GRASSROOTS leaders may soon be able to get diplomas and degrees in community leadership, under the People’s Association’s plans to expand training for grassroots volunteers.

Its National Community Leadership Institute (NACLI) is exploring such programmes with tertiary institutions, as part of efforts to train these leaders to deal with new challenges from an increasingly demanding and diverse populace.

“With the changing social and demographic landscape, we need to equip our grassroots leaders with skills and attributes to play a more proactive role,” Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office Grace Fu said yesterday at a NACLI graduation ceremony.

While she did not give details, Ms Fu, who is the chairman of NACLI, said that the new programmes would plug a gap in its current slate of offerings, which include certificate and master’s courses.

NACLI and Republic Polytechnic now co-run three certificate programmes in community development and leadership, which cover topics such as project management, conducting house visits, connecting with youths and mentorship. This month, NACLI and SIM University are also starting a new 18-month master’s course in community leadership and social development.

Last night, Ms Fu officiated at the graduation of about 150 grassroots leaders from the courses, including 62 from the first batch to complete a new advanced course in community leadership.

They included Mr L.A. Shahul Hameed, 44, who has been through all of NACLI’s certificate courses, and credits them with giving him the counselling skills needed to help families in financial difficulty.

Ms Rosemary Lim, 55, a grassroots veteran of 35 years, said the new skills are helpful for grassroots leaders in a changing environment. “In the earlier years, people tended to be more receptive,” she said. “These days, they ask questions more and are more sceptical. In terms of engagement, there’s a need to do a lot more homework.”

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**Tertiary options for community leaders**

By PHUA MEI PIN

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– Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office Grace Fu

**DIFFERENT SKILL SET NEEDED**

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