

Project No : 0091-01
Project Title : It's all because of you: Community Cohesion Project
Name of Organization : Richmond Fellowship of Hong Kong
Grant Approved : HK\$209,160

Project Highlights:

- A project to promote mutual care and trust as well as to build up community networks and mutual understanding amongst groups of ex-MI persons, elderly and youth.
- It has potential to be a ‘demonstration’ project in building up community awareness and promoting positive values, social inclusion, self-help and mutual help by increasing the social participation of and by turning the social disadvantages of a highly marginalized group (the ex-MI persons) into strengths within the design of the programme.
- The project aims to link up the three ‘marginalized’ groups in building up community support networks and making contributions in 4 localities.

Brief Description of Programmes to be organized:

The programme composes of three stages:

Stage 1: ‘Life Education’ and ‘Resilience Education’ will be launched in local schools and elderly service organizations in the 4 localities so as to enable the participants to know the meaning of life and self-worth.

Stage 2: ‘Volunteer Training’ programmes will be conducted so as to enable the participants to establish initial connections. Through the programme activities, the participants’ self-knowledge and potentials will be enhanced, and their self-worth affirmed.

Stage 3: ‘Community Networks’ will be formed by the volunteers. Besides providing volunteer services to the local communities, the networks will also promote self-help and mutual help spirit amongst themselves.

Unique Features of the Project:

1. The characteristics in programme implementation

Youth and elderly are not the usual service users of the Agency. The public often perceives ex-MI persons and elderly, who are the vulnerable groups in society, as social burdens. Through assisting with the programme implementation, both the elderly and the ex-MI persons have the opportunities to share their valuable life experiences with the youth in the community. They can even form mutual support networks and conduct volunteer services. As a

result, the elderly and the ex-MI persons will become contributing members and valuable asset of the community and will, thus, help establish a more positive public perception of them. On the other hand, the youth can also learn from the elderly and the ex-MI persons on how to show concern for others and treasure themselves. In addition, in providing volunteer services through co-operation with other marginalized groups in the community, the youth can also acquire positive values and the spirit of reciprocity. Eventually, ex-MI persons, elderly and youth can build up mutual support networks hand in hand.

2. The characteristics of the networks

Our proposed networks are neighborhood-based networks in the 4 localities. Each network will compose of 3 to 4 persons freely self-selected either by the ex-MI persons, elderly and/or youth. The local-based networks will be convenient for the members of the network to visit each other without transportation. In the first year, the network formed will serve as a community support network and will conduct volunteer services, such as household maintenance, cleaning etc., for those needy persons in the community. On the other hand, the network will also serve as a mutual support network for the network members themselves. The network members will have frequent contacts with each other for mutual support. It is hoped that a spirit of mutual care and trust as well as mutual assistance and reciprocity can be cultivated eventually amongst the networks.

Project Duration : 12 months (from 4/2003 – 3/2004)

Target Groups : ex-mentally ill persons, elderly and young volunteers

Location of the Project : Yuen Long, Wong Tai Sin, Tseung Kwan O & Chai Wan

Expected outputs and outcomes :

1. Short term (in the first year):

- More than 200 elderly, 400 young volunteers and 160 ex-MI persons will participate or provide services.
- A total number of 24 ‘community networks’ will be formed in the 4 localities.
- Positive values will be promoted in the community. The self-worth and the resilience capacity of the participants will also be enhanced.
- Volunteer and supportive services will be carried out for the needy persons in the community.
- A spirit of mutual care and trust as well as mutual assistance and reciprocity will be developed and promoted amongst the network members.

2. Long term (after the first year)

- The community networks formed can be sustained.
- The network members will maintain contact with each other and to achieve mutual assistance and reciprocity.
- It is also hoped that through the implementation of volunteer services, the network can even be enlarged or expanded.

Outcome measures: include changes in self-help and mutual help capabilities, values and attitudes after participation in the volunteering programme; degree of mutual acceptance, trust and reciprocity amongst the 3 participant groups; changes in the volunteer participants' perception of families in need in the local communities; changes in assessment by third parties; and ability of the networks formed to sustain themselves.