

MEDIA RELEASE**Banding Together to Enable Potential**

SINGAPORE, 6 May 2020 – In support of enabling more children and youths to use technology actively and harness the full potential of home-based learning (HBL) for Singaporean families, Facebook has committed USD250,000 (SGD350,000) to sponsor 1000 laptops for children and youths from low-income families. Facebook has worked with TOUCH Community Services (TOUCH) as the main coordinator since March 2020 to organise efforts to meet needs on the ground.

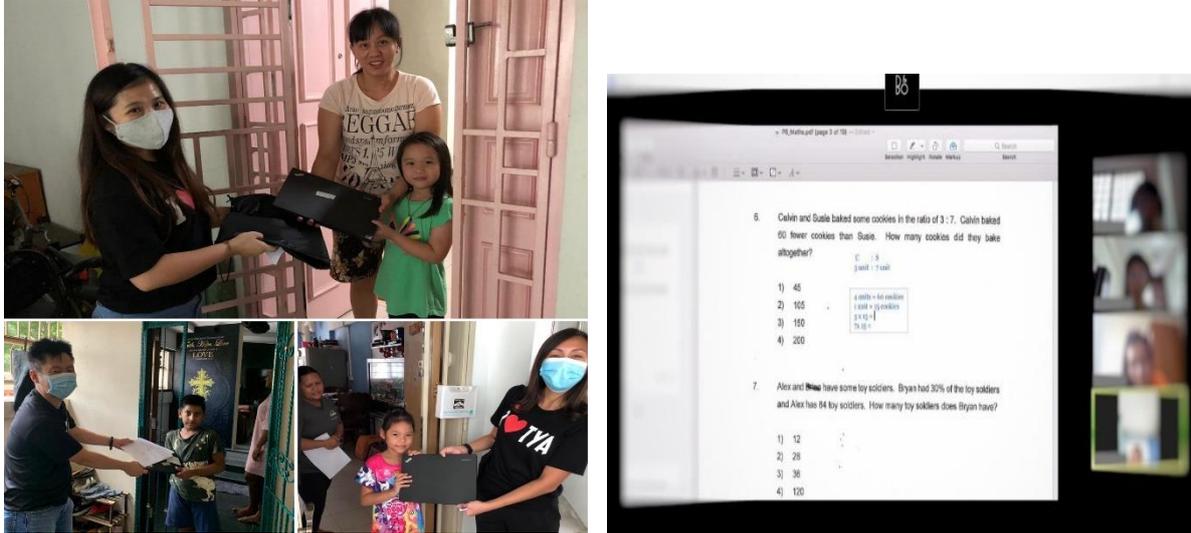
Facebook’s Regional Head of Infrastructure Engagement, Gavin Chua said, “We are committed to supporting this community especially during these challenging times.” Facebook first partnered with TOUCH in 2019 to introduce Digitally Ready Seniors, a community programme for seniors to learn more about using digital services. The programme also introduced content from Facebook’s *We Think Digital* portal which provides resources for seniors to build a global community of responsible digital citizens equipped with skills for a digital world. The current initiative to sponsor laptops for low-income families is an extension of a community outreach to enable people to remain connected and use technology actively, meaningfully and safely. In addition to Facebook’s office footprint, they broke ground on their first Asia-based data centre in Singapore in 2018.

Said Mr James Tan, Chief Executive Officer of TOUCH Community Services, “We are grateful for Facebook’s sponsorship to ensure more children stay connected to learning during this period. COVID-19 has forced a digital revolution in the way how many of us do things, and we are also experiencing how technology can be an enabler during this time. Riding on the support given by the government, schools and teachers, TOUCH has been helping families manage the transition of roles at home and equip them with the resources to navigate uncertainties brought about by working from home and HBL. This initiative to distribute laptops to beneficiaries in need shows how community and corporate efforts can band together to support nationwide efforts to achieve greater impact.”

Helping Children Realise their Potential

At TOUCH, children and youths from low-income or single-parent families will benefit from the laptops to continue their online value-added academic coaching by mentors. As these children are from vulnerable backgrounds, TOUCH offers educational, social, emotional and moral support to help them realise their potential in life.

Anna (*not her real name*), 8 years old, lives with her family and four siblings in a 2-room rental flat. Anna and her 9-year old brother are both from TOUCH Young Arrows (TYA) Sengkang and have benefitted from a laptop loaned for their HBL. The two older children will start their mornings first with HBL, followed by the younger children. All the children were sharing a laptop, but now, Anna and her older brother can have access to a laptop each to access TYA’s online club engagement and academic coaching activities.



*Photo caption:
Children from TYA receiving online tuition sessions using the laptops received. These children are mentored by TOUCH staff and volunteers for academic coaching and values-driven enrichment.*

Many Helping Hands Approach

Through the “Many Helping Hands” approach, social service agencies (SSAs) and other community groups closest to those in need deliver a range of social services and assistance programmes. These partnerships are an important aspect of Singapore’s social institutions and social safety net.

For this initiative, TOUCH worked through volunteer organisation 6th Sense to reach out to SSAs such as New Hope Community Services, AWWA, AMKFSC Community Services, SHINE Children & Youth Services to coordinate and give out these laptops to children and youths from needy families.

Co-founder of 6th Sense, Mr Abhishek Bajaj, said “Our children deserve the best possible opportunities to achieve their dreams. In this case, it is through taking a step towards digital connectivity and adoption by owning a laptop, gaining the know-how of using the device and making learning seamless for themselves. I would like to thank my volunteers who reached out to the various SSAs to tabulate ground needs as well as TOUCH Community Services and Facebook for swiftly providing for them. Collectively, we are able to align our efforts towards equitable outcomes in education.”

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FACEBOOK



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ABOUT FACEBOOK

Founded in 2004, Facebook's mission is to give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them.

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ABOUT TOUCH COMMUNITY SERVICES

Since 1992, TOUCH Community Services has served people of all ages, races and religions to see sustainable change and transformation in their lives. It believes in the worth and potential of every child, youth at-risk, family in need, senior and person with special or healthcare needs to grow, participate and contribute in the community. The heartbeat of TOUCH is to **activate potential, build independence, connect people** for mutual support, and **deliver impact** by developing sustainable solutions in society. For more information on TOUCH, please visit www.touch.org.sg