

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF CHARITIES FOR 2003

REGISTERED CHARITIES

The Charities Act provides the legal and regulatory framework for charities in Singapore. Every organisation providing public benefit and established exclusively for charitable purposes (other than those exempted) must apply for registration. Charitable purposes include the relief of poverty, the advancement of education or religion and other purposes beneficial to the community.

In 2003, 105 charities were registered and 10 were deregistered. This brings the total number of charities in Singapore to 1,659 as at 31 December 2003. Charities set up for the advancement of religion is still the majority at 55%. Appendix 1 shows the breakdown of the registered charities by charitable objectives.

More than half of the registered charities have income (including donations and grants from Government) of less than \$250,000. In 2002, there were 299 registered charities with income of \$50,000 or below. The 47 large charities whose income exceeded \$10 million received more than 70% of the \$3.9 billion of total income of registered charities. Appendix 2 shows the distribution of registered charities by annual income, 2002.

FUND-RAISING APPEALS FOR FOREIGN CHARITABLE PURPOSES

Any organisation that wishes to conduct or participate in any fund-raising appeal for foreign charitable purposes must apply for a permit from the Commissioner of Charities. A total of 33 permits were issued in 2003. Most of the fund-raising appeals were for humanitarian causes such as providing aid to the victims of the Bali bomb blast and the earthquake in Iran, the poor and needy in East Timor, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar.

FIELD VISITS

This is an on-going programme conducted by the Commissioner of Charities each year. 9 field visits were conducted in 2003. These field visits provided a better understanding of how charities operate and where there are areas for improvement, advice were given to help them strengthen charity governance.

DEVELOPMENTS IN 2003

All charities with Institution of A Public Character status (i.e. those charities authorised to collect tax-deductible donations) are required to post their key financial and profile information online by December 2003. Conducted in 2 phases since 2002, this is one of the initiatives to develop greater public accountability and transparency. This would give donors confidence that their money will be used for the purposes for which it was given and in the longer term, help secure future support for their charitable causes.

PLANS FOR 2004

We shall continue to work in partnership with the charities, other watchdog agencies and the Ministry of Finance to promote good practices in charity governance.

APPENDIX 1

NUMBER OF REGISTERED CHARITIES				
Charitable Objectives	As at 31 Dec 2002	Registered in 2003	Deregistered in 2003	As at 31 Dec 2003
Relief of Poverty	14	0	0	14 (1%)
Advancement of education	174	27	2	199 (12%)
Advancement of religion	871	43	6	908 (55%)
Purposes beneficial to the community	317	32	0	349 (21%)
Mixed activities	188	3	2	189 (11%)
TOTAL	1564	105	10	1659 (100%)

Distribution of registered charities by annual income, 2002

