

The CIIF Evaluation Consortium

Final Report of

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

The Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF)

For the

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

Background

To support the policy initiative in the Policy Address 2001, the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) have been launched since 2002 which aims to support community initiated projects that would promote mutual aid and concern among people, and to promote community participation in district and across sectors. It enhances social cohesion, strengthen community network, support family and social solidarity and self-sustaining of the social disadvantage group. To consolidate and promote the successful experiences, a consortium from five universities has been formed since December 2004 to evaluate the aggregated impacts of the CIIF project and identify critical successful factors across projects. APIAS, Lingnan University, is one of the research teams that have been invited to conduct the joint evaluation of the impacts of CIIF which specifically focus on the intergenerational aspects.

Aims of study

In response to the negative consequences of social changes in result of family dysfunction and age segregation in the community, the present evaluation study aims to investigate outcome impacts of selected intergenerational projects funded by CIIF. The attempt is also to develop a set of outcome indicators to measure the effectiveness and outcomes of the intergenerational projects and identify the key successful factors to promote intergenerational solidarity and the development of social capital of Hong Kong.

Conceptual framework

The present study follows the World Bank and CIIF working definitions of social capital which comprises social network, norms of trust, reciprocity, as a resource to social action. That is the cognitive, relationship and structural dimensions of social capital. Also, the evaluation study has reviewed that the intergenerational relationship and support could enhance the intergenerational solidarity which could be considered as the integral part of social capital. In other words, strengthening the intergenerational solidarity is essential to develop the social capital of Hong Kong. The theoretical foundation of the study is guided by the Bengston's

intergenerational solidarity theory in particular in the dimension of functional solidarity—reciprocal support.

Research methodology

A mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methodology has been employed for the evaluation study. First, the study has employed a qualitative bottom up approach by interviewing the key informants of the selected CIIF projects. The aim is to explore the nature and characteristics, the intergenerational relationship and support elements as well as the critical successful factors of the project implementations. A self-administered survey by the project participants have been conducted by using the self-developed outcomes indicators generated from the findings of the interviews. The attempt is to evaluate the outcome effectiveness and the aggregated impacts of the selected CIIF projects.

Sampling

A purposive sampling method has been adopted for the evaluation study. Ten projects from 59 CIIF projects were initially selected for in-depth interviews and field visits. The selection criteria are based on the relevant intergenerational elements i.e. having different age groups of participants and having the activities and cooperation between generations. Two of the key informants i.e. one project leader and one frontline worker have been invited for the in-depth interviews. A quota sampling with approximately 60 project participants from three age groups (1) aged 15 to 25 (2) aged 26 to 64 and (3) aged 65 or above (20 participants/ group) were recruited to conduct the survey. Six projects have finally been selected for the survey based on the per se selection criteria.

Data collection and analysis

The in-depth interviews and field visits were conducted between December 2004 and June 2005. Twenty key informants who have rich project experience with an average of 11.7 years in the field have been interviewed. Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed. Content analysis was used to generate the transcripts into themes. The surveys were distributed to project participants through the project coordinators from August to September 2005. The survey is basically self-administered with structured questionnaires. A total number of 316 valid questionnaires have been received. SPSS was used for descriptive analysis.

Research findings

Findings from in-depth interviews found that the nature and characteristics of the projects are to strengthen support between disadvantage groups, enlarge their social supportive network and enhance their social competence. Though the primary focus of the projects is not on promoting intergenerational support, intergenerational tie or cooperation, mutual learning and support were encouraged. Also, the projects create a platform for interactions and cooperation between generations. It could be viewed as by-product or alternative outcomes of the projects. The major target groups of the intergenerational projects are mainly vulnerable groups such as retired older people, housewives, mental rehabilitants, unemployed youth and new arrival children from Mainland China. A total number of eight domains to measure the outcome of the intergenerational projects have been identified which include: (1) Perceived positive image towards older/younger people, (2) Intergenerational communications and relationships, (3) Social competence and skill transfer, (4) Volunteerism/Social Participations/Self-Help and Mutual help, (5) Trust, (6) Intergenerational solidarity and Reciprocal support, (7) Social Network and (8) Social Support. Eight domains generated from the in-depth interviews are the essential elements of the outcomes of the projects.

The survey findings indicated that the participants have gained benefits from the project. The project participants have highly rated for all domains with the mean scores over 3.75 out of 5. Taking the cutoff point as 2.5, the intergenerational solidarity and reciprocal support have the highest score (Mean=4.02, SD=0.59). Then, the volunteerism's domain (Mean=3.97, SD=0.55), perceived positive images (Mean=3.96, SD=0.58) and intergenerational communications (Mean=3.96, SD=0.58) are the second highest aspects while the trust (Mean=3.77, SD=0.55) and the social competence (Mean= 3.77, SD=0.77) the third. In addition, the survey showed that most of the participants have built up the social support network after participating in the projects. The survey also found that older participants tend to score lower than younger participants in particular in the aspects of social competence skills and self-confidence.

Several key factors have been identified. Through the in-depth interviews and observations, a clear project mission of intergenerational cooperation was transmitted to the project staff and the participants. It is significant as it has overcome the common prejudice of the youth against older people and older people's against the youth, which are often the causes of

conflicts between generations. As a result, the degree of acceptances, project involvement and mutual support can be increased. Also, the study revealed that the reciprocal support is a vital factor to strengthen the solidarity between generations and contributes the development of social capital in Hong Kong. One of the effective strategies is to promote volunteerism through the community based intergenerational projects.

Recommendations

It was found that intergenerational solidarity is a vital factor to contribute to the development of social capital. Future CIIF projects could consider project aims which have the ideas of prompting the intergenerational solidarity elements.

Three types of intergenerational programmes, i) empowering older people, ii) empowering younger people and iii) promoting cross/intergenerational relationships are found to be effective models in practice. It is suggested that future intergenerational programmes may provide a variety of learning platforms for increasing the interactions and cooperation between generations.

The present study found that the reciprocal support between generations and the increase in the sense of volunteerism are the effective strategies to develop the social capital in Hong Kong. Finally, committed and outstanding staff are vital for the projects as not only do they have clear mindset of social capital but also skills in networking local resources in order to make the project sustainable in the long term.

Conclusion and recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this evaluation study is to investigate the aggregated outcome impacts of the selected intergenerational projects funded by CIIF. A mixture of both quantitative and qualitative methodology was used to explore the nature and characteristics of the projects as well as the overall impacts of the project on the participants. The attempt was also to identify a set of outcome indicators to measure the impacts on the participants and provide some possible crucial suggestions for project implementations. Also, the relationships between intergenerational programmes and the development of the intergenerational solidarity and social capital were also explored in the study.

Basically, the evaluation study consists of two stages. The first stage is to identify the intergenerational projects for the study. A qualitative approach was adopted by reviewing the relevant project proposals, project progress reports, literature reviews, relevant project deliverables as well as field observations, ten projects from the CIIF project pools have been chosen for further in-depth study. The selected projects basically share the intergenerational programmes' characteristics. For examples, the projects promote better relationships between generations and/ or promote intergenerational cooperation through various activities. Two of the project staff have been invited to the in-depth interviews from December 2004 to June 2005. The aims are to explore the possible outcome indicators to measure the outcome impacts of the intergenerational project as well as the practical experiences of the project implementation. Eight domains of the outcome indicator have been generated from the interviews which are: *(1) The perceived positive images of older people or younger people, (2) the intergenerational communications and relationships (3) social competence and skill transfer (4) Volunteerism/social participation/ self help and mutual help (5) Trust (6) intergenerational solidarity and reciprocal support (7) social network (8) social support.* The first to fifth domains are to measure the outcomes of the intergenerational solidarity of the individuals while the sixth domain is to explore the relationships between the intergenerational solidarity and the development of social capital. The last two domains are the overall project impacts on the development of the social capital.

Following up the in-depth interviews, in the second stage of the study, a survey was conducted from August to September 2005. Six projects have been chosen for the survey and a purposive sampling method was used with approximately 60 of the participants from each project. Two sets of structured questionnaires (one for older people and another one for younger people), comprising mainly closed-ended questions, were distributed to the project participants for self-administration. The aim of the survey is to investigate the outcomes after participating in the selected projects.

A total number of 316 valid questionnaires have been obtained from this study in which 117 participants were aged 14 to 25, 105 participants were aged 26 to 64 and 94 participants were aged 65 or over. The participants are healthy and active in general but not better off. Their financial support mainly relied on themselves or close family members. However, they have very few interactions with their grandchildren/grandparents as they are not living together.

The findings reveal that the projects are very effective as the project participants have highly rated (on average over 3.7 out of 5 points) for every domain of the project outcomes. The domains of perceived positive images towards older/younger people, the intergenerational communications and relationships, voluntarism, social participations, self-help and mutual help are rated the highest (about 4 out of 5 points), which means that the projects have strong impact on improving the negative image of older/younger people, increasing their communications skills as well as the altruistic spirits of helping others in the community. Social network and social support are regarded as the outcome indicators for the social capital. Most participants have reported that they have enlarged their social support network by making new friends (1 to 5 people) and received or provided help (1 to 5 times) frequently every month. The result implies that the projects could make contributions to the development of social capital in our community. Besides, the project participants also confirmed that better intergenerational relationships and support can enhance the solidarity between generations, social harmony and result in the increase in social capital in Hong Kong (3.99 out of 5 points). After joining the projects, they have had better understanding on the importance of the intergenerational cooperation and the reciprocal support.

Recommendations

Intergenerational solidarity is a vital to the development of social capital. This study found that all the selected intergenerational projects which are implemented effectively do not only enhance the intergenerational solidarity but also the development of social capital in Hong Kong. The study also confirmed that the intergenerational programmes can enhance the solidarity between generations through enhancing the positive image as well as the reciprocal support, which are vital for the development of social capital in Hong Kong given the increasing number of the older people, unemployed youth and new arrivals etc. Hence, the future CIIF projects could consider project aims which emphasize the ideas of prompting the intergenerational solidarity elements.

A learning platform is crucial to maximizing project outcomes. In general, three types of the intergenerational programmes have been examined in the study which are: (1) empowering older people (2) empowering younger people and (3) promoting cross/intergenerational relationships. From the result of this three types of interventional approaches, no big difference is found between them. This implies that the intergenerational programmes can provide a platform for increasing the interactions and cooperation between generations. Through the project activities, they can get a better understanding of each other and also have greater acceptance of their weaknesses. More importantly, through the interaction process, they can learn and support mutually. Hence, it is suggested that future project design should provide a variety of learning platforms for the participants. Meanwhile, there should be a better matching system which can enhance the partnership of the participants e.g. taking the available time, the needs, the interests and the personality of both the youth and the older people into consideration. Effectiveness and outcome impacts would be strengthened if these factors are taken into account in the project design process.

Another crucial factor is determined by the quality of the project staff. The study found that reciprocal support between generations and the increase in the sense of volunteerism are effective strategies in developing the social capital in Hong Kong. Although other domains such as trust, competence skills and human factors are as important, they are relatively time and resource consuming. Hence, it is necessary to have committed and outstanding staff who do not only have clear mindset of the social capital but are also skilled in networking local resources in order to make the project sustainable in the long term.