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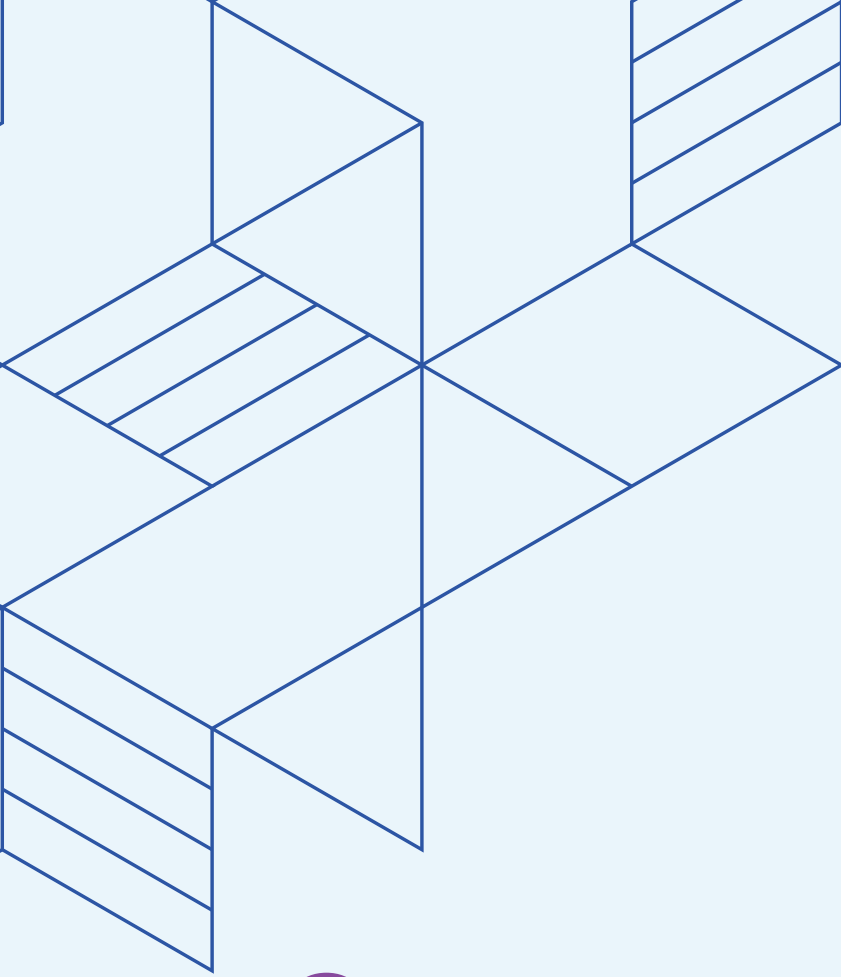


Community Development Practice During the Pandemic

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●●● Introduction

As a professional practice aims “to work with communities to achieve participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice” (IACD, 2018, p.13), engaging with communities is one of the key practice areas to allow practitioners to promote changes with different community stakeholders. Community development practitioners identify needs, assets, networks, interests, motivations, dynamic and opportunities in the communities and facilitate communities to develop groups and activities to enhance changes through ‘organizing’. The covid-19 pandemic and the related social distancing measures brought different challenges to the practices since chances for relationship building and maintenance were substantially reduced. However, it is identified that practitioners from different organizations had tuned their engagement strategies to cater for community needs. Here are some of the challenges and effort that we observed from the project participants of the NGO Innovation Hub (NIH).



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●●● Challenges in Community Engagement

The social distancing measures launched by the SAR government to safeguard public health brought constraints to projects in their service delivery as well as implementation of community development goals. Engaging residents who go to service centres to seek for resources is one of the main methods that workers from different NGOs used for development of trustful helping relationship for service delivery and facilitation of community participation. However, the covid-19 pandemic affected the opening hours of different service centres as well as residents' participation in centres. Residents especially those who were not familiar with the administrative routines of centres and not having closed relationship with the embedded communities stay isolated at home to avoid the risk of infection. Like many NGOs, projects of NIH actively tuned their engagement strategies to fit for the changing needs of the communities. It is identified that new out-reaching efforts

catering for immediate needs of residents has increasingly been critical for relationship building. The example of workers from the **“Nufriends Project” of People Service Centre Limited** who changed their strategy from recruiting volunteers from schools to recruiting residents living in the communities as volunteers to distribute food packs to grassroots families testified to such change. In order to have an effective platform to allow needy residents to be identified by the centre promptly, WhatsApp's groups were set-up among the new recruits and promoted within the relevant service users. Through the WhatsApp's platform, delivery of food packs, health materials and daily necessities for the immediate needs of the infected and/or quarantined residents became possible. Moreover, it facilitated the relationship building and maintenance between the centre staff and volunteers in this difficult time.



●●● Existence of Digital Divide of Different Levels

In the past two years, use of digital devices and internet access, or the information and communications technology (ICT) for social networking and communication became essential tools to complement the substantially reduced face-to-face interaction in Hong Kong. Despite high ICT penetration in Hong Kong, existence of challenges in digital access due to inadequate infrastructure and digital devices, which is the so-called first level digital divide, was identified among groups of service users in the communities. In addition, there were groups suffering from inadequate grasp of digital knowledge and skills, which relates to the second level digital divide. Their needs of support of various kinds for digital access were exposed. Notably, less-educated parents and older adults from low-income families were among those found suffering from digital divide at different levels. To cater for the community needs, the **“Wellness Home and Community” project of Boy’s and Girl’s Clubs Association** provided learning workshops for grassroots and new-arrival parents to equip their ICT knowledge and skills to deal with the digital divide. At the same time, the NGO grasped such an

opportunity to facilitate their parent-child relationships throughout the digital assistance process. The project staff shared the complexities experienced by parents who failed to attain the needed digital literacy for exercise of their caring duties as different related activities like school learning, and health information access, were implemented through the online platform. The workshops not only succeed in enriching the digital literacy of parents but also the parent-child relationship as a result. The service examples of different projects revealed the digital divide experienced by different disadvantaged groups as well as their new service needs of bridging the digital divide.



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●●● Use of Hybrid Mode

Resembling many NGOs in Hong Kong, NIH projects tended to use a hybrid intervention model for community engagement and development, which involves mixing intervention through online and offline platforms, even though the conventional face-to-face or offline approach was believed to be more effective. For example, the **“Step Out - from ME to community” project of Health in Action** organized most of their planned activities through the online platform. The project originally planned to mobilize student volunteers to identify for their communities the renowned restaurants embedded through restaurant visits and food tasting. However, to balance the public health concerns while facilitating students’ participation, students were asked to start an online blogging after they tasted the food through takeaway orders. The **“X Generation Co-Learning at Market” project of HKSKH Lady MacLehose Centre** which planned to use the conventional indoor and/or street markets as the platform to facil-

itate intergenerational relations through mutual learning between older adults and youngster about the conventional markets is another example, which has shifted the project into a hybrid mode. It recruited and trained older adult volunteers to be YouTubers to assist children and teenagers in their grasp of knowledge of the conventional markets, thus enriching their future skills. Running workshops in hybrid mode were noticed to be effective in equipping volunteers with video shooting and editing skills for participation in the YouTube platform. After the decline of the fifth wave, the older adult volunteers and the teenagers cooperated in shooting and broadcasting of the YouTube videos to introduce the culture and knowledge of the conventional markets for learning by children.

The hybrid mode of intervention demonstrates its flexibilities for different projects to continual their implementation of service delivery to the communities under



a new context of lockout and social distancing. Nevertheless, it is identified that traditional face-to-face approach is more preferred by workers since there were different new challenges affecting the resultant outcomes of such hybrid mode, such as availability of functional digital devices for service users; difficulties in facilitating network connections through the online platform; identification of relevant data and resources through digital networks for use by service users; and adequate grasp of digital knowledge and skills in operating different applications, and organizing programs with service users online. In addition, workers need to develop new intervention skills, including, for example, skills in assessing the conditions of and relations among group members as well as facilitating the group process when the group is run through on-line platform.



●●● Changes in Community Partnership

Community partnership is a critical element of community development practice and social innovation. It is believed that networks between different organizations in the communities can bring positive effects for community development. However, it is found that covid-19 pandemic brought challenges to existing partnership because community partners of some projects were affected by the social distancing measures too. For example, close of schools forced some projects to change their plan since the projects could not count on their community partners, the schools, to recruit the needed volunteers. Other than the challenges highlighted in the example of People Service Centre mentioned earlier, there are example of utilization of supports from new community partners identified from the practice of the project of “**Companions in Adversity Family Support Project**” of Wan Chai Methodist Centre for the Seniors. The project aimed at serving the middle-aged cancer patients through community care. To respond to the rapidly changes of community needs in the fifth wave of the pandemic, the centre re-activated partnership with NGOs, medical professionals and churches in the community. It organized volunteer teams of members from these community partners to provide immediate support, such as delivering personal protective devices and living necessities, to the service users under the devastating circumstances.



●●● Conclusion

In the past two years, the covid-19 pandemic brought unforeseen challenges to community development practice through limiting possibilities of face-to-face interaction for community engagement, relationship building and maintenance, which are essential intervention tools for community development services. This is particularly critical as community engagement is indispensable for social innovation of services for disadvantaged communities to be possible. At the same time, there emerged unimaginable new community needs encountered by grassroots families. Although the traditional face-to-face approach in service delivery is preferred by many of the projects, new form of engagement, the hybrid mode of intervention, and development of new community partnership were noticed to possess the potential of continual community development amid a disastrous context critical against daily interaction. Reflection upon and consolidation of related experience will facilitate development of critical components in community development practices for the new arena.

Reference

IACD. (2018). Towards shared international standards for community development practice. http://www.iacdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/IACD-Standards-Guidance-May-2018_Web.pdf

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●●● About NIH

NGO Innovation Hub 2021 - 22 (“NIH” hereafter) successfully accomplished in August 2022. The success of NIH relied on the joint efforts of the project participants to create a co-learning circle for the sharing of service practice wisdom under the difficult time in the Covid-19 pandemic. The Hong Kong Council of Social Service is preparing a seminar to be held in December and will invite the project participants of NIH 2021-22 to share their practice wisdom gained and observations in terms of changes in the community development intervention model under the context of unprecedented Covid-19 crisis.

HSBC Hong Kong Community Partnership Programme (“CPP” hereafter) launched in September 2022. This year, the program launched with the aim of helping disadvantaged communities rebuild and recover from the impact of the pandemic with two key focuses - “Well-being” and “Future Skills”. For NIH, a total of 12 CPP projects have been selected this year. With the lesson learned from the fifth wave of the pandemic that social welfare service was significantly affected by stringent precaution measures, it is expected that the co-learning circle would demonstrate its impact by promoting use of flexible and innovative models for community engagement and intervention for social capital building as a result.

In the following, we will introduce to you the 12 selected NIH projects.



Together We Build-our Healthy Community

Health In Action

●●● Project Summary

As Kwai Tsing district is one of the most severe outbreak districts in the 5th wave of Covid-19 in Hong Kong, the residents are facing noticeable challenges in physical, psychological, economical as well as social aspect. Mutual help spirit among residents turned to be more valuable in this context.

This project aims to unite residents by promoting healthy eating and community health, to grasp the situation of their post-pandemic lives, and to support their holistic health through a series of health and social activities. Home-based dietary consultations, trainings for “fridge magician”, and co-creation of “nutritious” restaurants not only helps re-establish healthy eating and living habits of the residents, but also enhance connectivity among residents and empower them to make change to the menus of local restaurant.

In addition, we work together with different stakeholders in the community to build a healthy community, as well as increase the cohesiveness in and resilience of the community.



2

RE-ConNET, Sham Shui Po Community Support Scheme

Evangelical Lutheran Church Social Service
Hong Kong Essence Hub

●●● Project Summary

Positive social connections are key to resilience! This scheme adopts a collaboration of social service interventions with church community networks to address the needs of residents in Sham Shui Po District.

It mobilizes the strengths and resources of grassroots women and young retirees to support the socially isolated elders. Through paid voluntary service, volunteers are given chances to contribute to the society. At the same time it helps reduce their financial burden, build social capital, foster neighborhood connection, as well as develop community support networks.

This project is also committed to raising public awareness of personal well-being and strengthen the resilience of the community against adversities through diversified health promotion activities.





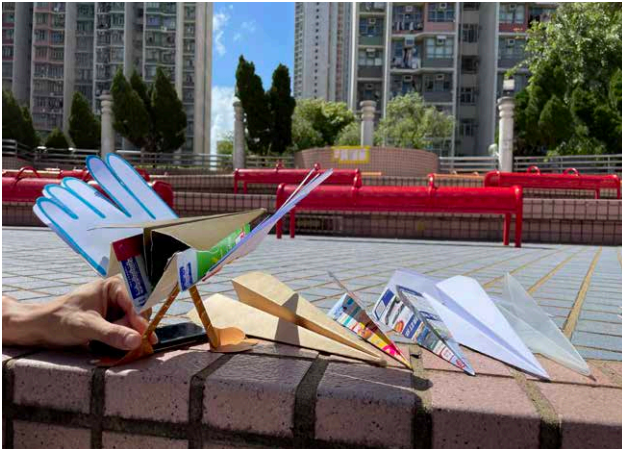
3

Scheme for Improving Hygiene and Green of Three-nil Buildings in Tsuen Wan

Asbury Methodist Social Service
HELP Community Service Centre

●●● Project Summary

“Three nil” building, which refers to building without any owners’ corporation, resident organization and property management’s service, is not rare in Tsuen Wan District. It is common for new-immigrants and residents living in sub-divided units to reside in these buildings due to relatively low rental level. However, garbage collection is unavailable for some of the buildings due to lack of management, not to mention environment decoration or environmental-friendly facilities. Therefore, the scheme aims to mobilize the residents to maintain public hygiene in the buildings and facilitate them to take part in the greening and environmental protection.



4

Tin Shui Wai Play Station

Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association
Tin Library

●●● Project Summary

The project aims to share the joy of playing with the youth in Tin Shui Wai and make them reacquaint the community living under the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are mainly two major parts under this project, namely Toy Design Workshop and Game Design Workshop. The youth participants are invited to design unique various toys and games with recycling materials through identifying community landscape. Prototypes created will be demonstrated in the first stage sharing - Tin Shui Wai Trial Station for collecting opinions from different community groups of Tin Shui Wai. Those views and suggestions will be considered to modify their prototypes for the final sharing.

During this process, it is expected to create opportunity for both participants and residents to communicate and re-discover Tin Shui Wai. The final products and rationale behind will be shared on various online platform that allows more people to enjoy the joy of playing.

5

Nutrition Support Program for Families Living in Sub-divided Units in Kowloon City

People Service Centre

●●● Project Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic hits Hong Kong's overall economy. Grassroots families have been facing significant economic difficulties and unemployment problems. For residents living in sub-divided units, they had to contain budget for foods and limit food choices to deal with reduction of income and high rental level.

To reduce health risks caused by the hardship, this project facilitates a cross-sectional cooperation between social welfare and medical care sector, linking resources from different sectors to support these families. These families will be trained to become nutrition ambassador in order to build up mutual support spirit in the community, as well as raise public awareness of poverty issues to induce change and empowerment for disadvantaged groups.



6

3D Printing Wheelchair Repairing Service Team

Direction Association for the Handicapped

●●● Project Summary

3D printing is highly efficient and customizable. Wheelchair users would no longer be obsessed with parts replacement as 3D printed parts can be used to replace those damaged parts or parts that are unavailable from the market.

This year, we plan to continue our 3D printing courses with a target of 20 disabled volunteers to be trained. This would be a great opportunity for wheelchair users to acquire 3D printing skills and design wheelchair accessories that suit their needs most by themselves. Besides passing on design and modelling skills, beneficiaries are empowered to help themselves and other wheelchair users through the process.

In addition, an add-on disinfecting antibacterial coating service is provided this year. The coating applied on wheelchair surface can create a long-lasting protection from bacteria and germs, easing users' concerns about contracting Covid-19, and reducing the anxiety.

The project also offers 240 sessions of wheelchair maintenance service. They will be encouraged to help in service by 3D printing technology.





7

Project “REHEAT” Community Story @ Wan Chai

Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service
Wan Chai Integrated Child and Youth Service Centre

●●● Project Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic has reduced face-to-face contact among people. It may be difficult for people to adapt to normalized living in the future.

Therefore, the project plans to recruit a group of young people who are interested in filming and multimedia production by micro-film and film production combined with community-oriented cooperation intervention. Bringing the youth an In-depth understanding of the community and neighbors, including the elderly, ethnic minorities, and families living in sub-divided units. Promoting the integration of “old and young + ethnic culture + different social and economic backgrounds” in three tasks - “Stay together Interview”, “Store Recovery Collaboration” and “Community Reconstruction” enables the youth to learn from the life experiences and spirits, such as perseverance of the community members. Meanwhile, it also brings the community members positivism and enthusiasm with talents and ideas from the youth to build a positive and caring community as a result.

In addition, the youth participants will produce 24 episodes of thematic short films on community figures, which will be broadcast on online social platforms for the public, to arouse public attention. And through the collaboration with the local schools, it can facilitate the sustainable development of ethical education.



8

Life of Toys

The Young Men's Christian Association of Hong Kong

●●● Project Summary

The problem of toy disposal in Hong Kong is worsening. A survey conducted in 2019 found that 65% of children in Hong Kong own 50 or more pieces of toys, and nearly 15% reported that they lost count of the number of toys they had owned. With 35% of parents spending \$2,000 a month on toys, 70% of toys that fell out of favour would be discarded to make room for new ones.

Since the majority of toys are made out of plastic that making sorting and recycling more challenging. Broken toys being discarded in landfills also take a long time to decompose. Handling plastic by incineration leads to emission of toxic gas that may cause increasing damage to the environment.

The purpose of this project is to extend the lifespan of toys through raising public awareness, toy recycling, donation and upcycling services. It is expected to promote waste reduction from the source and increase the re-use of second-hand toys at public level in order to promote the concept of resource saving and sustainable development in the long run.

9

Sustainable Food Lab

Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres
Jockey Club Tai Wo Centre

●●● Project Summary

Sustainable eating and consumer habits have always been some of the greatest concerns in society. Women, as one of the major family carers, take the leading role in environmental change, especially when coming to the part of the family eating practices.

In this project, it provides opportunities for women to develop their potential, and to promote sustainable farming and eating culture from individuals to family, and to the community, paving the way to build a sustainable environmental and economic platform in Tai Po District. These will be achieved through a series of in-depth and inter-connected activities with different stakeholders such as schools, farms, and local NGOs, which allow students, women, and the general public to understand and experience the significance and benefits of local farming and sustainable food education.



10

“Drug Use Master” Face-to-face and Online Community Education Program

Community Drug Advisory Council

●●● Project Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed the limited knowledge of Hong Kong people on using correct over-the-counter drugs to relieve the symptoms and manage their health. As a result, it costs an extra burden on the public health system due to delayed treatment of the infected members of the public. The situation could have been changed if people had known more about safe medication. The knowledge could also help people making wise drug purchase, stop stockpiling medicines at resale prices, and relieve the rising trend of youth drug addiction in Hong Kong. The existing text-based approach of safe-medication education is insufficient to respond to urgent social needs. Thus, Community Drug Advisory Council proposes the “Drug Use Master” Face-to-face and Online Community Education Program. The program is developed with our experience in applying experiential learning approach for health education and the overseas evidence-based cases of using electronic games for drug education.

With a combination of face-to-face education programs, innovative e-education platform, and parent-child artwork creation, the program is expected to serve more than 230,000 people in a more cost-effective way to enhance the users’ knowledge, attitude, and skill level related to correct drug use and drug abuse prevention. It is expected that the program will create more robust community in response to the threat of infectious disease and drug abuse.





11

Cross-Gen Gerontech Inventor

The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army Yau Ma Tei Integrated Service for Young People

●●● Project Summary

This project uses technology and innovation to respond to the needs of the elderly through cross-generational groups. It adopts the “Design Thinking Learning Model” to develop youth with SEN’s future skills such as creativity and logical thinking during the learning process. On the other hand, young senior citizens can benefit from this project by contributing the experience and competence to the society when co-creating innovation projects with youths.

Schools and innovation enterprise are invited as partners to promote STEM concepts, cross-generational harmony and provide concrete technical supports about the ideations.

12

X Generation Co-Creation Learning at Market

H.K.S.K.H. Lady MacLehose Centre

Dr. Lam Chik Suen District Elderly Community Centre



Project Summary

This is an enhanced edition of the 2021 funded project “X Generation Co-Learning at Market”. Market is still used as a learning platform and the activity design emphasizes children’s participation and reflection. Project responds to the Goal 12 of the United Nations Sustainable Development: “Responsible Consumption and Production” as the goal of stimulating children’s thinking and learning. The elderly will play a supporting role in the project.

Through online and experiential activities, such as market tours, children will be guided to observe the consumption patterns, review their consumption habits, and reflect on the marketing model of packaged foods at markets, letting children imagine how to practice responsible consumption and contribute to waste reduction.

At the end of the project, creative ideas of the elderly and children will be gathered into shopping tips and upcycling waste reduction toolkits, so as to encourage families and the community to pay attention to the issue of “responsible consumption and production”.



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