

**Building Social Capital:
A Formative Program Review of CIIF Projects**



Final Report
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TABLE OF CONTENT

<i>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</i>	3
<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	7
<i>LITERATURE EVIEW</i>	8
<i>RESEARCH OBJECTIVES</i>	11
<i>SCOPE OF THE STUDY</i>	12
<i>METHODOLOGY</i>	15
<i>FINDINGS & DISCUSSION</i>	18
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS</i>	32
<i>CONCLUSIONS</i>	36
<i>REFERENCES</i>	37
<i>APPENDICE</i>	40

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The HKU Research Team has conducted a formative evaluative study of social capital on 13 CIIF projects, 10 of which are towards the final stage of completion (Appendix II). The study documented the local experiences of the CIIF projects and hence examined the overall impacts, processes, strategies and factors contributing to building social capital. Case studies, familiarization visits, focus group interviews and a community forum were conducted.

What Has Been Achieved? - Social Capital Structural Features

Supportive Networks for Families and Individuals

Some projects targeted at families with low social capital and resources. These families are disconnected socially and often perceived as crisis-prone. Other CIIF projects targeted at groups of individuals who became disconnected with the social and economic mainstream as they were out of stable employment. Life chances of these people and families were transformed by their social participation and interactions with other members in the network. They were linked to a wider spectrum of community resources and organizational network through an enlarged social circle. Supportive networks are powerful vehicles to help families and individuals regain hope and faith in facing adversity and transforming their lives. Just knowing that somebody cares makes a whole world of difference to an individual or family who has long been experiencing social exclusion, dis-empowerment and isolation due to their life circumstances. Social networks increase and re-activate the potential and strength of families and individuals in transforming their life.

Mentoring

The 'Healthy Mothers-to-be' Project is a creative blending of traditional wisdom and modern knowledge of post-natal healthcare. It has trained up a group of middle-aged unemployed women to provide post-natal mentorship, companionship, babysitting and domestic services to middle class mothers. Another project bridges young people and adult mentors in different types of occupations. The traditional form of mentorship is revitalized to enhance the social capital of young people. It serves both the hands-on skills training and mentorship support in motivating and facilitating young people to have a clear direction in life. Mentors are expected to share their life experiences and values with young people and the relationship is more sustainable than the post-natal mentorship program. The project has expanded young people's social capital through informal education and inter-generational socialization. The mentorship program is a form of bridging capital to include and transform the norms and values of young people.

Self Help

Many CIIF projects adopted the self help and peer networking strategies to empower service users to take up active roles and support others in need. Service users who received counselling services, workers having rehabilitated from occupational injuries, and homeless people who successfully regained employment and shelter were recruited to take up the supporting role of peer counsellors or helpers in services they previously received. Self help enables service recipients to be engaged in social networks and be affiliated to other people after addressing the key issues or difficulties they encountered. Their social capital and personal growth continue to develop after they step out of the client role and assist the social worker or other professionals in helping others. The self help network not only bonds people with similar problems but also provides a platform for peer counsellors to bridge themselves with the professionals and the NGOs and be nurtured to grow and develop in this helping role.

Volunteering

Among the CIIF projects under study, volunteers may come from faith based organizations, professional groups, and the community. Volunteers are motivated by philanthropy and altruism, an interest to broaden their scope of life, availability of time or boredom, and viewing community engagement as a leisure time pursuit. The range of activities included outreaching visits to frail elderly in rural areas, accompanying elderly people, home visits to residents in deprived communities, organizing educational programs and recreational activities, acting as instructors and trainers, child minding and doing household chores for neighbours etc. Volunteering enhances social capital for both the helpers and those being helped. Volunteers expressed satisfaction in social affiliation, deriving meaning and sense of achievement in bringing forth changes in people's lives.

Co-operatives

The co-operative is an organizational form that combined economic production with social networking of people. It has a more formalized structure than a network and there are clear organizational norms to shape participants' expectations and behaviour. Three CIIF projects made use of the co-operative to network its target participants. They are the 'Healthy Mothers-to-be' post-natal mentors project, Tung Chung Sunny Community and Community Reciprocal Service Cooperative of the Modern Mentorship program. The co-operatives are largely horizontal in their organizational structure and provide a training platform for developing the necessary vocational skills, decision making mechanisms, business strategies and familiarize with the norms and culture of specific business or consumer characteristics.

What has been Achieved? - Social Capital Outcomes on Three Main Themes

Social network and support

In terms of social capital generation, CIIF projects facilitate social interaction between service users, ex-service users and current service users, volunteers and vulnerable populations. The interaction facilitates sharing of experiences and support. In all the focus group meetings, respondents reported an increase in number of close friends and an enriched social life through their participation in the CIIF projects. This outcome is irrespective of the types of social networks aforementioned to which the respondents belonged. Apart from social affiliation, participants received different forms of social support as members of the network. There were the tangible ones including practical tips, information exchange and also small favours in everyday social interactions. Examples of tangible support noted in focus group meetings included child minding, running errands, advice or practical tips, cooking, looking after the household etc. Support in time of crisis refers to support requiring intense and immediate assistance than providing small favours. Such contingency support is crucial to families especially those without strong kinship ties and single parent headed households.

Development of Trust & Efficacy

Many focus group respondents expressed a strong sense of isolation and insecurity before they got involved in the project. This was especially true for those residents newly arrived from the mainland and those who had experienced great transitions in their lives. Many respondents reported a change of personal values and increase in self confidence because of engaging in new roles and positive human relationships. The empowerment of individuals and communities has been striking and many focus group participants shared personal witness of transformation and growth. Trust level has obviously been improved within the social network of participants and also towards NGOs and other stakeholder organizations. But trust towards the government and society in general is not apparent as it may involve more extensive participation from different government departments and social institutions on a long term basis.

Civic Engagement

The range of civic engagement of participants and stakeholders in current CIIF projects is mainly in social services, economic activities and interpersonal helping. There was little mentioning of involvement in voicing concerns towards community or policy issues or civic and political engagement in community betterment. There was little linking social capital that connects the participants with the more powerful stakeholders in the community such as district

board members, government departments and other institutions. Co-operations and joint activities with these institutions might be frequent but there was little community activism and collaboration that worked towards the overall community problem solving and cohesion.

How and Why the Projects Work? Four Basic Tenets of CIIF:

Four basic tenets of CIIF were highlighted as the critical success factor, viz. the community building orientation, empowerment approach, fostering self reliance and inter-sector collaboration. CIIF projects have tried out the four basic tenets and they have demonstrated the effectiveness in building social capital. Examples of good practices were identified and grouped under the four basic tenets.

Community Building

CIIF projects would gain entry into communities with due considerations of the community history, pre-existing networks and also learn to respect and make use of the community assets to strength social ties and bridge the segregated groups with other stakeholder. CIIF projects aim to foster community awareness, cohesion and mutual concern through strengthening social ties and their capacity to address community and personal needs.

Empowerment Approach

The present research has affirmed the CIIF motto of ‘There is strength in every man’. Service users and volunteers shared personal stories of growth and empowerment through connecting and serving others. Four elements of social capital noted by Lin (1999), viz. information, influence, social credentials and reinforcement, may explain the subsequent personal, economical and social benefits for individuals and communities.

Fostering Self Reliance

On the other hand, self reliance and mutual support are another two main themes of the CIIF. Social connections were found to serve as a crucial platform for building self esteem and re-activate some of the participants to return to gainful employment. The gainful employment created through CIIF projects might only be temporary or low pay but these attempts were meaningful in enabling participants to engage in positive roles and gain hands-on experiences. These initiatives served as intermediate measures for people to restore their confidence and explore new career opportunities.

Inter-sector Collaboration

There was enhancement in bridging social capital in most of the CIIF projects under study. Residents of different socio-economic backgrounds have chances of mutual understanding, developing social relationships or co-operating in serving the community. However, few projects have demonstrated success in terms of enhancing linking social capital. The study has been unable to identify cases of a sustainable and long term linkage between project participants and the more powerful and resourceful stakeholders in the community. This may be due to sample bias or the limitation of project duration. The success of inter-sector collaboration hinges on the social capital of the project operators and their parent NGOs. Project operators are the most important agents to identify community stakeholders, formulate appropriate strategies, approach different stakeholders and build up platforms for such collaboration.

What Next on the Agenda?: Recommendations

At the Participant Level

1. Social capital of individuals is shown to be able to increase personal capital and also to function as cushions in adversities. These networks must be preserved and appropriately steered for the trust and cohesion among members be maintained and further enhanced.
2. The empowerment strategy of CIIF has been very successful but participants would still need training, support and guidance in learning new roles and transforming their lives through contributing and participating.
3. There should be due consideration for effective maintenance and development of these networks if they have demonstrated positive social outcomes and effectiveness in enhancing personal and community well-being.
4. The mentorship network strategy should be further experimented on a broader and more intensive level to enhance understanding on its effectiveness to increase bridging social capital.
5. The experiences of CIIF projects should be generalized on a wider scale especially in remote and marginalized communities like Tung Chung, Po Tin and Tin Shui Wai. More resource support and effective liaison between service agencies should be provided to incorporate and further extend the scope of the social networking approach in helping low income families.

At the Project Level:

6. There should be considerations of expanding, incorporating or transforming some of the successful strategies and service models into mainstream social service practices.

7. There should be consideration on the continuity of network development in involving service users, transfer of the know-how and expertise in community building and resource mobilization and strategic partnership with different stake holders and organization in the community.
8. CIIF project experiences are precious learning for their respective NGOs, other community stakeholders and other social service sectors like housing, healthcare and education.
9. The generalization of project experiences into different human service sectors and policy arenas can maximize the effects of social experimentation in building social capital. It can also expand the scope of inter-sector collaboration for different vulnerable and marginal communities.
10. Most of the project operators and focus group participants expressed the need for resource and staffing support. Volunteers and helpers need training and support as they render assistance to each others. They drew the parallel of social networks as plants needing water and sunshine for their healthy growth and development. Project operators are the gardeners to bring about the fruits of social capital.

At the Community Level

11. Social capital experiences of CIIF have set a good example for district level government institutions to make use of inter-sector collaboration in fostering solidarity and civic engagement at the community level. District officials should consider involving more NGOs and community stakeholders at the district level and work towards mezzo-level social capital outcome goals on a longer duration.
12. It would be much more desirable and sustainable for a well established and high power stakeholder to take up overall leadership for the long term development of inter-sector collaboration at the community level. Institutions like DSWO or District Council have the potential to plan and co-ordinate inter-sector social capital development at the district level.

At the Societal Level

13. Increasing burden of welfare and health care has pushed the government to redefine its role in welfare provision. The role of the government becomes the provider of tools for people to solve their own problems through family and informal social ties. But self reliance is easier said than done when unifying social institutions such as community, family and the church are declining in face of rapid social changes.
14. A corresponding policy formulation and implementation mechanism should be in place to actualize this new governance ideology. A new social contract between government, citizens and the corporate sector has to be developed. CIIF initiatives would be crucial to build up a strategic platform for citizen participation and problem solving at the grassroot level.

15. The government should take up a more proactive role to involve the commercial sector in bringing forth sustainable development and collective well being. Policy incentives, channels of communication and participation would have to be in place. Government institutions such as DSWO, DO or District Councils should be active players in building up linking social capital with the most powerful and resourceful stakeholders in society.

At the Academic Level

16. Research teams can be the accompanying consultants throughout the project intervention. Action research strategies can help to provide constant user feedbacks and reflections from community stakeholders throughout the project intervention.
17. There should be comparison, triangulation and cross-examination of findings and conclusions among research teams, particularly those teams working on the same group of projects or adopting similar measuring instruments.
18. A longitudinal design with more refined measuring instruments and vigorous and representative sampling frame is more appropriate for more conclusive observations on the aggregated effects of social capital intervention for certain groups or community.

INTRODUCTION

The setting up of the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund signifies a partnership between the government, NGOs and the community to tap into the potentials and possibilities of social capital initiatives in social development. It also connotes a new paradigm that moves away from a ‘deficit’ model into a ‘strengths or resource based’ approach in meeting community needs (Glenwood Research, 2002). Social capital, other than material resources and personal competence, helps an individual, a community and even the whole nation to achieve better social outcomes through bonding, bridging and linking people together. In the international arena, empirical evidence clearly demonstrated the significance of social capital on social outcomes such as economic status, health and overall quality of life (Rash & McCoy, 2001). It is timely to document the local experiences of the CIIF projects and hence achieve a better understanding of the overall impacts, processes, strategies and factors contributing to building social capital.

Objectives of the CIIF Program Review

- 1) To assess the effectiveness of the strategies pursued in achieving the CIIF’s objectives;
- 2) To appraise the contribution of the CIIF-funded projects towards promoting the development of social capital;
- 3) To evaluate the aggregated impact of the CIIF-funded projects on the groups and communities involved
- 4) To identify the critical success factors common to the CIIF-funded projects; and
- 5) To advise on the policy implications and mapping out future strategies for the further development of social capital.

Principles of the Review

- 1) Clear, meaningful and relevant in respect of the Fund objectives in developing social capital.
- 2) Operationalize the concept of “social capital” to make it amenable to evaluation
- 3) Make clear distinctions between the social capital core components, its determinants & its outcomes as the focus for investigation

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of Social Capital

According to the World Bank, “*Social capital refers to the norms and networks that enable collective action. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion- social capital- is critical for poverty alleviation and sustainable human and economic development.*” (World Bank, <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/index.htm>) Bourdieu (1986), defined social capital as: the forming of social connections and networks based on principles of trust, mutual reciprocity and norms of action. Coleman (1988) later refined the definition of social capital as a variety of entities with two elements in common: viz. they all consist of some aspects of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure. Robert Putnam (1995) has described social capital as features of social organization – such as networks, norms, and trust that increase a society’s productive potential.

Krishna and Shrader (1999), present no less than ten working definitions for the terminology social capital, including:

1. Webs of cooperative relations between citizens that facilitate resolution of collective action problems.
2. Quantity and quality of associational life and the related social norms.
3. Institutions, relationships, attitudes and values that govern interaction among people and contribute to economic and social development.
4. The formal and informal social networks that individuals use to produce or allocate goods and services.
5. Mutual trust and willingness to intervene for the common good.
6. Social relations that predispose individuals toward mutually beneficial collective action, and structural aspects that facilitate such action.
7. Features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.
8. Networks of sociability, both formal and informal, and norms of social trust associated with such networks.
9. Trust, cooperative norms, and association within groups.
10. Norms and networks that link citizens to one another, and that enable them to pursue their common objectives more efficiently.

Kreuter, Lezin and Koplán (1997) identified elements of social capital to include: trust, civic involvement, social engagement, and reciprocity. Bullen and Onyx (1998) identified six themes to describe social capital: 1. Participation in networks; 2. Reciprocity; 3. Trust; 4. Social norms; 5.

Commons; 6. Pro-activity. The OECD (2001) regards social capital as networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups. Cohen and Prusak (2001) define it as the stock of active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviours that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperative action possible. Grootaert, Narayan, Jones & Woolcock (2004) incorporated six different aspects as salient features of social capital: 1. Groups and networks; 2. Trust and solidarity; 3. Collective action and co-operation; 4. Information and communication; 5. Social cohesion & inclusion; and 6. Empowerment & political action

The Forms & Scope of Social Capital

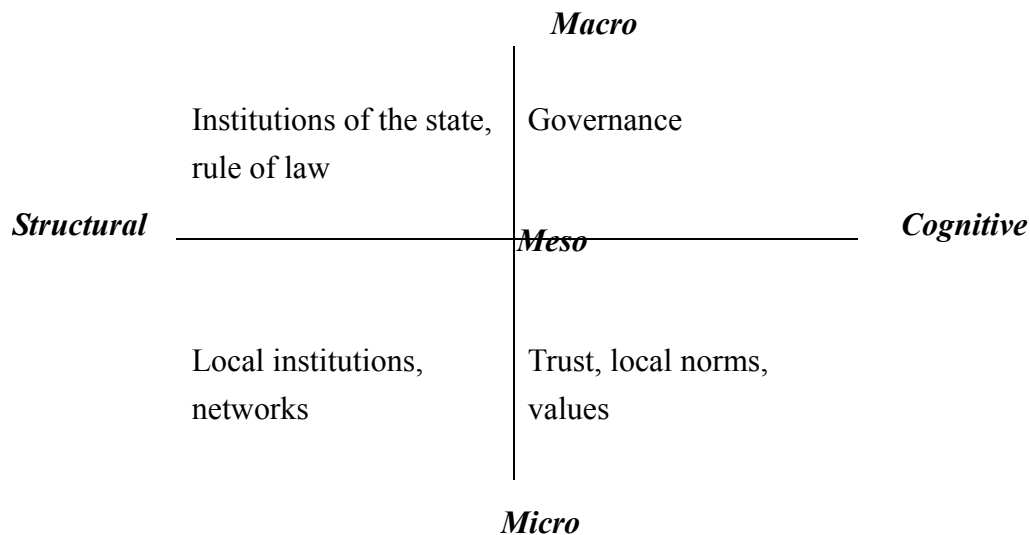
In a conceptual overview by Grootaert, Narayan, Jones and Woolcock (2004), they differentiated two conceptual approaches to social capital. The first emphasized on the resources (such as information, ideas, support) generated through social relationships. The structure and characteristics of a given network would govern the way of resources flow through that network (Burt, 2000). The second approach to social capital refers to the nature and extent of one's involvement in various informal and formal networks. It is a mapping of a community's social life (Putnam, 2000). Some researchers such as Putnam (2000) are concerned that the bonding types of social capital may be inward looking and exclusive while the bridging and linking types of social capital may be more outward looking and tend to be more inclusive to encompass people from different groupings and backgrounds.

The World Bank adopts a broad and embracive definition of social capital as 'the institutions, the relationships, the attitudes and values that govern interactions among people and contribute to economic and social development'. It identifies the common features across the different concepts of social capital. All definitions of social capital assume that social relationships would have influence on and in turn be influenced by the economic and political spheres. Reliable and stable relationships can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of both collective and individual actions. Most researchers agreed that social capital can be strengthened and this process requires resources.

The HKU CIIF research team would use the World Bank definition which regards social capital as a multi-dimensional construct. Special emphasis is upon a) the structural aspects which refer to the types of groups and networks; their nature and extent of contributions to the resources of the members and community; as well as b) the cognitive aspects which refers to the subjective perceptions of trustworthiness of other people and institutions as well as the norms of co-operation and reciprocity in working together (Grootaert, Narayan, Jones and Woolcock, 2004). The Australian Bureau of Statistics adopts a similar conceptualization and supplements the World Bank framework to enlist a more detailed description of the different dimensions of

social capital (2004). The structural dimensions of social capital include network types, network structure and network composition. The normative dimensions of social capital include network qualities, network transactions and network effects. The present study would draw reference to the World Bank framework focusing on the micro to meso levels (see Figure 1 below) as well as the operational framework provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004).

Figure 1: Forms and Scope of Social Capital



Social Determinants of Social Capital

Willms (2001) suggested three hypotheses to describe the relationships between community characteristics and social capital. He postulated that communities differ in their social outcomes because of different features and those disadvantaged groups who were living in disadvantaged communities would be in a state of double jeopardy. Glaeser(2001) drew parallel between investment decisions and people’s involvement in social networks and community associations. Length of time in a community, years of schooling and community homogeneity are found to be some of the determinants of people’s decisions to participate and consequently related to the social capital of a given community. Aldridge, Halpern and Fitzpatrick (2002) summarized the key determinants of social capital as follows: history and culture; whether social structures are flat or hierarchical; the family; education; the built environment; residential mobility; economic inequalities and social class; the strength and characteristics of civil society; and patterns of individual consumption and personal values.

Bullen and Onyx (1998) co-operated with neighbourhood and community centres in measuring social capital in five communities in New South Wales. They found the empirical concept of social capital especially useful and relevant at the community level. The study identified eight distinct elements in defining social capital in the local community. They are

participation in local community, proactivity in a social context, feelings of trust and safety, neighbourhood connections, family and friends connections, tolerance of diversity, value of life and work connections. The evaluation study by Glenwood Research (2002) demonstrated that social capital can be strengthened through project intervention. It was found that effective social capital building effort were those that successfully engaged the public sector, the private sector and the community. Reciprocity and mutuality developed between these three sectors led to a benefit (in terms of power, reward or change) to all those involved. Other researchers shared this view and opined that social capital has to be deliberately developed by means of programs implemented by appropriate people, and with corresponding institutional infrastructures (World Bank, 2002).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To conduct a formative evaluative study on selected CIIF projects

The study proposed by the HKU Research Team would focus on the 13 CIIF projects, 10 of which are towards the final stage of completion (Appendix II). A formative evaluative approach would be adopted in reviewing the CIIF projects and stakeholders' experiences. Both outcomes and processes would be examined. The study would be an evaluation and participatory action research with a customer-focused orientation.

2. To examine the experiences, subjective meaning and crucial determinants from stakeholders' perspectives

The experiences and perception of stakeholders including project operators and service targets would be examined in identifying the crucial factors and conditions towards a positive growth in social capital. The qualitative study is a process of interactive dialogue, reflection and consensus among program's key stakeholders on the significance, process and strategies in building up social capital on a community level.

3. To identify and document good practices

It is important to identify key factors and criteria for benchmarking best practices. A guidebook of good practices would be documented to maximize lessons learnt through the CIIF projects.

4. To build up a set of Social Capital Indicators for future comparison

The project objectives can be aggregated as output indicators across broad categories: membership in local associations and networks; indicators of trust and adherence to norms and indicators of collective action (Grootaert & Bastelaer, 2001). Social capital at the community level, with reference to the geographical or functional community base of individual projects, would be the key emphasis. The indicators would cover specifically the different dimensions of social capital, viz.

- i. social network and support,
- ii. trust and efficacy,
- iii. civic engagement (including volunteer work, & community participation)

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study follows the theory of change approach developed by Weiss (1999) and the Aspen Institute (2003) in program evaluation. There are four major purposes in grounding evaluation in theory of change. It concentrates on key aspects of the program. It aims at an aggregation of results into a broader base of theoretical and practical knowledge. It also involves program practitioners to make their assumptions explicit and to think about what they are trying to do and why do they believe the program would work (Weiss 1972, 50-53; Shadish 1987; Chen 1990; Lipsey 1993). Proponents of theory of change believe that this approach in program evaluation may have more far reaching implications on both policy and practical levels. The study addresses the following three levels of program evaluation.

Descriptive Level

It involves an analysis of social capital outcomes in terms of the network types, characteristics, features and interaction pattern. It addresses the key research question of **What Has Been Achieved** through CIIF project intervention.

Interpretive Level

This part mainly adopted the framework of the theory of change to answer essentially the research question of **How and Why CIIF Project Work?** The critical success factors, contextual factors and intervention strategies would be analyzed to review the process of social capital development.

Generalization Level

This level of discussion would focus on addressing the issue of sustainability of social capital outcomes and also generalizing the CIIF experiences into other facets of society and making recommendations on the policy implications of the CIIF experimentation in social capital development. It addresses the **What Next on the Agenda** issue and the implications of the research findings for our goals and steps in building up a cohesive and caring society.

METHODOLOGY

A Qualitative Approach

Krishna & Shrader (1999) caution against a universal and straightforward measurement of social capital. The structural features of social capital, i.e. social networks, do not by itself indicate the nature of human relationships within that network. Membership in networks covers a wide spectrum of experiences and trust is not necessarily a result of being included in networks (Eastis, 1998; Rose, 1998). Cultural and contextual factors are crucial in the operational definition of and understanding towards social capital. '*Qualitative methods, ..., are useful to elucidate values, perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of both individuals and groups of people, providing in-depth examination of relationships and behaviours*' (Krishna & Shrader, 1999 p.10). The qualitative approach serves to explore the perspectives of the stakeholders and thus operationalize the concept of social capital in the local context. The significance of the study is therefore two-fold: serving the program evaluative purpose as well as substantiating knowledge building into the social capital construct in the local context. Triangulation of methods and data sources can also be achieved to increase trustworthiness of the findings. Data collection strategies to be employed for this study include case studies, key informant interviews and focus group interviews. Constant comparison and thematic analysis would be used in qualitative data analysis.

Stage 1: Case studies through historical data and familiarization visits

This included a documentary review of project records, reports, and other locally developed written information. The research team has read through all the project proposals and progress reports of each CIIF project under study. Familiarization visits were paid to these projects and the overall objectives and methodologies of the study were explained to establish rapport and collaboration with project operators (Appendix IV). The background information enabled the researchers to generate interview guidelines and accomplish data triangulation in ensuring consistency and validity of the data analysis and interpretation. Service statistics and outputs were compiled to build up a service profile.

Stage Two: Focus Group Interviews with Stakeholders and Service Users

Structured interviews, developed by the researcher, were used to interview key project stakeholders. Key informants are individuals who have special knowledge, status, or communication skills and included volunteers, service recipients, sponsors and agency staff. An interview guide was developed for focus group sessions (Please refer to the Appendix III). Focus group interviews are conducted in a group setting and were used for obtaining a better

understanding of participants' subjective experiences.

Stage Three: Preliminary Data Analysis for the Interim Report

Focus group interviews were transcribed and analyzed. Preliminary data analysis was mainly on the structural and cognitive dimensions of social capital outcomes. The preliminary report was drafted in summarizing the observations.

Stage Four: Community Forum and Final Analysis

Project operators were invited to attend a community forum in which the preliminary findings were shared. Staff members were invited to make comments on the findings and suggest recommendations for the final analysis and recommendations.

Sampling

The study targeted at the 13 projects, 10 of which are approaching completion. The project nature was categorized according to the following parameters: service targets, duration of the project, community socio-economic features, intervention strategies and social capital outcomes. Focus group participants were invited by project operators and the criteria for inclusion is basically people having engaged in different roles and programs of the project. The details of the focus group participants were included in the Appendix V.

Table 1: Time frame

month	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2
A	A	A													
B	B	B	B												
C		C	C	C											
D				D	D	D									
E						E	E	E	E	E	E				
F							F	F	F	F	F	F	F		
G								G	G	G	G	G	G		
H									H	H	H	H	H	H	
I		I						I		I			I	I	I

- A: literature review / documentary review
- B: liaison with CIIF project agencies
- C: key informants interview
- D: sampling and interview guidelines
- E: conduct focus groups / interviews

- F: compiling Social Capital Indicators
- G: data analysis / community forum
- H: documentation of good practice
- I : report writing & submission

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

What Has Been Achieved? - An Analysis of Social Capital Structural Features

After a careful review of the project proposals and progress reports, familiarization visits and focus group meetings, research team members deliberated on the types of networks observed in the project under study. Research team members made notes on the network types, structures and compositions as well as the network transaction qualities expressed by focus group respondents. Five key network types were identified to summarize the structural dimensions of the social capital outcomes. These five network types are supportive networks for families and individuals, mentoring, self help, volunteering and co-operatives. A summary of the classification of projects on these network types was shown in Table 2 below. It should be noted that the classification of network types in different projects was based on the project proposal and progress report. There may be overlapping between the networks and each project may make use of several network types in their social capital building strategies. Essentially the classification was drawn up mainly for conceptual clarity to capture the most dominant social capital structural features observed by the research team. The social capital indicators (ABS, 2004) were adopted for project analysis. Please refer to Appendix VI for details.

Table 2: Types of Social Capital Networks

	Supportive	Mentoring	Self Help	Volunteer	Co-operative
0070-01D “Healthy Mothers-to-be” - A Women and Community Networking Project	x	x	x	x	x
0151-01D Family service Ambassador Scheme, Caritas Family Service	x		x	x	
0015-01D Helping Others - Self Growing Project	x		x	x	
0079-01C Sunny Community Programme	x		x	x	x
0092-01C Space of Dream – Youth Employment Project in the North District	x	x		x	x
0017-01D Family Education - Love and Caring at Home	x			x	
0023-01C Project to Promote Family Cohesion & a More Colourful Family Life	x		x	x	
0113-01E Community Care & Networking Programme for “Po Tin” Residents	x		x	x	
0069-01D Collaborating People in Tsuen Wan Rural Areas	x		x	x	
0013-01D Volunteer Partnership Scheme for Those Rehabilitated from Occupational Injuries and Disease	x		x	x	

Supportive networks for families and individuals:

While families are considered the fundamental bedrock of social capital, rising rates of divorce, changing family forms, long working hours and low pay in employment all contribute to the erosion of family cohesion and capacity to nurture its members. Some projects targeted at families with low social capital and resources. For example, families in remote communities such as Tung Chung, Po Tin, and Tin Shui Wai are cut off from their kinship ties either because of their background as new immigrants or the physical location of the community. Many of these families are single headed or on CSSA. These families are disconnected socially and often perceived as crisis-prone.

The CIIF projects organized parents' training, induction programs for new arrivals, community visitation programs offering active guidance, and support to parents in parenting skills and inculcating problem solving capacities through knowledge building and mutual support. Social networks enable low income families, lone mothers and new arrivals to gain access to community resources and information on family and community life. As noted by Halpern (2004), parents' social networks and interactions have significant impacts on their children, not only on their educational attainment and later life chances, but also the role modelling of facing adversities through a positive and mutual care spirit.

Some CIIF projects targeted at groups of individuals who became disconnected with the social and economic mainstream as they were out of stable employment. Examples include the homeless, frail elderly living in remote rural villages, and people with occupational diseases or injuries. With their limited personal and social capital, they had difficulties learning new skills and re-orientating themselves to survive in a changing and competitive society. The CIIF projects set out to reconnect these individuals into social networks and re-establish their roles as contributing members of society through volunteer service and small-scale employment activities. Life chances of these people were transformed by their social participation and interactions with other members in the network. They were linked to a wider spectrum of community resources and organizational network through an enlarged social circle. As part of a social network and linked up with reputable NGOs or faith-based organizations, individuals would have higher chances of gaining trust from employers or receiving vocational training tailored to their needs. The initial support to these individuals often involved very tangible assistance such as food, basic furniture, clothes, or petty cash for travelling. The social network also provided practical tips, knowledge and network resources to obtain updated information on job opportunities and training.

Supportive networks are powerful vehicles to help families and individuals regain hope and faith in facing adversity and transforming their lives. Just knowing that somebody cares makes a

whole world of difference to an individual or family who has long been experiencing social exclusion, dis-empowerment and isolation due to their life circumstances. Social networks increase and re-activate the potential and strength of families and individuals in transforming their life. But the economic and socio-cultural barriers in the larger environment pose formidable challenges to these individuals and families and pure social capital strategies may not be sufficient to resolve the structural and political issues that contribute to these problems.

Mentoring

Two of the projects in this study adopt the mentoring approach in building up social ties and bridging capital between different sectors of the community. The 'Healthy Mothers-to-be' Project is a creative blending of traditional wisdom and modern knowledge of post-natal healthcare. It trains up a group of middle-aged unemployed women to provide post-natal mentorship, companionship, babysitting and domestic services to middle class mothers. Post-natal mentors, to some extent, substitute the traditional role of the older generation and supplement the modern role of nursing care in enhancing post-natal well being of both mothers and infants. The engagement of the post-natal mentors expands the social capital of the nuclear families during the post-natal period and serves as a new form of pseudo-extended families in modern society. The relationship between the post-natal mentors and the middle class mothers is of a secondary and contractual nature. The mentoring relationship is based on employment terms and also transient and confined to the post-natal period only. The network of post-natal mentors is in the form of a co-operative and would be discussed in a later section.

Another project bridges young people and adult mentors in different types of occupations. The traditional form of mentorship is revitalized to enhance the social capital of young people. It serves both the hands-on skills training and mentorship support in motivating and facilitating young people to have a clear direction in life. Mentors are expected to share their life experiences and values with young people and the relationship is more sustainable than the post-natal mentorship program. The project expands young people's social capital through informal education and inter-generational socialization. The modern mentorship scheme provides young people chances to be exposed to the adult and work culture besides their peer groups and families. International literature reports the weaker social capital of young people in general in terms of norms and social participation in civic society. They are usually confined to the bonding capital of their peer group and influences of the youth sub-culture. The mentorship program is a form of bridging capital to include and transform the norms and values of young people.

Self Help

Many CIIF projects adopted the self help and peer networking strategies to empower service

users to take up active roles and support others in need. For example, the Family Ambassador Project is based on the wide network of 18 family service centres, including the Family Crisis Support Centre, provided by Caritas. Their centres have close to 10,000 cases with family related problems. The project encouraged former users of family services become volunteers to provide social support to new service users. Peer and informal support is complementary to professional intervention. By involving in volunteering work, members of the project can further strengthen their capacity in tackling their own problems. Participants are provided with training support (family relationship, stress management) and group meetings for mutual sharing of experiences. They are equipped with skills in peer counselling and organizing activities.

In the Streetsleeper Project, service users were people having complicated backgrounds of crime, drug addiction, or heavy gambling. They admitted that it was not easy for them to have trustful relationship with others. But they had a high level of trust towards the worker and members could gain a sense of acceptance by agency staff and other fellow street sleepers. They could re-gain the sense of self-worth, hope and confidence through the self help network. For those living in the agency's hostel, they could get tangible and material support of having a shelter. Through paying visits to other street sleepers and doing volunteer service, they could gain a sense of efficacy and contribution to others.

This kind of network is called the 'C2C' principle in the Saguaro seminar report on building social capital. C2C comes from the emerging language of information technology and refers to communications that occur 'consumer to consumer'. Service users who received counselling services, workers having rehabilitated from occupational injuries, and homeless people who successfully regained employment and shelter were recruited to take up the supporting role of peer counsellors or helpers in services they previously received. Self help enables service recipients to be engaged in social networks and be affiliated to other people after addressing the key issues or difficulties they encountered. Their social capital and personal growth continue to develop after they step out of the client role and assist the social worker or other professionals in helping others. The self help network not only bonds people with similar problems but also provides a platform for peer counsellors to bridge themselves with the professionals and the NGOs and be nurtured to grow and develop in this helping role.

Peer helpers supported people with similar problems through sharing their life experiences and journey of coping. Peer helpers would see their own problems in a new light as they witness the life struggles, sorrowful experiences as well as resilience and will power of other individuals. The trust and fraternity that flow from these intimate encounters further enhance the solidarity and cohesion of the self help network. Reciprocity among peers is characteristic of such horizontal communication patterns in comparison with the vertical communication between 'professionals' and 'clients' in the traditional sense. But lay helping may also confine the social

capital of service recipients to birds of the same feather and be more inward looking in its concern. Continuous support from professional social workers is necessary to help peer helpers further enhance their capacity to deal with their own concerns and care for others. The self help network serves as a basis for service users to learn new roles and be connected to the professional social workers as partners in helping others in need.

Volunteering

While self help networks mainly involve users as peer helpers, volunteering networks refer to those involving citizens from other walks of life to support those in need. Among the CIIF projects under study, volunteers may come from faith based organizations, professional groups, and the community. Volunteers are motivated by philanthropy and altruism, an interest to broaden their scope of life, availability of time or boredom, and viewing community engagement as a leisure time pursuit. The range of activities included outreaching visits to frail elderly in rural areas, accompanying elderly people, home visits to residents in deprived communities, organizing educational programs and recreational activities, acting as instructors and trainers, child minding and doing household chores for neighbours etc.

Volunteering enhances social capital for both the helpers and those being helped. Focus group participants reported volunteering experiences as rewarding and life enriching. Volunteers expressed satisfaction in social affiliation, deriving meaning and sense of achievement in bringing forth changes in people's lives. The gratitude and recognition expressed by those being served fuel the volunteers' enthusiasm and faith in serving people. The National skills development program in Australia (Winter, 2000) recognizes that the extent of volunteering as an indicator of community strength. Volunteer is also believed to be related to the capacity to ease stress on families and improve personal well-being. Focus groups with some of the stakeholders groups coming from middle class background revealed the positive and rewarding experiences of volunteering in facilitating inter-sector cohesion and support. Some of the volunteers and stakeholders from faith-based organizations were inspired and amazed by the life transformation of the people they served. The philanthropy and faith in building up a caring society through volunteering sound simple enough but it works tremendously.

Among the focus groups conducted, only one of them involved youth volunteers acting as tutors to children. There was, on the whole, fewer young people serving as volunteers to the community among the projects under study. It may be due to the community demographic profile or the general apathy of young people in community participation. In the international literature, young people are in general less participative in community and social affairs. Whether this is the case for HK would need further exploration. Some adult volunteers expressed pessimism over young people's interest and motivation to serve the community. A few others had brought their

own children to join their voluntary service and the results were impressive. The social exposure to how the others live and the modelling effects of their parents brought tremendous influences on young children and path the way for them to serve the community.

Co-operatives

Co-operative is an organizational form that combined economic production with social networking of people. It has a more formalized structure than a network and there are clear organizational norms to shape participants' expectations and behaviour. Three CIIF projects made use of the co-operative to network its target participants. They are the 'Healthy Mothers-to-be' post-natal mentors project, Tung Chung Sunny Community and Community Reciprocal Service Cooperative of the Modern Mentorship program. The co-operatives are largely horizontal in their organizational structure and provide a training platform for developing the necessary vocational skills, decision making mechanisms, business strategies and familiarize with the norms and culture of specific business or consumer characteristics.

The 'Healthy Mothers-to-be' post-natal mentorship project is based on its strong employment service network of the Kwun Tong Methodist Social Service Unit in the district. Members now have organized themselves into a business co-operative, and become more independent from the service units. Leaders have become more entrepreneurial. Participants now become experienced baby-sitters, able to have a stable income and can provide mentorship to new participants. Indeed, baby sitting is a demanding task and involve high risk. The project has to ensure quality of care, and there are mechanisms to ensure that graduates are competent in their jobs. Participants have become more competent on their self-image, being able to earn a good income and help new mothers to take care of their babies. They are proud that their work is being appreciated by consumers. The reputation of the service has become more well-known and credible.

Network members acquired specific vocational skills through training or mentorship and then served the community and acquired a small income from their own economic activities in the co-operative. The individual could derive some income based on their hours of services. The co-operative is also a community asset to serve specific community groups by providing services at an affordable rate. The co-operative served as a testing ground for community based economy and specific types of service provisions. Members could experiment business ideas and strategies without having to set up a business single-handed. In comparison with employment in a formal institution, respondents enjoyed the degree of flexibility, informal human relationships and community service orientation in being part of a co-operative.

What has been Achieved? - Social Capital Outcomes on Three Main Themes

The three themes of social network and support, trust and efficacy and civic engagement are the most common themes proposed by different researchers in enlisting the dimensions of the social capital construct regarding its normative features (Grootaert & Bastelaer, 2001). Qualitative analyses of focus group meetings were organized across the three themes to capture the subjective experiences of social capital outcomes by stakeholders.

Social network and support

In terms of social capital generation, CIIF projects facilitate social interaction between service users, ex-service users and current service users, volunteers and vulnerable populations. The interaction facilitates sharing of experiences and support. In all the focus group meetings, respondents reported an increase in number of close friends and an enriched social life through their participation in the CIIF projects. They got acquainted with a larger number of people after they joined the project, including neighbours, program participants and stakeholders involved in the project. When focus group participants were asked about the impacts of the enlarged social circle on their lives, they unanimously reported an increase in life satisfaction and a reduced sense of loneliness and social exclusion. This outcome is irrespective of the types of social networks aforementioned to which the respondents belonged.

Apart from social affiliation, participants received different forms of social support as members of the network. There were the tangible ones including practical tips, information exchange and also small favours in everyday social interactions. Examples of tangible support noted in focus group meetings included child minding, running errands, advice or practical tips, cooking, looking after the household etc. These were more characteristic of CIIF projects focusing on neighbourhoods.

Support in time of crisis refers to support requiring intense and immediate assistance than providing small favours. Some respondents reported providing or receiving such kind of support in focus group meetings. Usually it happened during an unexpected crisis or emergency situation, and no formal services could be mobilized on the spot. Examples of such support included escorting neighbours to A & E wards; a group of neighbours caring for a pregnant mother who need constant bed rest; etc. Such contingency support is crucial to families especially those without strong kinship ties and single parent headed households.

Development of Trust & Efficacy

Many focus group respondents expressed a strong sense of isolation and insecurity before

they got involved in the project. This was especially true for those residents newly arrived from the mainland and those who had experienced great transitions in their lives. Very often the whole community, such as in the cases of Tung Chung, Tin Shui Wai and Po Tin, was stigmatized because of its high percentages of new arrivals, single parents and CSSA recipients. Some respondents explicitly admitted that they felt ashamed of living in these communities and were reluctant to reveal their place of residence to other people. The stereotypical images of new arrivals, single parent headed families, youth at risks and homeless people were prevalent and posed formidable barriers for different sectors of the community to get in touch with and interact with these groups of people. The individuals and communities were defined by their deficits and problems and regarded as burdens to society.

This negative stereotype is detrimental to self esteem and sense of efficacy of these individuals and communities. With the active intervention of CIIF projects especially with the strength based approach in involving service targets, the general sense of efficacy as a network and united group of individuals is evident. Many respondents reported a change of personal values and increase in self confidence because of engaging in new roles and positive human relationships. The empowerment of individuals and communities has been striking and many focus group participants shared personal witness of transformation and growth.

It was not easy to trust other people when you are afraid of exposing your own vulnerability and risk stigmatization and rejection. Misunderstanding and scape-goating are dominant and cross sector interactions are uncommon in HK because of geographic distance and cultural segregation. Trust is a very crucial indicator of social capital in reflecting the social inclusion and cohesion of the community. In bonding social capital, participants revealed a high level of trust with their social network members as they shared the same problems and cultural backgrounds. The general social trust would reflect the state of bridging and linking social capital in the community. In many CIIF projects, the involvement of faith based organizations and volunteers from professional and middle class backgrounds has been effective in facilitating cross sector trust and mutual understanding. Mentorship schemes have great potentials to facilitate bridging capital between different sectors and generations. But it was not easy to create chances for contacts and interactions between these groups of people and other sectors of society. The investment and effort by CIIF projects had been laborious and the improvement is gradually gaining ground, although the pace may be slow and confined to mainly interpersonal levels. Trust level has obviously been improved within the social network of participants and also towards NGOs and other stakeholder organizations. But trust towards the government and society in general is not apparent as it may involve more extensive participation from different government departments and social institutions on a long term basis. Social and civic participation from a wider spectrum of people and organizations may need to be further vitalized and the scope of social capital building intervention may have to be expanded more extensively to bring forth

more visible outcomes in terms of trust and solidarity in society.

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement refers to actions taken because of concern about an issue (ABS, 2000). It included writing a letter to the press, contacting district board members, attending public meetings etc. This is regarded as an important indicator of social capital at the community level. As aforementioned, participants in CIIF projects became more active in social and community involvement through the different types of activities of volunteering, mentoring, peer counselling, participating in co-operatives and community activities. On the whole, this dimension was not the key emphasis in either the overall CIIF or individual project objectives.

The range of civic engagement of participants and stakeholders in current CIIF projects is mainly in social services, economic activities and interpersonal helping. There was little mentioning of involvement in voicing concerns towards community or policy issues or civic and political engagement in community betterment. There was little linking social capital that connects the participants with the more powerful stakeholders in the community such as district board members, government departments and other institutions. Co-operations and joint activities with these institutions might be frequent but there was little community activism and collaboration that worked towards the overall community problem solving and cohesion. The present scope and scale of CIIF projects were confined to a small sector of the community and the social capital outcomes generated within a small network may not have the spill over effect to the larger community.

How and Why CIIF Projects Work? The Critical Success Factors

Four basic tenets are observed across CIIF projects in their achievements in building up and enhancing social capital. They are community building, empowerment, self-reliance and inter-sector collaboration. They serve as concepts and theories of change in a broad sense behind project planning and practice. Some of the examples in good practices are also highlighted to illustrate these basic tenets and their interlocking relationships with social capital outcomes.

Community Building as the Key Strategy in Building Social Capital:

Communities have effects on individual and family well-being and neighbourhoods or self help communities are conceived as the targets of intervention. In some communities, poverty has become concentrated because of socio-economic situations and geographical isolation. Economic distress is strongly correlated with social segregation, political disempowerment, and social problems. By and large, poor people are bound to the neighbourhood and isolated from sources

of power and change. Segregated individuals are more receptive to people with similar backgrounds and common concerns. Project operators were either a serving NGO to these communities or would gain entry into these communities with due considerations of the community history, pre-existing networks and also learn to respect and make use of the community assets to strength social ties and bridge the segregated groups with other stakeholders. CIIF projects aim to foster community awareness, cohesion and mutual concern through strengthening social ties and their capacity to address community and personal needs.

Examples of good practice in community building:

- Understanding and analyzing the community through the eyes of residents and stakeholders
- Gaining entry through its existing institutions, resources and social fabrics
- Building the knowledge and abilities of individuals through training, services and supports, skills development and employment;
- Connecting residents through various types of programs and structures;
- Linking informal networks, residents groups and local organizations to public institutions and private enterprises;
- Creating joint tasks or community platforms to enhance involvement from a wide spectrum of residents

Strength Based and Empowerment Approach

An often emphasized assumption in CIIF is the central belief in the strength and assets of community and individuals. ‘There is strength in every man’ or ‘天生我材必有用’ has become a motto for CIIF. Communities and vulnerable groups were conceived as having the power and resources in problem solving and also contribution to the collective well being given the right circumstances and support. The present study has affirmed this basic tenet through discussion with project operators, service users, volunteers and community stakeholders. Service users and volunteers shared personal stories of growth and empowerment through connecting and serving others. They placed high regards on this core belief of CIIF. They have involved in a wide variety of program activities. They have become a vital human resource for the service units. Through the projects, collaboration and a strong sense of mutual trust has been developed between participants and the service units, and between participants themselves. Participants felt empowered through their own personal transformation, the process of helping other people, chances of learning and taking up active roles in the community and also the membership as part of a mutual care network. Social capital has become both the end and the means of personal and community empowerment.

According to Lin (1999), four elements of social capital, viz. information, influence, social credentials and reinforcement may explain the subsequent personal, economical and social

benefits for individuals and community. First, the flow of information facilitated by social ties can extend the individual's life opportunities, hope and choices. To low income and marginal groups such as street-sleepers, people of industrial accidents or diseases, the unemployed or newly arrived, tangible information and resources are essential for their basic coping and the life experiences of others also served as important information and reference. On the other hand, organizations and stakeholders can be more sensitive to community situations and needs of individuals. Such information would enable the best match or tailoring of community resources to strengthen the capacity of the networks and individuals. Second, various types of social capital would enlarge the social influence of vulnerable or marginalized groups as they can articulate their own situations and needs more effectively and have more chances to gain access to community resources or influence the decision making process in the community. Third, very often individuals with social capital resources would increase their social credentials as their membership and social connections reassure organizations and other stakeholders' confidence towards their capacity and trustworthiness. Social connections and organizational memberships became an added value to individuals' personal capital. Finally, as an individual builds up a sense of identity and belonging within an organization, the emotional support and access to organizational resources further reinforce loyalty and participation of the individual. CIIF project intervention has transformed isolated and alienated marginal groups into dynamic social networks. Self confidence and self worth of individuals were gradually restored through this desegregation process.

Examples of good practice in empowerment:

- Providing tangible services, material support and information in addressing basic needs;
- Outreaching to needy groups and connecting them through services;
- Identifying strength and resources of residents in the community;
- Identifying active roles and chances of community participation for participants;
- Recognizing the contribution of formal and informal networks;
- Interweaving the use of both formal and informal support in helping people;
- Enhancing emotional support and cohesion of networks and groups;
- Fostering a sense of community identity, spirit and pride that counteracts the stigmatization of the larger society

Fostering Self Reliance

Self reliance and mutual support are another two main themes of the CIIF. CIIF projects essential tested the effects of social capital on personal efficacy and self reliance. The present study has attempted to explore this notion with participants and stakeholders. Most focus group participants were of the view that social connections serve as a crucial platform for their sense of trust and self esteem. Some participants were extremely isolated and marginalized and they

treasured the chances of getting connected to the project operators and gradually to a self help network. This seems to be the basic step for them to gain a sense of self acceptance and self reliance. Bonding social capital serves to re-activate some of the participants to return to gainful employment through immediate tangible support, restoration of self esteem and provision of training.

Some of the projects attempted to identify and create local employment through co-operatives, mentorship programs, building up career information data base or establishing small enterprises. Both project operators and participants expressed the limitations of local initiatives in providing long term gainful employment opportunities. Many projects tried to line up local shops to donate gifts or provide career opportunities. But on the whole, responses were not favorable since these local shops are only small enterprises and they lack the resources to provide long term support to the projects. The jobs might only be temporary or low pay but these attempts were meaningful in enabling participants to have chances to engage in positive social roles and gain hands-on experiences. Some participants were able to progress further to establish themselves in more long term gainful employment. These initiatives served as intermediate measures for people to restore their confidence and explore new roles or career opportunities.

Examples of good practice in fostering self reliance:

- Making use of ex-service users as helpers;
- Providing training, support and guidance to volunteers and helpers;
- Fostering fraternity and vision in self help networks and organizations;
- Facilitating self efficacy through active involvement in new social or occupational roles;
- Identifying meaningful social or occupational roles in the community;
- Advocating for basic citizen rights and entitlement to resources;
- Building connections between participations and other stakeholders and employing institutions in the community;
- Facilitating communication between different sectors and stakeholders and participants on job opportunities;
- Setting up platforms for short term gainful employment or occupational training;
- Providing basic support and preparing participants for self reliance

Inter-sector collaboration

Inter-sector collaboration is another core concept behind CIIF projects. Project operators are the most important agents to identify community stakeholders, formulate appropriate strategies, approach different stakeholders and build up platforms for such collaboration. Thus, the research team regarded the social capital of project operators as one of the critical success factors in

inter-sector collaboration. Three levels of such social capital were distinguished. At the organizational level, the reputation and history of the NGO hold the key in gaining trust from participants and stakeholders. Its established network of professions, expertise, resources, social connections, and formal and informal ties is an important asset in the community. Many CIIF projects could have the support and collaboration with other stakeholders through the social connection of the parent NGO.

At the staff level, all the focus group participants expressed gratitude and appreciation towards CIIF project staff members. They regarded staff commitment, professional expertise, sense of direction and capacity of resources mobilization as critical factors of success in building up social capital. They expressed a higher level of trust towards staff than other fellow members in their social network. The professional expertise of staff in identifying community needs and locating strategic partnership in the district is crucial for successful collaboration.

At the community level, the social capital of users is gradually built up through the project operators' strategic partnership with other stakeholders. This bridging and linking function would be hard to be replaced by participants, volunteers or self help groups. These informal groups are far less reputable and resourceful in terms of their community standing and credibility in the community. It would be far more difficult for user, self help or co-operative networks to establish or maintain an inter-sector co-operation platform in the community without the support of their parent NGOs. It would be much more desirable and sustainable for a well established and high power stakeholder to take up overall leadership for the long term development of inter-sector collaboration at the community level. Institutions like DSWO or District Council have the potential to plan and co-ordinate inter-sector social capital development at the district level.

Identification of good practice in inter-sector collaboration:

- Identifying reciprocal and complimentary goals in Inter-Sector Collaboration
- Finding and building up resourceful allies
- Articulating interests in the partnership and negotiate roles and responsibilities with each other
- Preparing collaborators in accommodating the cultural norms of users and marginal groups
- Building a structure for shared decision making and accountability
- Sharing a common vision and working towards it
- Providing incentives and resources for collaboration
- Interact in functionally important activities or develop complimentary goals
- Availability of leadership (e.g. from DSWO) to guide and facilitate inter-sector collaboration

RECOMMENDATIONS

What Next on the Agenda?

Recommendations are made in relation to the development of social capital at the participant, project, community and societal levels. They incorporate suggestions to strengthen the capacities and connections of participants, the systems of supports, and also the connections between communities and the large policy environment. On the other hand, recommendations were also made regarding the best use of the present research findings to inform further social capital research in the local context.

At the Participant Level:

Deprivation and poverty are complicated social issues and the community is in a continuous state of change and evolution. Economic situations are unstable and the family is no longer a reliable haven of support and nurturance. Individual and families have become all the more fragile and crisis prone. At the participant level, the social networks built up through CIIF project interventions are now the key social capital of these marginal and vulnerably groups. Social capital of individuals is shown to be able to increase personal capital and also to function as cushions in adversities. These networks must be preserved and appropriately steered for the trust and cohesion among members be maintained and further enhanced. The empowerment strategy of CIIF has been very successful but participants would still need training, support and guidance in learning new roles and transforming their lives through contributing and participating.

Although participants gradually took up a more active leadership role in their social networks, they were of the view that volunteers are less dependable than staff members in sustaining the social networks and maintaining the momentum of change in the community. Volunteers and helpers would always come and go as participants frankly shared in focus group interviews. While they treasured membership in a network, some of the participants also expressed anxiety or even reluctance to shoulder up formal duties and responsibilities in running the organization. Unanimously participants and community stakeholders voiced concern towards the sustainability of the social networks and social capital outcomes after the project ceased to receive funding from CIIF. There should be due consideration for effective maintenance and development of these networks if they have demonstrated positive social outcomes and effectiveness in enhancing personal and community well-being.

Among the five types of social networks identified, the functioning and operation of the mentorship and co-operative networks would need further exploration and experimentation. The

success of co-operatives, in particular, would require knowledge in market analysis and entrepreneurship. Some co-operatives may have the potential to become a business or social enterprise, and less based on volunteering work. As for mentorship networks, few mentors have shared their experiences with the research team and thus the present study was unable to make observations on the characteristics and critical success factors. In the international literature, many researchers considered mentorship a good strategy to equip young people with the necessary life experiences. The mentorship network strategy should be further experimented on a broader and more intensive level to enhance understanding on its effectiveness to increase bridging social capital.

Many CIIF project participants were groups of individuals disconnected with the social and economic mainstream either because of the physical location of the community, or unemployment and other personal crisis. The community building and empowerment strategy of the CIIF has been found to be a very effective strategy in reconnecting and empowering these target groups. CIIF projects have been flexible and holistic in helping these individuals and families to survive through crisis and state of hopelessness. The experiences of CIIF projects in helping these low income families and individuals should be generalized on a wider scale especially in remote communities like Tung Chung, Po Tin and Tin Shui Wai. More resource support and effective liaison between service agencies should be provided to incorporate and further extend the scope of the social networking approach in helping low income families.

At the Project Level

Project operators were overloaded with administrative procedures and the pressure to prove their effectiveness within a short time span. They have real commitment towards the social capital ideas and most of the projects have operationalized the concept into real practice. Their contribution and achievement should be recognized and generalized to their own agency and also the community. While it is the intention of CIIF to demonstrate innovative approaches in building social capital, project operators' experiences and expertise should further be tapped to help expand the projects or replicate the project on other communities or service settings. There should be considerations of expanding, incorporating or transforming some of the successful strategies and service models into mainstream social service practices.

The long term development of CIIF projects is uncertain. Staff members have been striving diligently to meet project objectives and serve the community. But it is difficult for the project to plan for the sustainability and continuity of the network development when they have a relatively short project duration. There should be consideration on the continuity of network development in involving service users, transfer of the know-how and expertise in community building and resource mobilization and continuity in strategic partnership with different stake holders and

organization in the community. CIIF project experiences are precious learning for their respective NGOs, other community stakeholders and other social service sectors like housing, healthcare and education. The generalization of project experiences into different human service sectors and policy arenas can maximize the effects of social experimentation in building social capital.

Some of the NGOs can maintain the networks and social capital outcomes by absorbing and reshuffling the workload among other staff members or service units. But in cases of CIIF projects attaching to non-government funded NGOs, there would not be resources for employing social work trained personnel after project termination. The continuity and sustainability of social capital outcomes would be difficult to be ensured. Most of the project operators and focus group participants expressed the need for resources and staffing support. They drew the parallel of social networks as plants needing water and sunshine for their healthy growth and development. Volunteers and helpers need training and support as they render assistance to others.

At the Community Level

“I will issue internal guidelines asking all government departments to better complement the work of DOs with a view to raising the capacity to resolve problems, deal with issues concerning people's livelihood, strengthen community building, and promote community and charity work at the district level.” Donald Tsang, 2005 Policy Address

CIIF projects have enlightened us with the potential of the community. But their effort and achievement are still confined to a small spectrum of residents and it was still at some distance from the CIIF ideal of ‘cultural transformation’ 移風易俗. There were too few players to share this vision at the district level. The government is going to re-vitalize the community and social capital experiences of CIIF have set a good example for district level government institutions to make use of inter-sector collaboration in fostering solidarity and civic engagement at the community level. District officials should consider involving more NGOs and community stakeholders at the district level and work towards mezzo-level social capital outcome goals on a longer duration.

Right now the present study can only adopt a retrospective perspective to maximize lessons learnt through the CIIF project intervention. On a district level, social capital indicators can be taken as its social and civic landscape. Sense of belonging, civic engagement and citizen participation can be promoted as a long term goal of community building. It would be much more desirable and sustainable for a well established and high power stakeholder to take up overall leadership for the long term development of inter-sector collaboration at the community level. Institutions like DSWO or District Council have the potential to plan and co-ordinate inter-sector social capital development at the district level.

At the Societal Level

At the societal level, the increasing burden on welfare and health care has pushed the government to redefine its role in welfare provision. The new blueprint for social welfare in HK is built upon the Strategic Framework of Social Welfare which has been formulated and deliberated in Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) in 2004. The government is attempting to play the role of a safety net and civic catalyst. It explicitly states that the values in social welfare provision in HK are: self reliance; mutual concern; equal opportunities and fair competition and mobility. The role of the government becomes the provider of tools for people to solve their own problems rather than the main problem-solver or the regulator. But self reliance is easier said than done when unifying social institutions such as community, family and the church are declining in face of rapid social changes.

A new strategy and policy mechanism have to accompany this new thinking. A corresponding policy formulation and implementation mechanism should be in place to actualize this ideology of governance and co-ordinate different government institutions to work towards its goals. A new social contract between government, citizens and the corporate sector has to be developed through dialogue, policy frameworks and community initiatives. This new contract is essential a new citizenship that emphasizes mutual support and cross sector interaction and cohesion. The informal sector and the community are seen as a basis for citizen involvement in helping each other. Under this new thinking, CIIF initiatives would be crucial to build up a strategic platform for citizen participation and problem solving at the grassroots level. It would be the crucial role of CIIF project operators to educate and mobilize citizens in assuming this new citizenship through formal and informal social and civic engagement.

On the other hand, the development of corporate citizenship is essential. The government should take up a more proactive role to involve the commercial sector in bringing forth sustainable development and collective well-being. While low income groups are encouraged to be self reliant and help each other in stormy times, the rich should not be washing their hands off in serving the community. But it should be the role of other government institutions rather than project operators to encourage corporate institutions and the commercial sectors to take up the responsibility of corporate citizenship. Policy incentives, channels of communication and participation would have to be in place. Project operators should direct their energy and effort in engaging the most vulnerable and segregated while the other government institutions such as DSWO, DO or District Councils should be actively playing the linking function of mobilizing the most powerful and resourceful stakeholders in community betterment.

At the Academic Level

The present study is largely a formative evaluative research on existing CIIF projects. It adopts a retrospective and qualitative approach. It would be much more desirable for research frameworks be established before project commencement so that the theories of change of project operators and funding body be made explicit. Research teams can then become the accompanying consultants throughout the project intervention. Action research strategies can help to provide constant user feedbacks and reflections from community stakeholders throughout the project intervention. The partnership between researchers and operators would be more fruitful and beneficial.

It has been an invaluable chance to have different research teams examining the project intervention, social capital outcomes, process and strategies. A mixed methodology utilizing both quantitative and qualitative measures has been particularly useful to work towards a conceptual and operational framework of social capital. There should be comparison, triangulation and cross-examination of findings and conclusions among research teams, particularly those teams working on the same group of projects or adopting similar measuring instruments.

There is much more room in broadening the scope and usefulness of social capital research in the local context. Social capital research cannot be separated from social goals and related policy formulation. If the social capital agenda is to be taken seriously by the government, the scope of the accompanying research should be on a larger scale and the duration be much longer. A longitudinal design with more refined measuring instruments and vigorous and representative sampling frame would be appropriate for the findings of social capital research to inform policies.

CONCLUSION

Social capital is an umbrella term in describing human interactions and relationships. Its manifestation and structural features are different and unique to each community setting. The study has basically affirm the effectiveness of CIIF projects and proven the basic tenets of CIIF in community building, empowerment, self reliance and inter-sector collaboration. But is hard to give conclusive and absolute answers to how it can solve complex social problems such as poverty and discrimination. So far the CIIF project experiences have been encouraging and positive. Project participants and stakeholders have been co-operative and frank in sharing their personal experiences. They are enthusiastic and eager to move forward to continue the journey of building social capital and a caring society. It's time to witness social harmony in deeds rather than words. But it is very essential for the government to hear these voices and take the lead to mobilize different sectors to build up a warm, caring and strong community.

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Appendices

- I. Members of the Research Team for the program Review of CIIF Projects**
- II. List of CIIF Projects in the HKU Study**
- III. Focus Group Discussion Guidelines**
 - III.a For stakeholders/service users**
 - III.b For stakeholders/service users (Chinese version)**
- IV. Familiarization Visits**
- V. List of focus groups and number of participants**
- VI. Social Capital Indicators**

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II. List of CIF Projects in the HKU Study

<u>Project name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Period</u>
「再創明天」-職業傷病復康者盡展所長義工 伙伴計劃 0013-01D Volunteer Partnership scheme for Those Rehabilitated from Occupational Injuries and Disease	香港工人健康中心有限公司 The Hong Kong workers' Health Centre Ltd	01/08/03-31/07/04
「母嬰康逸社」婦女及社區互助網絡計劃 0070-01D “Healthy Mothers-to-be” - A Women and Community Networking Project	循道衛理觀塘社會服務處基層在職人士服 務部 – 母嬰康逸社 Kwun Tong Methodist Social Service Grassroots Occupational Service Unit “Healthy Mothers-to-be” Club	18/11/04-17/11/05 01/04/03-31/03/05
香港明愛家庭服務- 家庭服務大使計劃 0151-01D Family service Ambassador Scheme, Caritas Family Service	香港明愛家庭服務 Caritas –Hong Kong Family Service	01/04/03-31/03/06
助人自助成長計劃 0015-01D Helping Others – Self Growing Project	基督教關懷無家者協會 Christian Concern for the Homeless Association	01/04/03-31/03/06
陽光社區計劃 0079-01C Sunny Community Programme	香港離島婦女聯會賽馬會婦女綜合服務中 心 Hong Kong Outlying Islands Women's Association, Jockey Club Women's Integrated Service	01/04/03-31/03/06
想創空間 – 北區青少年互惠計劃 0092-01C Space of Dream – Youth Employment Project in the North District	基督教香港信義會北區青少年綜合服務中 心 The Evangelical Lutheran Church Of Hong Kong North District Integrated Youth Service Centre	01/04/03-31/03/06
你我一家親，生活樂繽紛 0023-01C Project to Promote Family Cohesion & a More Colourful Family Life	博愛醫院朱國京夫人紀念幼兒中心 Pok Oi Hospital Mrs Chu Kwok King Memorial Day Nursery	01/05/03-30/04/05
寶田鄰舍動力-社區關懷網絡計劃 0113-01E Community Care & Networking Programme for “Po Tin” Residents	城市睦福團契 Urban Peacemaker Evangelistic Fellowship	01/05/03-30/04/06
荃郊網中人 0069-01D Collaborating People in Tsuen Wan Rural Areas	圓玄學院 The Yuen Yuen Institute	01/04/03-31/03/06
愛家教室 0017-01D	青暉婦女會	01/10/03-30/09/04

III. Focus Group Discussion Guidelines

IIIa. For stakeholders¹ / service users

- ▶ * How long have you been living in this community and joining this Project?
- ▶ * What are your impressions of your place of residence? What are the recent changes?
- ▶ How did you join this project? Comment on their outreaching efforts?
- ▶ * What types of groups/programmes have you joined? Can they satisfy your needs? Any changes after the programmes?
- ▶ * Any critical incidents or specific issues you have been impressed during the participation?
- ▶ According to your understanding, what this project is trying to achieve?
- ▶ To what extent, this objective has been achieved? And how to achieve?
- ▶ What are the Strengths and weaknesses of this project?
- ▶ * Can you make more friends after receiving this service? Can you share an experience of mutual support between you and other group members/friends?
- ▶ Do you agree to preserve this Project? What are the reasons?
- ▶ After joining this project, can your knowledge of community resources/services be enhanced?
- ▶ Any suggestions for improvements of the community you are living?
- ▶ * What referrals the Project has made for you? After referrals, do you still use this service?
- ▶ Have you introduced the project to other people, why?
- ▶ Have you participated in volunteer activities? What were your experiences as volunteers to serve others?
- ▶ Any suggestions for improving this Project?
- ▶ What is your perception of social worker's role in this Project?

¹ * not applicable

IIIb. For stakeholders² / service recipients (Chinese version)

- ▶ * 你係呢個區住咗幾耐？參加咗『計劃』有幾耐呢？
- ▶ * 你對呢個區嘅居民有乜嘢印象？你覺得近期呢區有無乜嘢改變或者唔同咗？
- ▶ 你點樣認識同參加『計劃』？你覺得『計劃』嘅宣傳方法/方式點樣？
- ▶ * 係『計劃』裡面，你參加過邊一類型嘅活動、小組？你覺得呢類活動/小組可唔可以滿足到你嘅需要同要求？參加咗呢類活動/小組後，覺得有乜嘢改變？
- ▶ * 係參加『計劃』嘅過程中，有邊件事你嘅印象特別深刻，可以講出嚟同大家分享下？
- ▶ 以你嘅理解，你覺得『計劃』呢一個服務，想為居民做到嘅乜嘢？
- ▶ 呢個計劃真正俾到居民乜嘢服務？我地可以從邊方面睇到佢係做到你所提及嗰種服務？
- ▶ 你覺得『計劃』呢個服務，邊一樣係佢嘅強項，做得最好；而邊一樣佢會比較弱，做得會無咁好？
- ▶ * 有無因為參加咗『計劃』嘅關係，你認識多咗朋友？請講下你係『計劃』裡面認識到嘅一位朋友，你哋一次互相幫助/支持嘅經驗？
- ▶ 你覺得而家嗰社區仲需唔需要『計劃』呢個服務？點解呢？
- ▶ 有無因為參加咗『計劃』，你對呢個社區嘅資源同埋服務認識多咗，點解呢？
- ▶ 如果你想改善而家住緊嘅社區，你有乜嘢建議？
- ▶ * 『計劃』有無介紹其他嘅服務俾你？介紹之後，你仲有無繼續參加『計劃』嘅活動，點解呢？
- ▶ 你有無將『計劃』介紹俾其他人？點解你會/無介紹俾其他人呢？
- ▶ 有無參加過『計劃』裡面嘅一啲義工活動？如果有，請講下你嘅服務經驗？
- ▶ 若果要保留『計劃』，你覺得可以用乜嘢方式/方法嚟繼續運作，令個『計劃』做得更好？
- ▶ 最後，你覺得社工係『計劃』當中，所擔當嘅角色係啲乜嘢？你點解會咁諗呢？

² * 不適用

IV. Familiarization Visits

<u>Project</u>	<u>Date</u>
Volunteer Partnership scheme for Those Rehabilitated from Occupational Injuries and Disease	21/01/05
“Healthy Mothers-to-be”- A Women and Community Networking Project	07/02/05
Family service Ambassador Scheme, Caritas Family Service	01/02/05
Helping Others – Self Growing Project	23/01/05
Sunny Community Programme	16/02/05
Space of Dream – Youth Employment Project in the North District	23/12/04
Project to Promote Family Cohesion & a More Colourful Family Life	03/02/05
Community Care & Networking Programme for “Po Tin” Residents	26/01/05
Collaborating People in Tsuen Wan Rural Areas	22/02/05
Family Education – Love and Caring at Home	02/02/05
A Neighbourhood Support Project for Buildings in Wan Chai	27/10/05
Sunshine Community of Lamma Island	26/10/05
Enhancing community spirit, social cohesion and the mutual assistance in the community that harmonize the atmosphere in Kwai Tsing	30/09/05

V. List of focus groups and number of participants

Project name	Service user		stakeholders	
	date	no	date	no
「再創明天」-職業傷病復康者盡展所長義工伙伴計劃 0013-01D Volunteer Partnership scheme for Those Rehabilitated from Occupational Injuries and Disease	11/5	4	25/8	3
「母嬰康逸社」婦女及社區互助網絡計劃 0070-01D “Healthy Mothers-to-be” - A Women and Community Networking Project	18/5	9	3/6	3
香港明愛家庭服務- 家庭服務大使計劃 0151-01D Family service Ambassador Scheme, Caritas Family Service	23/5	11	7/6	2
助人自助成長計劃 0015-01D Helping Others – Self Growing Project	1/6	3	1/6 23/10	5 2
陽光社區計劃 0079-01C Sunny Community Programme	9/6	5	9/6	4
想創空間 – 北區青少年互惠計劃 0092-01C Space of Dream – Youth Employment Project in the North District	6/8	3	6/8	1
你我一家親，生活樂繽紛 0023-01C Project to Promote Family Cohesion & a More Colourful Family Life	28/6	6	28/6	2
寶田鄰舍動力-社區關懷網絡計劃 0113-01E Community Care & Networking Programme for “Po Tin” Residents	22/6	7	22/6	7
荃郊網中人 0069-01D Collaborating People in Tsuen Wan Rural Areas	16/6	5	16/6	5
愛家教室 0017-01D Family Education – Love and Caring at Home	22/6	8	22/6	8

VI. Social Capital Indicators

Structural Dimensions of Social Capital

Network Types (Bonding; Bridging; Linking)

Network structure (Size; Porosity; Frequency; Density; Communication mode; Transience/mobility; Power relationships)

Network composition (Family-In-household; -Ex-household; Friends; Neighbours; Colleagues; Organisations/Groups; Commercial; People in general; Acquaintances)

Normative Dimensions of Social Capital

Network qualities (Norms; Trust/Trustworthiness; Reciprocity; Sense of efficacy; Cooperation; Acceptance of diversity; Inclusiveness; Common Purpose; Social participation; *Civic participation/*Community Support; Friendship; Economic participation/interest)

Network transactions (Sharing Knowledge; Information; Introductions; Sharing Support; Physical/financial assistance; Emotional support; Encouragement; Integration into community; Common action; Negotiation; Applying sanctions)

Positive effects of social capital (Network development; Identity and sense of belonging; Increased knowledge/understanding; Increased confidence in community; capacity to achieve goals; Community resilience; Satisfactory locus of control; Lowering of transaction costs; Conflict resolution)

Negative effects of social capital (Social exclusion or intolerance of difference (unbalanced bonding; Reduced family functioning (unbalanced bridging); Corruption (unbalanced linking); Community breakdown)