

Sustainability: Resilience and Inclusiveness in Fighting COVID-19

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Covid-19 has taken the world by storm since it crept up on us in the later months of 2019. Ever since then, the world has fallen into chaos with unprecedented death tolls. The severity of this pandemic has had experts likening it to being in a war with an invisible enemy. This once-in-a-century-pandemic has undeniably ravaged the world both economically, socially and even politically. However, the truth of the matter is that some countries have fared much better than others and to me, it all boils down to sustainability, resilience and inclusiveness in fighting Covid-19 as a nation.

While Singapore had met her fair share of turmoil in 2020 where Covid-19 cases were on a rise on the daily, the situation that we were in was a far cry from the predicament that countries such as America and Brazil were battling. Today, the total Covid-19 death toll in Singapore stands at 34, which is a stark contrast to 585K in America. I believe that this was only possible as citizens and government were willing to work cohesively together for the betterment of Singapore.

No doubt Singapore had gone through a trying time during the pandemic, but the silver lining was that Singaporeans displayed our sense of resilience and inclusiveness that has ensured our sustainability as we stand strong as a nation today.

Singaporeans have no doubt displayed the virtue of resilience throughout the course of the pandemic and it is a trait that I deeply admire and am extremely proud of. While it is no secret that many Singaporeans have suffered from job loss due to Covid-19, they were determined warriors who made lemonade out of lemon. Many of them actively took up delivery jobs or started home businesses in an

attempt to eke out a living. But what reflected resilience like no other would be our health care workers. They say that not all heroes wear capes and that could not be more true for our healthcare warriors. Who could ever forget about the initial stages of the pandemic where Singapore first fell victim to the pandemic? It was our healthcare workers' resilience and determination that helped Singapore pull through the first wave of the pandemic. It was their unwavering commitment to making Singapore safe from the pandemic that Singapore managed to pull through. However, behind this resilience is a sacrifice like no other. Having placed both themselves and their families at risk, our healthcare workers soldiered on and never gave up for the betterment of their nation.

But with a pandemic as lethal as Covid-19, resilience itself would not be sufficient. The ability for a country to sustain itself in trying times like these is testament to a country's survivability and Singapore has done just that. The Singapore government has evidently proved that the years of careful saving has done Singapore good in such a climate. From the very onset when citizens were suffering financially from the impact of the pandemic, the Singapore government has issued several grants such as 'Covid-19 Support Grant' where eligible candidates are able to receive \$800 a month if they have lost their jobs or experienced a 30% reduction in their salary or the 'Jobs Support Scheme' where employers in selected sectors will receive wage support of 10-50% offset for the first SGD 4,600 of monthly wages paid to each employee. The Singapore government's ability to do so without borrowing money from other countries reflects that Singapore has a good financial health which is a good indication of sustainability. This juxtaposes the UK, who has borrowed an estimated £394bn in order for them to tide through the financial crisis that Covid-19 has brought about. As compared to the UK, Singapore has done outstandingly in terms of financial sustainability and it is something that all Singaporeans should be tremendously proud of.

But more than just financial sustainability, Singapore has also bore witness to sustainability when it comes to food security. Being a little red dot with no natural resources and a tiny agricultural sector, it would seem that Singapore

would be vulnerable to food shortages especially during a pandemic like Covid-19. However, contrary to popular belief, the Singapore government has once again displayed the country's sustainability through its healthy food supply during the pandemic. This is done through great foresight as Singapore's food importers leverage the nation's connectivity and global free trade environment to import from multiple sources in about 170 countries and regions worldwide. Singapore's sustainability when it comes to food security is thus evident during this pandemic as the Singapore government was able to ensure its citizens of an abundant food supply and as a result Singaporeans did not descend into panic buying. As such, through economical and social sustainability displayed during this pandemic, it goes to show that Singapore is able to weather any storm.

It goes without saying that Singapore has excelled in both the sustainability as well as the resilience aspect during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, more than just the economical facet that Singapore has proven to have outdone herself. It is through this pandemic that Singaporeans were able to display the more sentimental and emotional side of us that is otherwise unheard of. While Singapore may at times seem like a harsh and unforgiving place to live in with our fast pace and hectic lifestyle, this pandemic has shattered this tough exterior and allowed us to get in touch with empathy. The virtue of inclusiveness is exhibited in many aspects during this pandemic. When Singapore was hit with the first wave of Covid-19, the most vulnerable groups were foreign workers as well as the elderly community. This was when Singaporeans banded together and were determined to leave no one behind. Charity organisations were formed and funds were raised in order to supply these vulnerable groups with adequate masks and food. Singaporeans truly stepped up their game and by refusing to be self-centered during times of need is reflective of Singapore's unity and togetherness. Not only were foreign workers and the elderly hardest hit during this trying time, the F&B industry (especially hawkers) was also detrimentally affected since dining in was strictly prohibited. This was when we witnessed Singapore's inclusiveness and unity once again. Since the hawker culture is an integral part of Singapore's heritage and many hawkers were on the brink of closing down, Singaporeans did their best to ensure and help these businesses sustain through repeated orders. In fact, many hawker

stalls managed to pull through the pandemic all thanks to the unwavering support that Singaporeans displayed during the pandemic. No doubt a pandemic like Covid-19 would encourage more individualism since social distancing is a requirement in our day-to-day, however, Singaporeans chose unity and inclusiveness during this time which is heartening to say the very least.

Covid-19 has completely altered the world in ways that are unthinkable. The wearing of masks and social distancing, habits that were almost unheard of in the pre-Covid-19 era, have now become the new norm. It is true that this pandemic has caught the human race by surprise and we were thoroughly ill-prepared for the magnitude of this virus. Not only that, our complacency got in the way, allowing the virus to claim many lives to date. Covid-19 has indeed taught the human race many lessons and amongst them, is preparedness in times of unprecedented crisis.

Similarly, this pandemic has taught me a thing or two and has prepared me for a situation like this should it happen again. First thing's first, I would ensure that my home would always have an ample supply of masks and sanitisers to prevent the situation where I am not prepared for the first line of defence. Next, it is also important that I pay close attention to the news at all times to be kept abreast to the latest update. The news is extremely important as I will be able to receive directions from government bodies which need to be adhered to, as soon as possible, so as to ensure a more effective result when tackling the pandemic. Furthermore, I believe that everyone should be socially responsible in times of a pandemic like this in order for us to quell a potent virus such as Covid-19. Habits such as personal hygiene and social distancing are some of the routines that we will need to stick by should a pandemic like this arise again. I believe that with these plans, we will be able to tackle a pandemic like Covid-19 more effectively and would definitely reduce the death toll on the global scale.

I believe that through my personal experience with the pandemic, I can adequately influence and encourage future Singaporeans to move towards the correct trajectory should a pandemic like Covid-19 arise again. In the past year and a half, I have experienced the dos and don'ts when it comes to handling the virus.

With the combination of personal hygiene, social distancing and the boosting of my immunity through my diet, my family and I have managed to keep the pandemic at bay and I believe that what I have gone through would be an invaluable experience that can guide future generations when it comes to a crisis as such.

All in all, while it is true that Covid-19 has been a life-altering experience for the world with its lethal impact on mankind, we cannot deny the fact that it is also this pandemic that has taught the world a thing or two about preparedness. This pandemic has reflected both the ugly and pretty sides of humanity and while the virus has ravaged many parts of the world, I cannot be more heartened to see that Singapore, while not immuned to the pandemic, has decided to stand together as one people, one nation and one Singapore. It is our resilience, inclusiveness and sustainability that has allowed us to stand up against the virus and eventually emerge victorious. This would not have been possible without the collective teamwork between the government bodies and its citizens. This pandemic has brought about much uncertainty for the past year and a half for this little red dot. However, one thing is for sure, Covid-19 has not only strengthened Singapore as a whole, but it has definitely and sufficiently prepared all of us should another adversity befall us again.