interview to share their feelings and advocate healthy ways to cope with mental stress. The interview was later posted on nEbO's social media platforms and received good response.

Similarly, Young NTUC organised a “safe space” dialogue for youths to discuss mental well-being. Some 40 youths participated in the dialogue. Young NTUC also organised a Facebook Live session titled Mental Matters. Influencer Sylvia Chan of Night Owl Cinematics shared her struggles with depression and shared tip on how youths can cope with high anxiety levels during COVID-19.

### Supporting SMEs

To ensure that small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME) were kept up to date with the COVID-19 situation, NTUC U SME has proactively sent out the tripartite advisories to SMEs and associations. U SME has also arranged webinars in collaboration with NTUC Training & Transformation, and NTUC LearningHub to encourage SMEs to upskill the workers. Events with specific themes, for example events on budget clarifications, were also arranged with Ernst & Young to explain the various tax schemes.

### NTUC Income: Keeping Customers Stay Insured

Through its seven Income Support Schemes, NTUC Income helped customers stay insured even if they faced financial difficulties due to COVID-19. In total, over \$1.4 million worth of support, including premium deferrals and discounts, was provided.

NTUC Income also developed the innovative bite-sized insurance, SNACK. It also worked with NTUC and Leap201 to develop Care4MigrantWorkers to protect migrant workers against non-work related death, disability and critical illnesses. Like SNACK, this is also a first in Singapore.



The Income Support Schemes provided over \$1.4 million worth of support, including premium deferrals and discounts.

## MATCHING SEP UNION MEMBERS WITH OPPORTUNITIES

Self-employed persons (SEP) were particularly hit hard by the pandemic. Various steps were taken during this period to provide them with alternative income streams and new work opportunities.

### Job Opportunities for P2P Drivers

The National Taxi Association (NTA) proactively formed multiple partnerships with food and beverage and retail outlets to provide alternative income opportunities to members in the form of delivery jobs. NTA also collaborated with Caregiver Asia to train and deploy some members as medical escorts. Similarly, the National Private Hire Vehicles Association (NPHVA) regularly shared delivery work options as well as new work opportunities with driver-members, including career opportunities in the port, public transport and hospitality.

To further help members stretch the dollar during this period, the NPHVA worked with various car wash providers to extend exclusive rates on car wash services to members.

### Assisting Coaches and Instructors

To help coaches and instructors, the National Instructors and Coaches Association (NICA) explored new ways to promote its member-services. During the June holidays, NICA partnered with NTUC's

Membership Services Division to offer a list of family-friendly virtual programmes to NTUC members. NICA had also worked with unions and associations to tap on ActiveSG Enabler Programme Fund, a funding to promote sports activities as part of National Day celebration, to organise events as part of their members engagement.

NICA also organised various rounds of group buys of new normal "essentials" that translated to more savings for members. This included the bulk purchase of sanitisers and disinfectants as well as headsets for virtual coaching.

### Job Opportunities for Creative Professionals

For creative professionals, the Visual, Audio, Creative Content Professionals Association (Singapore) (VICPA) worked with various partners to create work opportunities for its members. For example, VICPA reached out to SportSG to list VICPA videographer-members as part of the resources coaches and instructors on-board the SportSG's SEP project grant can engage for the development of the grant-funded projects.

### SEP Income Relief Scheme Appeal Cases

The U Care Centre managed over 13,000 SIRS appeal cases and helped applicants correctly submit information and documents, giving them guidance through the appeal process.



The National Taxi Association (NTA) proactively formed multiple partnerships with food and beverage and retail outlets to provide alternative income opportunities.





NTUC facilitated the SIRS appeals for freelancers and self-employed persons.

### Helping Freelancers Tap on the U FSE Network

The annual U FSE Freelancer Fair, usually held once every year, was held twice in 2020 to bring together up-to-date insights, resources and advice from experts and established freelancers to the SEP community. Apart from the exchange of expertise, the event allowed new and veteran SEPs to come together to lend support for one another.

Introduced in March 2021, the U FSE Care Series focused on bringing welfare, support and resources to the freelancers and SEP community. Past sessions included a tax clinic and the Health Jamboree.

The U FSE also actively collaborated with various ministries. For example, when the Ministry for Social and Family Development (MSF) announced the COVID-19 Recovery Grant (CRG) and COVID-19 Recovery Grant - Temporary (CRG-T) schemes for SEPs, there was confusion from the SEP communities regarding the eligibility criteria and supporting documents required. U FSE approached MSF to co-organise a sharing-cum-Q&A session.

The Copyright Bill is set to be amended in 2021 which will impact SEPs. U FSE is closely working with the Ministry of Law and the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore on a series of efforts to engage freelancers.

### Charting a New Future: U FSE X Enterprise Singapore Makeathon

U FSE recognised that SEPs would be most impacted by the pandemic, especially those in the MICE and events sectors. To help small businesses and SEPs involved in small-scale community and social events to re-focus and reset their direction, U FSE secured sponsorship from Enterprise Singapore to commission the “Makeathon” project. Through the project, U FSE and SEPs got together to map out the possible business models that could be viable in the new normal. U FSE and SEPs charted out the impact of such business models, including its impact on freelance jobs, and workforce competencies. These examples were shared with the wider communities and seeded inspiration among freelancers to pivot.

### PREPPING FOR THE FUTURE

Working with unions and partners, NTUC LearningHub trained over 16,000 Safe Management Officers to facilitate Singapore’s safe reopening. It also trained 479 union leaders on training needs analysis and skills mapping, to effectively identify areas for companies to upskill and reskill employees.



NTUC LearningHub has trained over 16,000 Safe Management Officers to facilitate Singapore’s safe reopening and trained 479 union leaders on training needs analysis and skills mapping.



## Muhamed Ibrahim Mohd Salleh

Owner, Bespoke Barbers

Muhamed Ibrahim Mohd Salleh was unemployed for five years as he is the primary caregiver to his elderly parents. Previously, he had worked in boutique sales dealing with luxury products.

During the pandemic, Ibrahim chanced upon an opportunity to upgrade himself.

“I came across one of the SGUnited Skills Programme at NTUC LearningHub. I thought to myself, I’m so old already, almost coming to 60. If I don’t start to upgrade myself now, I never will. So I decided I must try.”

Ibrahim enrolled in the SGUnited Skills Programme, Digital Marketing and E Commerce Specialist course. While he had no concrete plans to go into marketing, Ibrahim thought it was a useful skill to have in today’s economy and could be a common bonding topic for him and his son.

“ I thought to myself, I’m so old already, almost coming to 60. If I don’t start to upgrade myself now, I never will. So I decided I must try. ”

The first three months of the course were extremely challenging for Ibrahim.

“Looking around the class, I was definitely one of the oldest. I had a bit of inferiority complex because I’m not that strong with digital things. Also, the class is full-day and it’s tough to concentrate for so many hours, plus my absorption rate is not so high. So I really struggled.”

Still, Ibrahim persevered. He decided to be upfront with his classmates and tutor about the challenges he was facing.

“If I didn’t know something, I was frank. I’ll ask, ‘Can you teach me this? Can you tell me how to do this?’ Slowly, I started to get the hang of things. We learnt things like website building, Instagram, SEO. I enjoyed the class, like doing the group assignments. I believe everyone can find their own talent. For me, I like to give ideas, to motivate each other.”

His son, Noor Muhamed Muhamed Ibrahim, also took advantage of the SkillsFuture initiative. He took up a

course conducted by Kimage Hairdressing School. Together, father and son decided to go into business and opened a gentleman’s barber at a shop-house in Joo Chiat Road.

Ibrahim put his new digital marketing skills to good use and takes care of the marketing while his son is the barber.

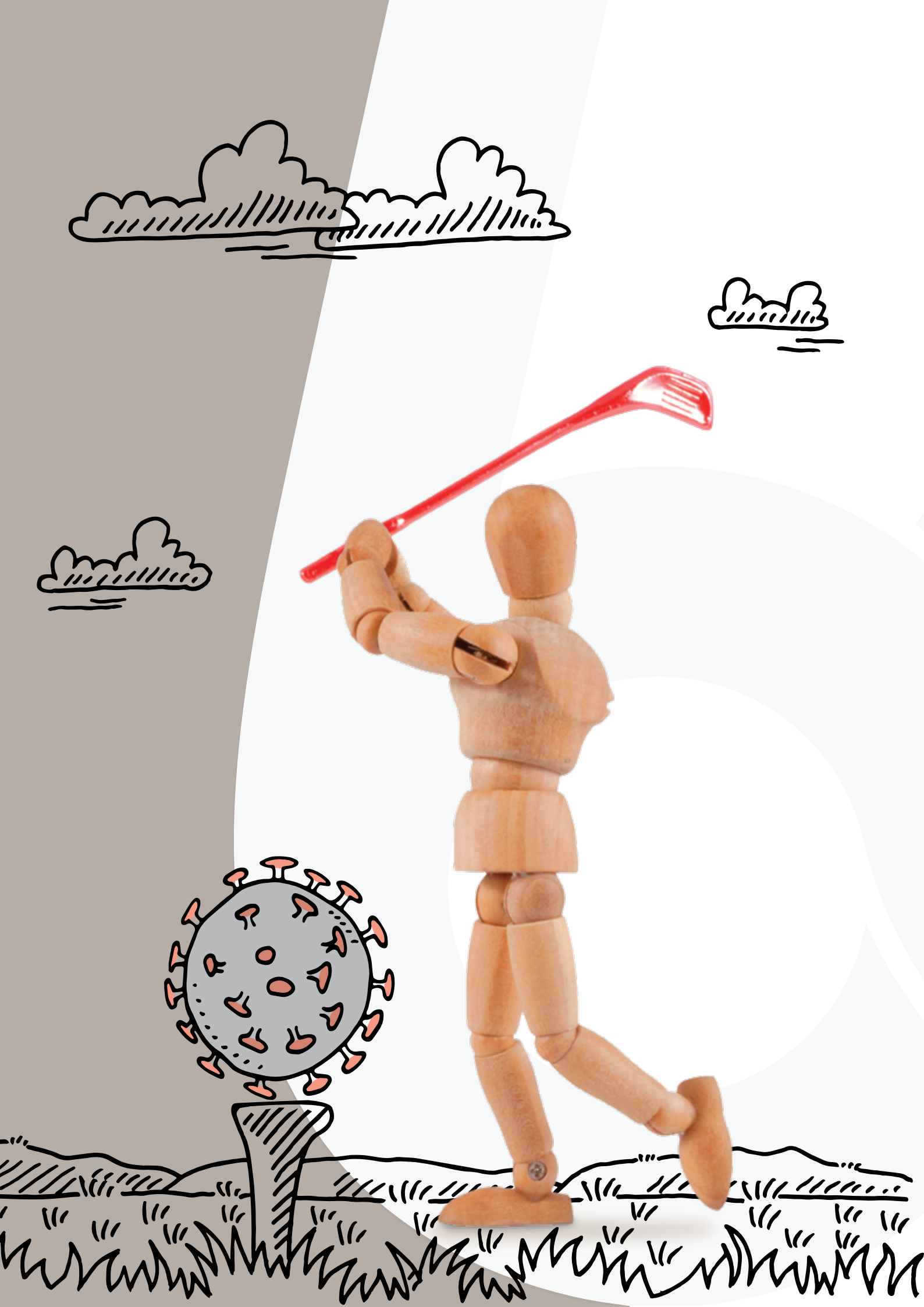
“I told him, we must try to be different from the norm. We must do things differently, not just hairdressing, it’s the total experience. So we also include things like head massage, foot detox.

“Today, I may not be the best in digital marketing, I know there are people way better than me. But if say, one day we have the ability to hire someone, a professional in marketing, at least now, thanks to the course, I know the lingo. I can keep up with the ideas discussed and that to me is important. I want to tell everyone, if someone like me, at my age can do this course, others definitely can do it as well.”

“If I didn’t know something, I was frank ... Slowly, I started to get the hang of things. We learnt things like website building, Instagram, SEO. I enjoyed the class ... ”







## FORGING AHEAD

As of September 2021, while over 80 per cent of Singapore's population is fully vaccinated, variant strains of the virus mean the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve. The fight against COVID-19 is not over.

Nonetheless, we have come a long way. To prepare us for the road ahead, what are some of the lessons we can draw from our experience?

# FORGING AHEAD

## THE ADVANTAGE OF TRIPARTISM

Our unique tripartite model was a valuable asset during the pandemic. Union leaders and employers came together to prioritise saving jobs and find win-win solutions, while the Government provided grants and support schemes to aid businesses and workers.

Tripartism works because generations of leaders representing the Government, unions and employers have worked in close collaboration to sustain these bonds, and we must continue to do so.

## UPSKILLING OUR WORKERS IS A PRIORITY

### Company Training Committees

A job is the best form of welfare. However, a global pandemic like COVID-19 poses grave threat to job security.

Company Training Committees (CTC) that support workers in upskilling and achieving better work prospects have emerged as one of the best ways we can help workers retain their jobs.

To this end, more companies should be encouraged to develop new strategies and training plans to transform their business and workforce, by working closely with NTUC Training & Transformation to utilise the Operation & Technology Roadmap (OTR).



### Union Steps In

Working with SkillsFuture Singapore and training partners NTUC LearningHub and SHATEC, the Food, Drinks and Allied Workers Union (FDAWU) tapped on the Enhanced Training Support Package to provide workers with service excellence and digital training.

In addition, more than 30 per cent of FDAWU's branches have formed Company Training Committees to develop strategies on business and workforce transformation, with an emphasis on reskilling and upskilling workers to improve their employability.

The NTUC Hospitality & Consumer Business Cluster, NTUC Training & Transformation and Singapore Tourism Board also jointly developed a Tourism Sector Capability Development Roadmap. The initiative is geared at ensuring the tourism workforce is equipped with skills to handle new norms of travel in a post-pandemic world.

This first of its kind initiative hopes to identify the necessary skills and technologies required across different tourism touchpoints so that tourists can enjoy a safe and seamless travel itinerary. The initiative hopes to balance public health considerations and user experience. Supported by the Alliance for Action in Enabling Safe and Innovative Visitor Experiences under the Emerging Stronger Taskforce, the Tourism Sector Development Roadmap was completed on 26 April 2021.

### NTUC Club: In Tandem with CTC

In tandem with NTUC's initiative on CTCs, NTUC Club signed a memorandum of understanding with the Attractions, Resorts & Entertainment Union (AREU) and NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) in July 2019. A CTC steering committee was formed to detail the development and learning needs of employees to accelerate their transition into Worker 4.0, in parallel with workforce transformation.

Under the initiative, 30 programmes have been conducted thus far to upskill workers. These included curated workshops such as SkillsFuture for Digital Workplace, Mental Health Peer Support Programme, Digital Sales and Marketing, Design Thinking, and Leadership 4.0.



## DIGITALISATION AND AUTOMATION

COVID-19 has demonstrated the urgency for organisations and companies to digitalise and automate.

In the new normal, working remotely, providing customers and users with online access to services and training, and being reliant on tools instead of a human workforce are changes that now take root in our lives.

To this end, company transformation and worker training should thus be geared towards digitalisation and automation.



Working remotely, providing customers and users with online access to services and training, and being reliant on tools instead of a human workforce are changes that now take root in our lives.

## GREATER PROTECTION FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS, LOWER-WAGE WORKERS

Essential workers have been the heroes during this pandemic. Their work is critical and cannot be done remotely. Many essential workers are also lower-wage workers.

To help these workers, initiatives like the Progressive Wage Model help to uplift their wages. NTUC-U Care Fund and other initiatives also help lower-wage workers with their welfare needs.

Still, the pandemic puts this group of workers under greater strain. Thus, the welfare of this group of workers should be closely monitored to see if greater assistance need to be rendered.

## LET US STAY UNITED

Every storm runs out of rain.

At NTUC, we stand firmly on the side of every worker and believe that by staying united and working closely with our tripartite partners, we can weather the storm of COVID-19 together and position Singapore for eventual recovery.

# INDEX

## NTUC-AFFILIATED UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

AESU	Air Transport Executive Staff Union
AUPE	Amalgamated Union of Public Employees
AUSBE	Amalgamated Union of Statutory Board Employees
AREU	Attractions, Resorts & Entertainment Union
BFSU	Banking and Financial Services Union
BATU	Building Construction And Timber Industries Employees' Union
CIEU	Chemical Industries Employees' Union
CMPU	Creative Media and Publishing Union
DBSSU	DBS Staff Union
DSSU	dnata Singapore Staff Union
ESU	Education Services Union
ESSU	Enterprise Singapore Staff Union
EMSEU	ExxonMobil Singapore Employees Union
FDAWU	Food, Drinks and Allied Workers Union
HSEU	Healthcare Services Employees' Union
HDBSU	Housing and Development Board Staff Union
IRASSU	Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore Staff Union
KEU	Keppel Employees Union
KFEU	Keppel FELS Employees' Union
MIWU	Metal Industries Workers' Union
NDCA	National Delivery Champions Association
NICA	National Instructors And Coaches Association
NPHVA	National Private Hire Vehicles Association
NTA	National Taxi Association
NTWU	National Transport Workers' Union
NEU	NatSteel Employees' Union
NPASU	Ngee Ann Polytechnic Academic Staff Union
POU	Port Officers' Union
PUBEU	Public Utilities Board Employees' Union
RLEU	Reuter Local Employees Union
STSU	Scoot Staff Union
SMEEU	Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering Employees' Union



SEEU	SIA Engineering Company Engineers and Executives Union
SIASU	Singapore Airlines Staff Union
SATSWU	Singapore Airport Terminal Services Workers' Union
SBEU	Singapore Bank Employees' Union
SCTU	Singapore Chinese Teachers' Union
SFA	Singapore Fintech Association
SISEU	Singapore Industrial & Services Employees' Union
SIEU	Singapore Insurance Employees' Union
SITU	Singapore Interpreters' and Translators' Union
SMTU	Singapore Malay Teachers' Union
SMMWU	The Singapore Manual & Mercantile Workers' Union
SMOU	Singapore Maritime Officers' Union
SOS	Singapore Organisation of Seamen
SPWU	Singapore Port Workers Union
SRCEU	Singapore Refining Company Employees' Union
SSEU-Shell	Singapore Shell Employees' Union
STTU	Singapore Tamil Teachers' Union
STU	Singapore Teachers' Union
SUBE	Singapore Union of Broadcasting Employees
SURAWU	Singapore Urban Redevelopment Authority Workers' Union
STESU	ST Engineering Staff Union
SUN	Staff Union of NTUC-ARU
SCEU	Supply Chain Employees' Union
TTAB	Tech Talent Assembly
TPGEU	Times Publishing Group Employees' Union
UITS	Union of ITE Training Staff
UPAGE	Union of Power and Gas Employees
USE	Union of Security Employees
UTES	Union of Telecoms Employees of Singapore
UTAL	Union of Tripartite Alliance Limited
UWEEI	United Workers of Electronics & Electrical Industries
UWPI	United Workers of Petroleum Industry
VICPA	Visual, Audio, Creative Content Professionals Association (Singapore)

## **NTUC SOCIAL ENTERPRISES**

NTUC Enterprise Co-operative Limited

NTUC Club

NTUC FairPrice Group

NTUC First Campus Co-operative Limited

NTUC Health Co-operative Limited

NTUC Income Insurance Co-operative Limited

NTUC LearningHub Co-operative Limited

Mercatus Co-operative Limited

MoneyOwl Pte Ltd

## **NTUC-RELATED ORGANISATIONS**

CDE	Centre for Domestic Employees
CASE	Consumers Association of Singapore
e2i	Employment and Employability Institute Private Limited
MWC	Migrant Workers' Centre
OTC INSTITUTE	Ong Teng Cheong Labour Leadership Institute
SLF	Singapore Labour Foundation

**ntuc**

National Trades Union Congress

**#EVERY  
WORKER  
MATTERS**

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**MEMBERSFIRST  
WORKERSALWAYS**

**60** years by your side

**National Trades Union Congress**

NTUC Centre

1 Marina Boulevard Level 10

One Marina Boulevard

Singapore 018989

Tel: +65 6213 8000

Fax: +65 6327 8800

[www.ntuc.org.sg](http://www.ntuc.org.sg)