

NEW FUND FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Stepfather's struggles inspire pau-maker

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SINGAPORE – His stepfather was sentenced to jail when he was a teen and could not land a permanent job even well into his 40s. His struggles inspired Mr Mohamed Shahri to start a social enterprise and help former offenders reintegrate into society.

Last November, the 24-year-old decided to set up a business making pau, or steamed buns with a filling. He named his company Pauwer, and has become the first recipient of a new fund for social enterprises, called the Youth Social Entrepreneurship Programme for Start-ups.

At the launch of the fund yesterday at *SCAPE, Mr Mohamed, who has a

passion for experimenting with food, said: "My stepfather, who has been surviving on odd jobs all these years, inspired me to set up this business."

"I want to help people like him reintegrate into society," he added, declining to reveal what his stepfather was convicted of.

He has set up a central kitchen to make his paus and will be distributing them to food outlets. Helpers will include former offenders, single parents and people who are partially blind and deaf. The paus come with chocolate and durian fillings, and there may be fried versions as well.

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The MSF has tied up with the National University of Singapore Entrepreneurship Centre and the Singapore Management University Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship. They will provide successful applicants with incubation support, as well as mentors to advise them on social enterprise business models, and give them access to contacts and networks.

Applications are open throughout the year.

Mr Chan Chun Sing, Acting Minister for Social and Family Development, said: "We believe there are many passionate young Singaporeans who want to do good for society and we want to do our best to support them ... We will continue on this trajectory, to enlist more young people to come forward to serve the society in an area they are passionate in."

Mr Chan, who was at the launch of the programme, also toured a bazaar at *SCAPE, where participating stalls will donate part of their proceeds to charity.