

The CIIF Evaluation Consortium Reports – Integrated Summary of Key Findings, Critical Success Factors and Recommendations (April 2006)

Background

1. The Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) is a Government policy initiative established in 2002 to encourage social capital development in Hong Kong, and to create opportunities through tripartite partnerships. The Finance Committee paper on the setting up of the CIIF outlined clear expectations of keeping the effectiveness of the CIIF under continuous review, including a) the overall effectiveness of the CIIF operation, and b) the contributions of individual projects to the achieving the Fund objectives.

2. As the number of local researchers with interest in social capital research was relatively limited when the CIIF was first introduced, the CIIF started the process of academic engagement to cultivate interest through establishing an informal academic circle in April 2003. By mid 2004, the CIIF has accumulated a critical mass of over 50 projects. The CIIF Committee considered it timely then to commission an independent evaluation.

Evaluation objectives and approach

3. Invitations were issued in July 2004 to all tertiary institutions and organizations with research capacity to undertake an objective and independent assessment of the aggregated impact of the CIIF funded projects at a mezzo level, with an emphasis on identification of the critical success factors to inform future policy and practices.

4. Seven research teams from five tertiary institutions responded to the invitation. The Bureau and the CIIF Committee took into consideration that the social capital conceptual framework and the scope of the CIIF called for an evaluation team with a broad range of research foci, multi-disciplinary perspectives and expertise; preferably with external expert advice from specialist agencies to maintain objectivity.

Also formalized academic collaboration across five tertiary institutions would be a tangible form of social capital building, and an extended CIIF-academic engagement could be instrumental to the promotion of social capital. Consequently, the Bureau opted for a Consortium approach involving inter-disciplinary and cross-institutional research teams to enhance overall completeness, objectivity, reliability, scalability and added values of the evaluation.

5. The seven research teams also favoured the consortium approach and voluntarily formed the CIIF Evaluation Consortium in September 2004. As noted by Dr KK Leung in the Inception Report (February 2005): “... *at this stage of the joint research... there is a broad consensus on the conceptualization of social capital among all seven Research Teams. Differences in the operationalization and theorization of social capital among the Teams reflect their different foci and specific objectives... This **dynamic interplay between convergence and divergence** will provide the Consortium with a stimulating and robust platform to go forward to produce research results that would address the respective objectives of the Research Teams while affording a degree of commonality for **added values** to the overall research”.*

6. Dr Brahm Prakash, the retired Director of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and who has been maintaining close contact with the CIIF since its Inaugural Forum in 2003, served as an external expert advisor to the Consortium in an entirely honorary capacity.

Evaluation scope and process

7. Fifty-six CIIF-funded projects, approved as at December 2004, were included in the seven research studies. The 15-month evaluative studies, adopting what the Consortium called a formative approach, was formally launched in December 2004, with data collection that involved considerable interaction with the project teams started in April 2005. The studies were completed according to schedule, and Consortium Final Reports were submitted in March 2006.

8. These 56 projects were at different stages of implementation during data collection period, mostly between April and October 2005. During this period, only the first-batch projects would have operated for 12 months or more, with over 60% for less than 6 months and a few projects did not formally commence until after mid-year 2005. As observed by the research teams and by the CIIF project teams,

the concepts of social capital and strategies to achieve social capital outcomes were evolving; and there were varying shades of understanding during the evaluation period. The data being collected were generally retrospective with opportunities to capture short durations of “before” and “after” changes for projects that commenced during the study period. These factors pose some practical challenges for studies that aimed to capture "before/after" differences.

9. The Consortium operated with full academic autonomy. To facilitate practical implementation of the evaluation exercise and overall alignment with the commissioning objectives, the Chairman of the Evaluation and Development of Social Capital Sub-committee and the CIIF Secretariat attended the bi-monthly Consortium meeting. Joint meetings between the Consortium and members of the CIIF Committee were held to consider the Interim Reports in August 2005 and the Final Reports in March 2006.

Key findings, critical success factors and recommendations from the Consortium Evaluation Study

10. The research foci, the key findings of each team and in respect of the commissioning objectives are summarized in **Table 1** and their recommendations in **Table 2**. In brief, the report findings are largely confirmative of the CIIF strategies being promoted to date. The recommendations for enhancing the CIIF operation and expanding and mainstreaming the social capital impacts are also generally in line with the policy direction of the Bureau and the development strategies of the CIIF Committee. Each study, individually and together, has generated a rich pool of data that could be further utilized to generate added values. That there were still some lingering differences, as revealed the studies, in understanding amongst the academics, within the project teams, and with the CIIF over some aspects of the social capital concepts (such as bridging and linking social capital) was not unexpected. One of extraneous values being generated through this CIIF evaluation exercise lie in interactive platforms and relationships being established, enabling further engagement, dialogue and collaboration between the CIIF and the academic community and in-depth interaction between some research teams with the community project teams, that would not otherwise occur.

14. Whilst the studies were retrospective in nature, the Bureau and the CIIF would be reviewing the recommendations in a forward-looking perspective with at least 4 areas deserving further attention:

- a) achieving sustainability and consolidating mindset changes;
- b) greater promotion of tripartite partnerships;
- c) training and development; and
- d) future research on longitudinal studies and development of SC indicators and scales could be further explored.

15. On further academic investigation, a number of research teams highlighted sustainability, amongst others, as an evolving concept worthwhile for further investigation. As a demonstration of positive use of research findings to extend the social capital impact, it was encouraging to note that a new course “Social Capital and Sustainable Development was to be offered as part of the Applied Sociology studies by the City University of Hong Kong.

Table 1: Key Findings of Each CIIF Consortium Research Teams

Research team	Key findings
Department of Social Work and Social Administration, University of Hong Kong Building Social Capital: A Formative Evaluative Study of CIIF Projects - Dr Donna Wong, Dr Ernest Chui, Dr Joe Leung and Dr CK Law	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Documented the local experiences of 13 CIIF projects (with 10 from the first batch) and examined the overall impacts, processes, strategies and factors contributing to building social capital. ◆ Social Capital Structural Features identified - supportive networks for families and individuals; mentoring, self help, volunteering and co-operatives. ◆ Social capital outcomes identified - social network and support, development of trust and efficacy, and civic engagement. ◆ The “How and Why the Projects Work” included the four basic tenets of CIIF - such as community building, empowerment, approach that foster self-reliance, and inter-sector collaboration. ◆ Concluded that there was enhancement in bridging social capital in most of the CIIF projects under study. Residents of different socio-economic background have chances of mutual understanding, developing social relationships or co-operating to serve the community. ◆ Few projects have demonstrated success in enhancing linking social capital.

Quality Evaluation Centre, City University of Hong Kong

The Impact of CIIF Strategies to Promote Social Capital

- Prof Chan Wing-tai, Dr Raymond Chan and Dr KK Leung

- Prof SH Ng (Advisor)

- ◆ Examined the impact of CIIF strategies to promote social capital amongst 12 CIIF projects at different stages of implementation.
- ◆ Concluded that the CIIF-funded projects have promoted the development of social capital.
- ◆ CIIF project workers generally implemented strategies being promoted, e.g. building up the capacity of marginalized individuals and groups; changing the mindset from passive acceptance of welfare to active givers; building up networks between different groups with diverse backgrounds; and enhancing joint efforts among government, business and the third sector.
- ◆ There were differing shades of understanding of social capital amongst the project teams and that of the CIIF.
- ◆ Bonding and bridging social capitals were built up steadily, while linking social capital was relatively weak.
- ◆ Mutual care and trust have been established and active community engagement increased after capacity building.
- ◆ Structural and cognitive social capital and collective action were positively inter-correlated.
- ◆ Critical success factors included: dedicated project participants; enthusiastic CIIF project workers; involvement of collaborating parties; popularity of project organizers; and expansion of existing networks.
- ◆ Limitations comprised of inadequate capacity building; failure in recruiting dedicated participants; and lack of a physical local base (network).

Department of Applied Social Sciences, Hong Kong Polytechnic University

A study to document the process and mechanism of social capital development and to measure the impact of social capital on the lives of project participants who belong to the socially and economically disadvantaged groups – **Dr WF Ting**

- Focused on documenting the process, mechanism and impact of social capital formation, amongst projects that involved ethnic groups and youth.
- Confirmed that most of the 11 CIIF projects have been effective in building trust and reciprocity amongst members, but purposive groups are more conducive to mutual help.
- Deeper and longer collaboration is more likely between less formal organizations.
- Strategies found effective in building up social capital - groups with outward looking objectives that cultivate trust, mutual help, civic awareness and participation; programmers that engage partners from different sectors, preferably those with long standing relationship; programmers for EMs should address their primary language barrier with sensitivities to and respect for cultural and religious contexts; programmers for Yaps should identify their 'alternative and multiple talents', solicit multi-support and recognition to sustain motivation; involving the family; recruiting the right staff with training on the theory and practice of social capital, new strategies, connection and collaborative relationship with other sectors for joint venture.

Unit of Third Sector Studies, Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Social Investment and Social Network: An Analysis of the Collaboration between Third Sector and Private Sector in the CIIF projects

– Dr KT Chan

- ◆ Focused on tripartite partnership formation amongst 6 CIIF projects.
- ◆ Observed efforts on developing bonding, bridging and linking relationships; close working relationships were established amongst service operators; experiences exchanged and synergy created between NGOs and the private sector.
- ◆ TPP as a form of bridging relationship, bonding in neighborhood caring and linking across sectors such as mentoring were developed.
- ◆ Structural, cognitive and collective social capitals were built at individual and organizational levels.

APIAS – Lingnan University

An Evaluation Study on the Impacts of CIIF Intergenerational Programmes on the Development of Social Capital in Hong Kong

- Prof Alfred Chan, Prof Lin Ping, Ms Florence Fong, Mr Eric Wong, Ms Luk Kit-ling

- ◆ Investigated the outcome impacts of the 10 “intergenerational” projects funded by CIIF.
- ◆ Found all these intergenerational projects were implemented effectively, enhancing intergenerational solidarity resulting in positive image and reciprocal support for older people, unemployed youth and new arrivals.
- ◆ Suggested that future project designs should include a variety of learning platforms, better matching system, and enhanced partnerships.
- ◆ Reciprocal support between generations and increased sense of volunteerism are effective social capital strategies.
- ◆ Considered it necessary to have outstanding staffs with clear mindset of social capital and able to network local resources in order to sustain the projects in the long run.

Department of Social Work, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Professional Contribution to the Sustainability of Self-help Groups and their Social Capital created in CIIF projects

- Prof BH Mok, Prof Steven Ngai, Prof Jacky Cheung

- ◆ Explored professional contributions to the sustainability of self-help groups and their social capital created in 15 CIIF projects with emphasis on good practices. Seven non-CIIF self-help group projects were selected for comparison.
- ◆ Focused on the “sometimes conflicting” relationship between self-help groups and professionals.
- ◆ Concluded that whilst a balanced coordination, appropriate distancing coupled with empowerment between the two is theoretically possible, but they were not (yet) systematically achieved through the CIIF projects, when compared with eight non-CIIF self-help group projects.

Department of Applied Social Studies, City University of Hong Kong

Social Trust and its Antecedent Conditions in the Development of Social Capital

- Dr Alice Chong, Dr Raymond Chan

- Prof SH Ng (Advisor)

- ◆ Addressed the connection between trust and development of social capital, as both are the core elements and outcomes of social capital formation (such as value change, formation of relationships, and collaboration).
- ◆ Concluded that involvement in 14 CIIF projects (with 11 from the first batch) brought about positive outcomes in the participants with heightened motivation; enhanced sense of achievement, self-confidence, self-control, and self-efficacy.
- ◆ Increased personalized trust was evident but less certain about generalized trust (to other groups, other institutions or government generally); more dense networks resulted with greater readiness to give and reciprocate.
- ◆ Project worker enthusiasm, programme strategies and agency brand names are critical factors.

Table 2: Recommendations of the CIIF Evaluation Consortium

Appraising the contribution of the CIIF-funded projects towards promoting the development of social capital

Six out of the seven research teams affirmed that participation in and experience of the CIIF projects produced positive outcomes with evidence of transformation achieved. Examples of such outcomes included:

- ◆ Bonding within similar groups and bridging across social groups lifted participants out of despair and helped their re-engagement with the community;
- ◆ Facilitated sharing of experiences and support;
- ◆ Affirmed the CIIF motto being promoted (天生我才必有用) – participants felt empowered with stronger sense of satisfaction after engaging in new roles with enlarged social networks;
- ◆ Participants became more socially included, with heightened participatory motivation; regaining hope and with stronger resilience;
- ◆ Involvement in CIIF projects have brought about increased level of personalized and particularized trust amongst project participants; the resulting higher trust level increased respondents' readiness to involve further in social capital building and increased willingness to help others;
- ◆ Transformation in norms and values amongst disengaged youth were observed; and their engagement in mentorship projects provided them with clearer life course pathways; and
- ◆ CIIF project experiences were considered a precious learning experience by the respective NGOs and the research teams considered it important to extend to other community stakeholders and other social sectors like housing, healthcare and education.

Areas identified for further attention

- ◆ Very different shades of understanding of various social capital concepts, such as the definition of bonding, bridging and linking social capital - substantial differences remained amongst the research teams, the project teams and the CIIF in the interpretation of the rationale why the CIIF promoted bridging and linking social capital ahead of bonding.
- ◆ Involvement in the CIIF projects remained at a relatively low level, there are too few key players sharing the CIIF vision at the district level, there is still some distance in achieving widespread normative changes (移風易俗).
- ◆ Personalised and particularized trust amongst participants was evident, whilst extending trust towards other institutions, the government or society in general were less apparent.
- ◆ Bonding social capital was easier for the project workers and participants to grasp. Increasing evidence of bridging social capital, such as across social class, generations, and ethnic groups were observed.

- ◆ But most research teams were unable to identify strong evidence of linking social capital, especially when indicators such as “sustainable and long term linkage between the relatively disadvantaged project participants with the more powerful and resourceful stakeholders in the community” were used.
- ◆ Several research teams also reported limited evidence of civic engagement (which the research teams regard as collective action and an evidence of linking social capital).

Assessing the effectiveness of the strategies pursued in achieving the CIIF’s objectives

The CIIF projects were seen to have a clear purpose of engaging the participants in the process of change. Six of the seven research teams generally affirmed the effectiveness of change strategies being promoted by the CIIF projects in community building, empowerment, enhancing self-reliance and cross-sector collaboration. There was general consensus on the following strategies:

- ◆ Role transformation strategies - found to be effective are those that fostered self-reliance, coupled with intermediate measures in building support networks to restore people’s confidence, with directional outcomes such as making effective contributions to neighbours, achieving gainful employments or exploring new career opportunities.
- ◆ Change agents - (especially at the initial phases of the projects) are project workers who were able to motivate participants, identify and approach community stakeholders, and formulate appropriate strategies. An area found to be in need of strengthening through development, training or mentorship.
- ◆ Community engagement and community building strategies – project teams that were effective in gaining entry into and engaging with their target communities were those with in-depth understanding of their community needs, with credible local presence, able to make use of existing networks and community assets, strengthen social ties and bridge the segregated groups with other stakeholders.
- ◆ Mentorship, pairing up, interlocking, and reciprocal matching (凹凸互補) strategies – found ready endorsement amongst participants and project workers. E.g. cross generational mentorship was found to effective in providing more than hands-on skills training, with life experience, care and support of the mentors making profound impact on motivating and facilitating young people to regain a clearer direction in life.
- ◆ Partnership strategies – many partnerships were formed, enhancement in bridging social capital was witnessed; but still more in the form of one-way giving of resources by the “donor” parties, with limited evidence of joint ownership or shared partnerships.

Evaluating the aggregated impact of the CIIF funded projects on the groups and communities involved

Practically all the studies reported (through quantitative and qualitative indicators) that there were measurable and observable impact on the participant groups resulting from their involvement in the CIIF funded projects, even though the durations for measuring change were necessarily limited to the data collection period of around four to six months that limited the magnitude of “before and after” impact.

- ◆ Bonding social capital was evidently developed within groups with shared objectives and similar backgrounds.
- ◆ Bridging social capital was being actively pursued in a number of projects (such as cross generational projects, mentorship projects that link adults and youth; cross strata projects that involve ‘disadvantaged’ participants with other middle class or professional groups; or collaboration across NGOs, or between NGOs and other professional or business partners).
- ◆ Linking social capital (i.e. tripartite partnerships linking vertical institutions) was found to be still weak.
- ◆ The CIIF experience in promoting inter-generational connection, especially those outside of the immediate family, was found to be conducive in strengthening intergenerational solidarity, a positive outcome and an essential facilitator for further development of social capital.
- ◆ CIIF projects were found to have been successful in creating platforms for interaction and cooperation across generations, groups and sectors, which would in turn encourage mutual learning and support.

Identifying the critical success (and failure) factors common to the CIIF-funded projects

Whilst there were some differences in how the seven studies operationalised their social capital concepts and in their study foci, there was also considerable convergence in the range of critical success factors being identified to date. These include:

- ◆ **Critical success factors**
 - a) Project workers who have some understanding of and enthusiasm in social capital concepts; highly devoted project workers;
 - b) Dedicated participants – projects that were able to identify, recruit and engage the active participation of the target groups;
 - c) Maximize Brand-name effect – project organizations and project personnel with good track record and networking base;
 - d) Involvement of collaborating parties – project workers with skills and strategies to

build on their existing networks for further expansion involving groups from diverse and heterogeneous backgrounds;

- e) Programme strategies – to include factors instrumental in building trust: shared altruistic values and norms; being non-calculative; frequent contacts; having purposeful social gathering with meaningful experiences; facilitating open discussion to enable reflection and learning from experience;
- f) Adopting complementary approach - to address community needs with greater social inclusion;
- g) Developmental assistance from the CIIF Members and Secretariat – with project workers who valued the help and advice offered by the CIIF Secretariat. “I have positive feedback on CIIF Secretariat. We have submitted reports to the Secretariat regularly. The Secretariat reads our reports and shares experience with us. Regardless of the effectiveness of the suggestions and advice, they show sincerity in our project and follow our work closely (CIIF project worker, 05/04/2005:17)”; and
- h) Knowledge transfer: forums, sharing sessions and workshops organized by the CIIF were considered helpful in sharing experience, building and transferring knowledge.

◆ **Barriers and failure factors**

- a) Insufficient capacity building of both workers and participants;
- b) Failure in recruiting dedicated participants (e.g. lack of committed mentors);
- c) Lacking a local base (local connections, networks) to provide a hub for project participants to gather and hold functions;
- d) Insufficient encouragement, support or clear guidance from the CIIF; and
- e) Imposition of advice and strategies.

Advice on good practices at project level, policy implications, future social capital development strategies and enhancement of the CIIF operation

1) Further promotion of good practices - at project level

- ◆ More effects to preserve the neighbourhood support networks, making them stronger and more cohesive;
- ◆ Greater involvement of children and youth in CIIF projects (as trust raising would be more effective starting from a younger age);
- ◆ Taking the empowerment and role transformation strategies further by giving participants more appropriate support such as training and opportunities to take up more responsible roles;
- ◆ Further development and consolidation of the project networks through involving strategic partnerships with different stakeholders in the community – involving the

collaborating parties earlier in planning, and in working groups and steering committee of the project is helpful to promote ownership, participation and sustainability;

- ◆ Programmers involving ethnic minorities should address their primary language barriers (learning through doing approach) as a priority;
- ◆ Programmers for marginalised youth should aim at identifying their “alternative and multiple talents”, motivate through recognition, and involvement of family members and significant others;
- ◆ Stronger promotion of projects with inter-generational (cross age and cross strata) elements; and
- ◆ Training to project workers on good practices in: partnering strategy, building community connections, fund raising techniques, skills on resource mobilization, marketing strategy and business operation, etc.

2) Strengthen impact at community level

- ◆ The CIIF was considered to have set a good example for district officials to make use of cross-sectoral collaboration in fostering solidarity and civic engagement. Some research teams considered it more desirable for a “well established and high power stakeholder” such as DSWO, DO or DC to assume leadership roles to secure local ownership for sustainable outcome.
- ◆ Most teams suggested that the government should take up a more proactive role in promoting corporate citizenship by encouraging the commercial sector for greater participation. Policy incentives should be in place with DSWO, DO or DC as active players.
- ◆ Teams suggested that priority should be given to gain collaboration with established enterprises, to be followed by SMEs who have little ideas on corporate social responsibility.

3) Mainstreaming influence at policy level

- ◆ The purposeful and matched mentorship strategy was valued and recommended for further experimentation on a broader and more intensive level.
- ◆ Three types of intergenerational programmers are encouraged – empowering older people; empowering younger people and promoting cross/intergenerational relationships.
- ◆ The experience of CIIF projects were considered worthwhile and should be generalized on a wider scale especially in remote and marginalized communities such as Tung Chung, Po Tin and Tin Shui Wai.
- ◆ Those CIIF strategies found to be successful should be expanded into mainstream services, others sectors and policy arenas.

4) Strengthening the CIIF operation

- ◆ To document the success and failure factors from the evaluation studies for wider discussion and dissemination. Such a document would facilitate the preparation of future proposals for CIIF funding.
- ◆ Vetting procedure alone is no guarantee for the eventual success of the project. There should be on-going involvement of the CIIF throughout implementation to share the cumulative and collective wisdom that has been accrued from previous experience.
- ◆ A supportive and mentoring system should be in place so as to encourage applicants to trial bold, innovative, and experimental implementation models.
- ◆ Promote mutual trust and equalitarian partnerships with the project teams.
- ◆ Keep up the good practice for non-rigid reporting, acceptance of qualitative data, and openness to modify strategies through experience.
- ◆ Strike a good balance between “conveying / sharing with operators on critical success / failure factors” and “imposing on them on what works (i.e. some project teams resents any suggestions of “copy and paste” from successful projects).
- ◆ Open up communication channels (with the CIIF and amongst the project teams that are not “task-oriented”).
- ◆ Strengthen support to the project teams - address the queries / worries raised by the project workers; show more appreciation for the positive developments achieved by the project teams; acknowledge the fact that each project is unique and lend understanding to unique situations and difficulties.
- ◆ Facilitate / provide training to project workers on the concept and practice of social capital.
- ◆ Be considerate in funding by taking into account the difficult financial/personnel situations faced by some organizations.
- ◆ Review and address the needs for manpower and resource throughout project implementation.

5) For academics

- ◆ Some research teams could play the roles as consultants throughout project implementation (i.e. knowledge transfer from the researchers to the project teams).
- ◆ Instill the CIIF experience into the teaching curriculum, find/provide space in teaching the theory and practice of social capital.
- ◆ Provide on job training to staff – e.g. on how to work with new partners: funders, business partners, mentors, ethnic minorities; and facilitate the ethnic workers to obtain professional training.
- ◆ Facilitate / arrange student placement in the CIIF projects.
- ◆ Encourage further research on social capital – e.g. encourage research teams (particularly

for teams working on similar groups of projects) to conduct comparison, triangulation and cross-examination of findings and conclusions.

- ◆ Conduct further research either individually or collaboratively on the topic of social capital.

Initiatives being put into practice by QEC, City University research team

- SC and Sustainable Development will become a new course to be taught as part of the Applied Sociology Course at CityU.
- QEC is actively considering the development of a SC Scale/indicators to be validated through a longitudinal study.