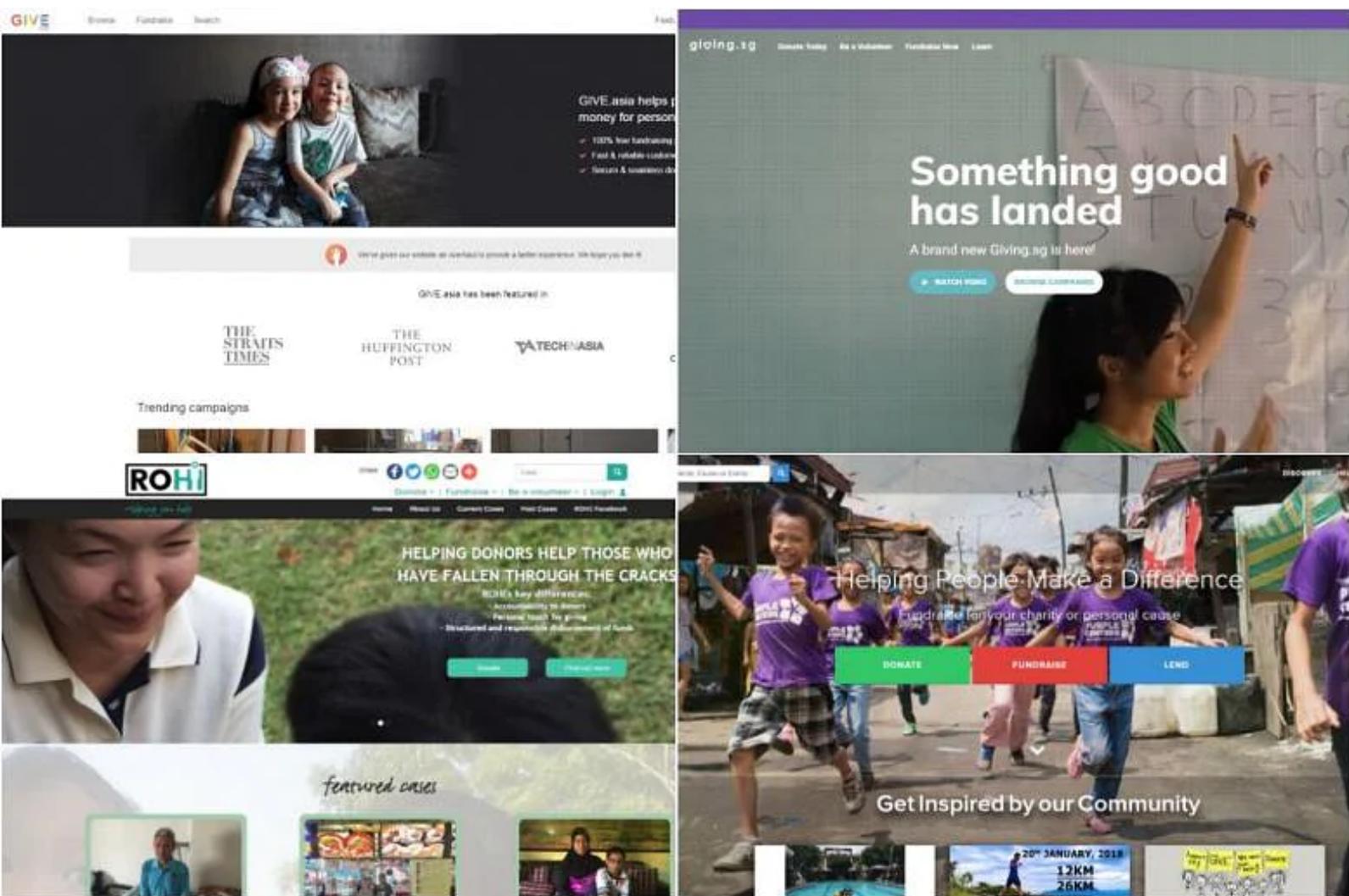


Letting people know where the money went is right thing to do, says online fundraiser



Crowdfunding platforms will now be required to complete a declaration of compliance with the fund-raising regulations under the Charities Act. PHOTOS: GIVE.ASIA, GIVING.SG, RAY OF HOPE INITIATIVE, SIMPLY GIVING

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SINGAPORE - When 44-year-old Goh Hoon Tiong discovered he had esophageal cancer in March 2015, he had to give up his jobs as a cleaner and dishwasher.

The single parent had slimmed down to just 44kg but still had to look after his three children aged 13, 10 and seven after their mother left.

His thousand dollar monthly salary was not enough to cover his medical fees and daily expenses but he managed to raise more than \$49,000 through online crowdfunding platforms, Ray of Hope Initiative, Give.asia and Indiegogo.

Although Mr Goh died a year later, the donations helped to pay the cost of his operations as well as more than 25 chemotherapy treatments and four radiotherapy sessions.

His sister, Madam Katherine Goh, 49, is thankful to the donors. "Because of the charitable donors, he lived the last part of his life without worrying about the bills," she told The Straits Times. She estimates that treatments alone amounted to nearly \$50,000.

Online fund-raising appeals have come under the spotlight recently after four major crowdfunding platforms in Singapore committed to adopt a new industry Code of Practice.

Give.asia, Giving.sg, Ray of Hope Initiative and SimplyGiving will be required to complete a declaration of compliance with the fundraising regulations under the Charities Act.



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These regulations include giving accurate information to donors, keeping proper records of donations received and using the money for its intended purpose. They apply to both the online fundraisers as well as the platforms they use to raise funds.

The code has triggered discussion about accountability and transparency of charitable appeals hosted on crowdfunding platforms.

Individuals like Madam Goh say they are happy to update the public about the use of the funds out of gratitude. "I appreciate that there are many kind people in Singapore, letting them know where the money went is the right thing," she said. "The donor will be pleased if their donations did actually help and especially when the beneficiary is doing well."

The Straits Times was also able to verify Mr Goh's treatment and disbursement details with Ray of Hope Initiative.

Other beneficiaries say they may not be able to give a thorough update frequently because they may be too caught up in the health complications and trials that affect the family.

Jake - a five-year-old who suffers from neuroblastoma, an aggressive form of childhood cancer - had \$400,000 raised for his treatment through an online fundraising campaign in 2017. A family friend said his mother is very tired, adding: "We don't have the time to dig up all the information unfortunately.

"We have been honest and forthcoming about the situation and journey and have updated all that has happened."

Jake's campaign page is updated with his progress every other month or so.

Though the parents of Xue Yujia, better known as Baby Yujia and whose campaign raised more than \$1.2 million declined to comment, there are frequent updates of the toddler's health progress in a Facebook dedicated to her.

Baby Yujia was born without part of her oesophagus and her parents sought donations through Indiegogo and Give.asia for her treatment. Her Give.asia campaign is still active.

With the code's introduction, online fundraisers and crowdfunding platforms that they tap on have to give regular updates on funds raised of appeals. The Straits Times understands that this will apply to both ongoing and future campaigns by the first half of the year.

Former chairman of the National Kidney Foundation Gerard Ee said that implementing the code for current and future campaigns brings more accountability and transparency for both the platforms and fundraiser. "For current campaigns, its a good balance because they would have the records at hand as the campaign is fresh," he said. "Future campaign fundraisers can plan ahead.

"Ultimately it's worth it, because it gives donors the confidence knowing where their money goes."

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