

## **Opening Remarks by Senior Minister of State Janil Puthucheary Launch of the “3M Girls Can Tinker” Initiative on 28 April 2022**

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Girls

### **Introduction**

- 1) Good afternoon, I am very happy to join you today.
- 2) Congratulations to 3M and Science Centre Singapore on the launch of the “3M Girls Can Tinker” Initiative today.

### **Harnessing the Potential of Women in STEM**

- 3) Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) has always been an important part of our lives, opening up new possibilities, providing greater convenience, transforming the way we think about what we do, and also transforming the opportunities and our hope for the future. It opens new possibilities, and the Covid-19 pandemic brought to the forefront some of these.
  - a) Without which, we would not have vaccines, TraceTogether, the ART kits. All of these things that we use which would not have been possible if we do not have people in Singapore who have experience, passion and commitment, and an education in STEM.
  - b) But our response also taught us about many things that we can do for our future using technology.
- 4) The possibilities of transforming our lives, transforming our society and transforming our country through technology potentially are endless, and women have a significant part to play in this. They have more potential in STEM that we can harness. Today, we see many more Singaporean women leaders and experts in STEM fields. It used to be a male-dominated field and we see these women emerging. But we still have a legacy because of the people who are in leadership positions today, organisations that have been around for 40 or 50 years. It takes time for the new cohorts of women to progress through, but it is starting, and we are progressing well. Already, we have one of the highest proportions globally of women in the technology workforce.
  - a) Women comprise 41% of our tech workforce, in contrast to the global average of 28%. What is important is not what the global average is. We should compare

ourselves to where we think we can go, and 41% - we can go further and we will. Because if we do not, we will not be making use of that experience, expertise and opportunity that is there in half of our population.

- 5) In 3M's global survey<sup>1</sup> last year:
- a) Nearly all (9 in 10) respondents in Singapore agree that it is important to increase diversity and inclusion in STEM fields.
  - b) More than 8 in 10 here agree that more needs to be done to encourage girls to go into STEM fields, and importantly, keep them engaged in the opportunities and find a way to balance the opportunities with their other aspirations.

### **Promoting Inclusivity in STEM**

- 6) The government is committed to building a more inclusive digital society. One that harnesses the full potential of everyone – including women – and enable every Singaporean to participate and benefit from the growing digital sector. This includes giving people access to digital tools and skills, and importantly, access to job opportunities.
- 7) This is one of the reasons why we have partnered so successfully with the community and industry partners to support and empower girls and women to pursue STEM careers. For example, the SG Women in Tech initiative has made significant progress since it was launched in 2019.
- a) We have connected over 115,000 girls in schools with female tech leaders through a series of Students Ask videos; and
  - b) We facilitated tech companies to reach out to over 380 students during Girls In Tech Week, where youths learned more about the tech sector and connected with industry role models – people only just a little bit older than them. We need all kinds of role models – ladies who have walked the journey and arrived at senior leadership positions, and ladies who have just stepped in.
  - c) Both together, through this initiative, we have brought together over 600 women in the tech workforce for networking and mentoring activities, providing ongoing coaching and counselling.
- 8) The government will continue to ensure that opportunities in the STEM industry remain open to women and help them fulfil their full potential.

### **Conclusion**

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<sup>1</sup> 3M's 2021 State of Science Index Survey: [https://www.3m.com.sg/3M/en\\_SG/state-of-science-index-survey-sg/insights/](https://www.3m.com.sg/3M/en_SG/state-of-science-index-survey-sg/insights/)

- 9) I would like to thank 3M and Science Centre Singapore for partnering the community over the years. In particular, today's "3M Girls Can Tinker" initiative will enable 300 girls to have a real-world, hands-on experience to learn through play.
- a) These efforts increasingly will level the playing field and give girls the opportunities to tinker, develop a curious mindset from young, and use those skills and experiences to achieve their dreams and aspirations.
  - b) I hope we will see more of such initiatives in the years to come.
  - c) Together, we can create a more inclusive environment for girls to take their first steps into STEM fields, and enable them to become tomorrow's leading innovators.
- 10) Our pursuit of digital innovation must be guided by values such as inclusion and progress for all, where men and women partner each other as equals, and can contribute towards building Singapore's digital future. We have talked about this extensively nationally, including recently at Parliament through the motion on the Singapore Women's Development White Paper. There are many aspects to making sure that these ideals and ideas get translated into a lived experience for the young ladies of today, including for example, today's programme.
- 11) To the girls with us today, I hope you will be inspired and dream of becoming scientists, game designers, astronomers, astronauts, or whatever you think may be possible using technology and science.
- a) As you explore and tinker, you will not succeed every time. That is the nature of tinkering and the nature of experimentation. Don't give up, learn from every attempt and every experiment, stay curious, ask lots of difficult questions, especially to your teachers, and try again. That is the spirit of tinkering.
- 12) I look forward to meeting everyone later today, and I hope to see your projects come alive. Thank you once again to our community partners, and everybody for being here today.
- 13) Thank you very much.

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