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## NEWS

# Good news for the poor

Catholic charities discuss plans to cooperate and serve the poor better

By Joyce Gan

**SINGAPORE** – The Roman Catholic Prison Ministry (RCPM) will work with Catholic Welfare Services on the feasibility of building a halfway house for ex-prisoners. This is one of several collaborative projects materializing from a recent Catholic Social and Community Council (CSCC) forum for member organizations. RCPM also informed the 70 representatives from 23 CSCC member organizations that it plans to develop an outcare ‘conciierge’ service to direct released prisoners to the organizations they can draw help from, depending on their individual needs.

The forum at Catholic Junior College on Saturday Apr 5 is the second of such and was themed “Bringing the Good News to the Poor”. Delegates were asked to think of needs of the poor that their organizations were still unable to meet and to discuss how member organizations can pool resources and combine their efforts to reach more of those who need help.

The poor refers to the marginalized, those neglected by

society or are of lower priority according to authorities, vulnerable groups taken advantage of by others or those who are deemed “different”, said Formation Consultant Christina Kheng.

“We are constantly challenged to be where the poor are. Let their stories and voices be heard, dispel stigma and help society and the church be more inclusive,” she added. This is how gaps can be filled to help more people, she continued.

Laurence Lien, Chairman of CSCC Community Strategy Committee, and Jesuit Father Colin Tan also addressed the delegates.

Mr Lien told them that although a lot is being done by many players – the government, non-profit organizations and the private sector – many in our midst still cannot reach the help they need. He said that the church needs to remain focused on human services. “Gaps can be filled through enhancement of services by existing agencies or the creation of new agencies,” he continued.

Jesuit Father Colin Tan emphasized that “we can now synergize our resources so we don’t work separately like horses going off in different directions”

but move together in one direction.

By the end of the forum, organizations with similar missions had made plans to collaborate.

St. Joseph’s Home, which has 22 hospice beds that are not always occupied because patients cannot use their Medisave to pay for the service, will work with Assisi Home and Hospice, where patients can pay through Medisave but has insufficient hospice beds.

The Jesuit Refugee Service will help acts29, which helps children in the Philippines, to get in touch with bigger donors. These mission groups also plan to work with the Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People to share shelters for refugees and migrants.

Several family oriented organizations – Christian Family and Social Movement, Morning Star Community Services, Marine Parade Family Service Centre, Couples For Christ, Family Life Society, Beginning Experience, Marriage Preparation Course and Couple-Empowerment Program – plan to form a family life cluster and meet quarterly to understand one another’s work and to identify the needs of each for the purpose of cooperating. □