



**PRESS RELEASE (Embargo till 10 Sep 2025, 0000hrs)**

**Community group behind Singapore's first suicide prevention White Paper tackles male suicide and launches study to uncover true suicide numbers**

Singapore, 10 September 2025: On World Suicide Prevention Day, SG Mental Health Matters - the community group behind Project Hayat - announced the launch of a landmark study to estimate the true number of suicides in Singapore.

This builds on Project Hayat's White Paper, released on the same day last year, which called for a comprehensive national suicide prevention strategy anchored in the evidence-based S.A.V.E L.I.V.E.S. framework. The White Paper was presented to the Government - specifically the National Mental Health Office has met with the Project Hayat team to discuss collaboration. *(Note: Please check with NMHO about their plan to launch the national suicide prevention framework, partly informed by Project Hayat findings)*

The launch comes in the wake of provisional statistics released in July this year that sparked widespread concern. Provisional figures for 2023 suggested suicides were at a 20-year record low. But final figures revealed a 35 percent increase in deaths than originally reported - raising questions about the reliability of provisional statistics, which have become a source of confusion for both professionals and the public.

*"Every life lost to suicide is one too many - but we may be undercounting these lives,"* said former Nominated Member of Parliament Anthea Ong, who initiated Project Hayat and co-leads the effort. *"Last year, we called for Singapore to SAVE LIVES through a national suicide prevention strategy. This year, we are pushing forward by finding better ways to measure the true scale of the crisis. We cannot build solutions on incomplete data."*

The next step is to fill the urgent data gaps through a pioneering study led by Dr Rayner Tan, Assistant Professor at the NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health. The study will employ the Network Scale-Up Method (NSUM) - a novel statistical approach never before applied to suicides in Singapore.

NSUM has been used internationally to estimate the size of hidden or hard-to-reach populations, such as communities at risk of HIV, which are not captured by official census or national approaches.

*“Applying this method to suicides is an important step forward”, said Dr Tan. “We welcome further funding support and hope this study will give us a clearer picture of the lives we are losing and guide evidence-based prevention policies that match the scale of the problem.”*

Men accounted for nearly 70% of all suicides in 2023. Suicide is now the leading cause of death among youth aged 10–29, with elderly men also seeing alarming increases. Certain subpopulations, such as Indian men, are disproportionately affected - highlighting critical vulnerabilities shaped by ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other social determinants.

*“Without urgent intervention, Singapore risks losing even more men to suicide - across both our youngest and oldest generations,” Ong added.*

To address this, SG Mental Health Matters, together with partners from the NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, has submitted a \$1 million grant proposal to the Social Science & Humanities Research Thematic Grant (administered by the Social Science Research Council). If awarded, the grant will support a community-based participatory study of male suicide risk, designed to uncover the social conditions that drive despair and shape more effective prevention.

*“Suicide is never just about an individual - it is about the social conditions that make people feel hopeless,” said Ong. “By focusing on male suicide, we aim to uncover those conditions and design prevention that truly meets men where they are.”*

Since its launch in 2024, Project Hayat has made progress in advancing conversations on suicide prevention in Singapore. Its findings have been presented both locally and internationally, including at the NUS Social Service Research Seminar Series and the International Association for Suicide Prevention Congress 2025 in Vienna.

Building on the White Paper, Project Hayat’s research subgroup secured a \$50,000 seed grant from the National University Health System under the Academic Health Programme (AHP) Fund 2024. This grant is funding interviews with five groups of Singaporeans vulnerable to suicide: older adults, LGBTQ+ people, low-income migrant workers, neurodivergent youth, and caregivers. A community report is expected by the first quarter of 2026.

Scientific papers focusing on Project Hayat’s unique community-led governance structure, its shift away from a moral view of suicide, and the constructive role of media in suicide prevention are also underway, and expected to be published by end of 2025.

*“Project Hayat remains committed to ensuring that every life counts, and that Singapore’s national suicide prevention efforts are anchored in transparency, compassion, and evidence”, added Dr Tan.*

### **About Project Hayat**

Project Hayat (“hayat” means life in Malay) is a community-led initiative by SG Mental Health Matters, calling for a national suicide prevention strategy in Singapore. It is co-led by mental health advocate Anthea Ong, public health researcher Dr Rayner Tan, and psychiatrist Dr Jared Ng, together with a coalition of mental health professionals, researchers, and community partners.

In 2024, Project Hayat launched Singapore’s first community-led White Paper on suicide prevention on World Suicide Prevention Day. It continues to advocate for urgent, coordinated national action to ensure that every life counts — and that Singapore’s suicide prevention efforts are anchored in transparency, compassion, and evidence.

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