

Project Title: Community Collaborative Partnership Programme

Project No.: 0015-11

Name of Organization: Lok Kwan Social Service

Grant Approved: \$1,000,000

Project Duration: March 2009 – March 2011

Target Groups: Interior maintenance/repair workers; those who are willing to serve the disadvantaged groups; community/family groups; disadvantaged groups; young new arrivals; business sector and non-governmental organizations

Location of the Project: All districts

Brief Description of Programme

The project consists of a group of aged but talented interior maintenance workers, who apply their specialized skills, to provide quality interior maintenance and repair works to people living in aged flats. Apart from working on household maintenance and repair jobs which provide an income, they also extend their service to different community/family groups. The project has reached the second stage now and it mainly focuses on strengthening the networks with different sectors in a regional level. Throughout the networks, the target groups can fully develop their potential, and as a whole, to increase the social capital of society. The creation of social capital enables the project to develop in a more sustainable way and the concept of social enterprise can be further promoted.

Changes of the role, capabilities and attitudes of participants

1. Participants of this project are regarded as members of the cooperative. They attend monthly meeting to discuss development plan and marketing strategies of the cooperative. Members of the cooperative participate in formulating the agenda of the meeting and lead the discussion, which further strengthen their leadership skills. At the end of the meeting, they would coordinate different opinions to reach a consensus. This greatly improves the management as well as communication skills of the participants.
2. The project also improves the network among the participants. The cooperative consists of different smaller groups which are leaded each by a group leader. The group leader is responsible for the relay of information to others, which enhances

the communication channel between the cooperative and individual members. At the same time, the group leader would assist fellow group members, especially those who have relatively weaker working capacity. The group leader arranges some job opportunities for them according to their skill level. As a result, the relatively weaker members could explore more working opportunities, and may achieve self-reliance, which could then contribute their talents to society as well as other disadvantaged.

3. Members of the cooperative would also take an active role in recruiting and selecting new participants, which improves the confidence and capability of the members and hence may develop a stronger sense of belonging within the cooperative. During the process of recruitment and selection, members mainly focus on the strengths of the new participants and assist them to re-integrate into society. Through this process, it could be seen that members of the cooperative gradually shift their role from being 'service receivers' to 'service deliverers' by passing on what others have previously done for them.
4. Participants also make good use of their strength to participate in community service. They would go to different organizations and act as volunteer tutors to teach some simple maintenance/repair skills to frontline volunteers, who would in turn help the disadvantaged groups to improve their living environment. Being a volunteer tutors could highlight the process of empowerment, and the skills and techniques of the participants could be passed on.

Networking across various strata of the society

1. School

The project works with schools and arranges career-oriented programme for young new arrivals. The programme includes both theory and hand-on parts. The youngsters learn the basic skills and techniques (mainly carpentry, plastering and painting) and the general requirements for entering into the construction industry. Members of the cooperative would also share with them their work experiences and information on the career path, which may often inspire the youngsters to plan for their future. This process improves the cooperation and communication across various strata of society.

2. Business Sector

The cooperative helps to disseminate latest information with the assistance of

different construction material suppliers and engineer companies, which improves and updates the knowledge base of members in construction industry. With the knowledge, members of the cooperative could provide more comprehensive and diversified professional opinions to the customers, which in turn may improve the reputation and service quality of the cooperative. On the other hand, the cooperative works with a media company to promote the core values of the cooperative such that the public could understand more about the nature of the project and be aware of the changes in social identity of the participants.

3. Government and non-governmental organizations

The cooperative works closely with the government as well as different non-governmental organizations. This would extend and develop the networks of the cooperative and to establish mutual trust relationship within the community. Members of the cooperative take part in community sharing conference actively on their knowledge of interior maintenance. They would also attend home safety seminars, held by the government and different non-governmental organizations, which not only improve members' self awareness on safety issues but also help to promote the project, in the form of a social enterprise, to the general public. The local community would get to know more about how a social enterprise could enhance social capital and thus improves the lives of the under-privileged.

4. Professional Organization

The Hong Kong Construction Industry Employees General Union (HKCIEGU) has kept a close and friendly relationship with the cooperative for a long time. The Union would share with the cooperative the latest construction techniques and information such that members could be updated on the development of the trade. In addition, the cooperative also works closely with the HKCIEGU in order to explore more job opportunities and venues for collaboration so as to strengthen the entire development of the cooperative and the well-being of its members.