



Media Release

Lotus Life Foundation and SMU launch \$3 million initiative to build capacity and create positive impact in Nepal

Singapore, 1 November 2018 (Thursday) – Lotus Life Foundation, a charitable organisation in Singapore, has pledged a term contribution of \$3 million to SMU’s Lien Centre for Social Innovation (Lien Centre) to strengthen the local capabilities in Nepal so as to drive programmes that tackle poverty in entrepreneurial and innovative ways.

Called “The Lotus Initiative”, Lien Centre and Lotus Life Foundation will implement a multi-pronged social innovation and entrepreneurship development partnership involving different stakeholders over five years. Amongst other plans, the Initiative aims to develop skills and build a core network of partners and practitioners in Nepal to support the capability building work; engage SMU faculty and students, social purpose organisations, social innovators and entrepreneurs, and other multi-sector partners and professionals to contribute towards social betterment in Nepal; and support and develop long-term socioeconomic benefits to local communities in Nepal through expertise transfer and development.

Mr Nirmal Singh, Chairman of Lotus Life Foundation, and SMU President Professor Arnoud De Meyer signed the gift agreement at SMU today. Also present at the event were senior management and staff from SMU and Lotus Life Foundation.

Mr Singh said, “The Lotus Initiative will add strength to the local capabilities in Nepal to develop and nurture local talent and build core network of business, social and apolitical organisations to drive programmes that tackle rural poverty in effective and entrepreneurial ways. We are hopeful that with SMU assistance, The Lotus Initiative will support and develop long term socioeconomic benefits to vulnerable groups in Nepal, especially in the rural communities and beyond, through expertise transfer and development, where feasible and appropriate, to existing projects that are in implementation stage in the communities.

“This initiative will also immensely enrich SMU students and faculty involved with experience in effectively dealing with problems faced by the lesser privileged section of society living in harsh conditions which then can be applied in other countries. This will also foster stronger socioeconomic relations between Singapore and Nepal.”

Professor Arnoud De Meyer said, “SMU is committed to educational endeavours that make the world better. We do so by developing graduates and partnerships that are both capable of, and responsive to, solving complex problems and making a positive difference to humanity. I am pleased that we have found a common vision with Lotus Life Foundation in an initiative that seeks to build capacity, support solutions and transform lives through social innovation and entrepreneurship development.

“The Lotus Initiative will encourage faculty and students from SMU and Nepal to work in partnership with other sectors, industries and cultures on real-life and complex issues, enhancing the impact of what SMU does on so many levels. We are grateful that the Initiative will give SMU students added opportunity to develop international experience and take them on an educational journey that is enriching, relevant and life-changing.”

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, a suite of six interconnected programmes will be conducted. They are:

- Appointment of Practice Fellows with the relevant skills and experience to work with local stakeholders to produce well-informed recommendations and interventions for improving rural livelihood.
- Boot camp training in Nepal to develop skills and knowledge in social innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Identification and provision of assistance, through experts and local stakeholders, to develop technological capabilities for improving rural livelihood.
- Identification and provision of assistance, through experts and local stakeholders, in areas such as rural entrepreneurship development and product development to improve rural livelihood.
- Support for SMU faculty to develop research as well as curriculum and resources related to rural entrepreneurial development in Nepal through SMU’s unique SMU-X experiential courses in which students work with stakeholder clients to improve business processes, productivity and connectivity.
- Development of dynamic monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track and report on the outcomes of the programmes, and to produce useful evidence-based insights to share with the wider community of practitioners.

Mr Jonathan Chang, Executive Director of the Lien Centre said, “Partnering with Lotus Life Foundation to provide practical training and other forms of support to local stakeholders to advance their capabilities in addressing social issues is only the first step in a continuing effort to improve livelihoods in rural Nepal. To ensure lasting and sustainable improvements in the community, key stakeholders and local organisations will need to actively participate in the conversation, develop innovative multi-sector solutions, and collaboratively work towards a more resilient and prosperous society.”

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About Lotus Life Foundation

Lotus Life Foundation Limited (LLF) was set up in 2016 by the Lotus Heritage Trust with the sole intention to be a charitable foundation in Singapore. LLF aims to uplift the lives of the less fortunate in Nepal and Singapore. Current partners include SMU, NUS and AVSAR Foundation.

About the Singapore Management University

Established in 2000, Singapore Management University (SMU) is recognised for its high-impact multi-disciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance, and for its innovations in experiential learning. With 10,000 students, SMU offers bachelors, masters and PhD degree programmes in Accountancy, Business, Economics, Information Systems, Law and Social Sciences, and executive development programmes. Through its city campus, SMU enjoys strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community in Singapore and beyond. www.smu.edu.sg

About Lien Centre for Social Innovation

The Lien Centre for Social Innovation (LCSI) was established to advance the thinking and capability of the social sector. Its mission is to catalyse innovative responses to social needs through applied research and capacity building at the intersection of the public, private and social sectors. LCSI contributes to a more equitable, inclusive and vibrant society, and it drives socially innovative solutions by strengthening social sector organisations so that they become influential and effective partners with business and government. <https://lcsi.smu.edu.sg>