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3 telcos commit to more than \$3 million worth of data for 30,000 beneficiaries



The Data for All scheme was launched on May 21 at the first Digital for Life Festival. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO



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SINGAPORE - Ms Chan Ying Xiu has had to tap her father's phone as a mobile hot spot to access the Internet outside their home, but she will now have her own free mobile data line from StarHub's giga to connect with her parents and friends.

Ms Chan, 34, who has cerebral palsy, is one of the beneficiaries of the Data for All scheme, which was launched on Saturday (May 21) by Minister for Communications and Information Josephine Teo at the first Digital for Life Festival, organised by the Infocomm Media Development Authority.

Customers of the three major telcos here will be able to pledge their support to help vulnerable individuals as part of an initiative to build a digitally connected and inclusive society.

The telcos - M1, Singtel and StarHub - have each committed to providing 10,000 mobile data lines, which will collectively support 30,000 beneficiaries.

Valued at more than \$3 million, the initiative will benefit children, young people and seniors from low-income families, as well as people with disabilities and their caregivers.

Ms Chan's father and caregiver, 62-year-old retiree Patrick Chan, told The Straits Times that while her condition limits her motor skills, she can still write with her keyboard and take photos with her iPad to send to her friends.

"(With her own mobile data line) at least she has the independence... she and her mother can check e-mails, book appointments at polyclinics and use (ride-hailing) apps without needing to have me around," he said.

Each of the telcos is focusing on a different vulnerable group.

Users of StarHub's Giga can lend a helping hand to people with disabilities and their caregivers, through a redemption in the Giga app.

With every pledge, a beneficiary will get 6GB of data per month and other bonuses such as 500 minutes of talk time.

M1 is donating up to 10,000 SIM cards with free mobile plans to young people from low-income families. They will get 50GB of data every month for a year, alongside benefits such as unlimited incoming calls.

Users of Singtel's Gomo mobile plan can donate their extra data. The telco will then consolidate the data into Hi! SIM cards that will be distributed to 10,000 vulnerable seniors, who will get 3GB of data per month.

The initiative is backed by public organisations, social service agencies and community partners.

The Ministry of Social and Family Development's Community Link will assist in reaching out to children and young people from low-income families.

AMKFSC Community Services, Care Corner, Lions Befrienders, NTUC Health and Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities will reach out to seniors from low-income families.

SG Enable will link up with people with disabilities and their caregivers.

"While the Digital for Life Festival recognises that so much of our daily lives has gone digital, not everyone is equally comfortable when they engage digitally," noted Mrs Teo, speaking on the sidelines of the launch.

"There is a need to know about access, and how to protect oneself from harms such as scams... in trying to promote digital inclusion, it is useful to work with partners from both the private and people sector," she added.

"We hope that this festival will inspire more partners to come on board, (and) also help more Singaporeans to go digital with confidence and with a great sense of comfort."

It is a sentiment shared by Singtel's vice-president of group sustainability, Mr Andrew Buay, who said: "We believe that by enabling seniors to have digital access and having them know how to use it safely, these will form important foundations for future healthcare-related and social care applications, especially given that Singapore has an ageing population."

The nine-day Digital for Life Festival will be held from May 21 to May 29.



yjfair19-ol - The Digital for Life Festival will also engage persons with disabilities Credit: Microsoft PHOTO: MICROSOFT

The first weekend will see on-site activities, such as blockchain workshops and sessions on navigating a POSB digibank mobile app, at Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre on May 21 and 22.

Activities at Heartbeat@Bedok on May 28 and 29 include getting tips on how to be a cybersafe family and go cashless using a FairPrice app at the supermarket chain.

For more details about the festival and to sign up for activities, visit [this website](#).

The Digital for Life movement was launched in February last year to encourage Singaporeans to embrace digitalisation and build a digitally inclusive society.

Under the movement, strengthening digital literacy and wellness is one key area.

It aims to not only promote good digital habits but also mitigate the risks of online harms such as phishing attacks, fake news and cyber bullying.

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