



Photo credits: SHINE

STAR PROGRAMME IMPACT FUND

Children | Education



FUND OVERVIEW

NAME

STAR Programme Impact Fund

FUND OBJECTIVES

This fund aims to **break the cycle of intergenerational poverty** and enable children from less socio-economically advantaged families to **maximise their potential** by providing one-to-one professional mentorships over eight years.

COUNTRY OF OPERATIONS

Singapore

LAUNCH DATE

October 2024

MINIMUM CONTRIBUTION

SGD20,000

Multi-year contributions encouraged

FUND TARGET AND DURATION

SGD6,000,000

Over 4 years

THE ISSUE

A child's development during their early years is critical to future happiness, wellbeing and success. Two key differentiating factors in this are a safe and functioning family environment and psychological well-being. However, children from less socio-economically advantaged families face significant challenges in accessing education and social-emotional development support. Often stretched for time and resources, their families are focused on making ends meet. With current support initiatives in Singapore focused more on adults, there are limited opportunities for direct child intervention. To ensure that all children can achieve and maximise their potential, they need access to proper guidance, positive reinforcement, enriching social interactions, and assistance to nurture their talents and learning.

OUR PARTNER

In June 2023, SHINE Children and Youth Services (SHINE) piloted STAR, a child-centric, long-term mentoring programme for children aged six to 13. Focusing on families of lower socio-economic backgrounds and living in government-subsidised rental communities, the programme aims to support and uplift these children towards social mobility.

Modeled after the evidence-based **Friends of The Children programme** in the U.S., STAR is an individualised mentoring programme focused on the holistic development of a child. Full time, salaried, Professional Mentors provide consistent, one-to-one guidance to both the child and their parents/caregivers over the course of eight years. These Professional Mentors help children build social emotional competencies, develop age-relevant learning goals, and core life skills. These Mentors also equip parents with the skills and capacity to nurture an environment that best helps children to achieve their potential.

Since 1976, SHINE has empowered children, youth, and families through school, center, and community-based social work and educational psychology programmes. Annually, **SHINE supports around 6,000 children and youth, helping them build resilience and hope for their future.**

WHAT YOUR FUNDING COULD UNLOCK

SGD30,000

Support **two children's** journey with STAR for **one** year.

SGD60,000

Support **one child's** journey with STAR for **four** years.

SGD120,000

Support **one child's** journey to complete the STAR programme over **eight** years.

TO GIVE:

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5% of the total funds raised will cover ACF's fundraising and administrative costs.

Individuals with 'Accredited Investor' status, their associated private wealth entities, or corporate entities that pass ACF's Know-Your-Donor process may give through ACF's various funds.

KEY PRIORITIES



- 1 Enabling the development of a child's social-emotional competencies in their formative years
- 2 Fostering a child's development of positive connections with their peers and increase their motivation towards learning
- 3 Empowering parents to play a bigger role in nurturing their child by providing better access to opportunities and resources

CHAMPION DONOR

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When designing to solve wicked problems such as social mobility for underserved population, it is imperative to be evidence-informed while considering the local context, user experiences, and last mile solution. STAR programme has been designed with these considerations. We are thrilled to be partnering SHINE in developing STAR programme and playing our part by bringing in the risk capital requisite for social innovation.

RAMAN SIDHU

Chief Executive Officer, Octava Foundation

Octava Foundation is a Singapore-based private grantmaker committed to promoting equitable education and skills development. Using a venture philanthropy approach, the Foundation supports social purpose organisations in developing solutions and furthering their impact in Singapore and Asia. Through its Young Learners Fund, it aims to close the disadvantaged gap in education for primary school-aged children in Singapore.

WHY GIVE?

- 1 **Learn alongside experienced givers**
Join the champion's giving journey and learn about the issue and needs.
- 2 **Fund high-quality social impact organisations**
Support impactful nonprofits with a proven track record of driving positive change.
- 3 **Join a network of donors**
Be part of a community of impact-minded donors.
- 4 **Focus on your giving**
Leverage ACF's grant management capabilities to reduce your administrative burden.
- 5 **Ensure security and accountability**
Rely on the ACF team to conduct due diligence and manage grant tracking and reporting.

THE BACKGROUND

A child's development in their formative years is crucial in ensuring they grow up to be confident, successful and independent. For children and youth without additional health or developmental conditions, a safe, nurturing family environment and psychological well-being are the most important factors impacting their quality of life.

Responsive caregiving has a key role to play. However, the bandwidth of parents running lower-income households is often stretched, leaving limited capacity to provide this support. For some, early childhood education can be an expensive commitment, and they may need to focus their resources on providing day-to-day subsistence. As a result, children from these families may spend much of their time at home, with less access to resources compared to their peers. This means they can also miss out on more peer-enriching social interactions.

With parents focused on making ends meet, children also have fewer opportunities to learn from and be guided by the adult figures in their lives. Studies have shown that the presence of a consistent adult figure can lessen the likelihood of risk indicators such as poor school attendance or a lack of pre-education engagement. Meeting these needs helps ensure that a child's development in literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional competencies are on par with their peers.

Despite Singapore's diverse child development support ecosystem, many existing programmes emphasise short-term, centre-based interventions. With most programmes occurring outside regular school hours, challenges arise in sustaining child engagement and attendance, which impact their overall effectiveness. A high volunteer and social worker turnover rate further complicates these efforts, making it **difficult to build lasting trust with children and their parents.**

Additionally, social work in Singapore traditionally focuses on supporting adults rather than directly engaging children. This limits opportunities for direct intervention and often frames users from a deficit perspective, with assistance provided only when challenges escalate. Without effective and sustained interventions during a child's critical developmental years, children may face less desirable life outcomes, perpetuating the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

To address this gap, there is **an urgent need for long-term, consistent, child-centric support** to ensure that these children have the best opportunities and environments to reach their full potential.

Key factors for a child's development:

- 1 Providing a supportive and safe learning environment
- 2 Ensuring children establish and reach their learning goals
- 3 Developing their social emotional competencies
- 4 Having a consistent guiding figure in their lives to reinforce positive behaviours

In Singapore,

25% households earn less than half the national median income.

References:

1. Fam, A., Tan, L. S., & National Council of Social Service. Understanding the quality of life of children and youth. In Understanding the Quality of Life of Children and Youth (p.1). National Council of Social Service. 2022.

