



Department of Applied Social Studies Serves the Society

SICHUAN EARTHQUAKE KILLED THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE

"If lives would disappear in a matter of seconds, what then really matters? If mountains would be shaken and the earth be torn, what stays forever? If despite all the pains and the hardness, we see hope and hear laughter, what we need to fear? So it is time to get moving to work on our core responsibility."

*Mr. Joannes Lee,
Project Assistant of
Project Rebuild*

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Project Rebuild



(from the cover page)

On 12 May 2008, Sichuan was hit by an 8.0 magnitude earthquake. Thousands of buildings and schools were destroyed. Nearly 80,000 people were killed, and millions were left homeless. With a view to helping Sichuan rebuild lives and reconstruct homes and schools, the Department has collaborated with Sowers Action to initiate a joint project, "Project Rebuild."

According to Sowers Action, the budget required for rebuilding a prefabricated school is in the region of HK\$300,000 to HK\$500,000. In view of this, fundraising activities, such as the Charitable Fundraising Vegetarian Dinner, various charity bazaars, and the Sichuan Field Practice Exhibition, were launched by CityU staff, students, and alumni. With huge involvement and much effort from various parties, the project has raised a total of HK\$404,349.94. Sowers Action has now received this amount as a donation to contribute toward rebuilding the province.

Words from the Head



With the glorious ending of the great Olympic Game at Beijing, the Sichuan earthquake. Though lots of meaningful initiatives and projects should recognize that improved community building, work and coordination need to be integrated as part of an overall strategy. It requires a holistic approach, let's hope for the best in tomorrow.

Apart from fundraising, rebuilding human lives is another focus of the project. In order to show our care and support for the victims in the affected districts, a quake-area visit to Sichuan province was organized in August 2008 under the coordination of Dr. K.K. Leung and Dr. T.Y. Lee. Experienced professionals within the Department assisted by providing a total of 13 pre-visit training sessions in Hong Kong on counseling and mental health to selected volunteers. In the Sichuan visit, our project team then worked hand-in-hand with Southwest Jiaotong University to offer a series of training workshops to professionals, teachers, university students, and volunteers in order to provide both tangible and intangible services for victims. These services might include recreational groups, English tutorial classes, and also some field study groups, within the towns of both Peng Zhou City and Mian Zhu City.



Follow-up collaboration between the City University of Hong Kong and Southwest Jiaotong University will be launched in the near future to conduct further community research in order to investigate the current needs of quake-affected citizens in Sichuan.

Reported by Mike Ng

Now it is time to think about the future welfare of the survivors of the earthquake. What are being implemented in Sichuan Province, the Chinese government's working environment, community supportive structure, and resource allocation policy. Sustainable development in Sichuan for the future. Sustainable development in Sichuan for the future. Sustainable development in Sichuan for the future.

Prof. Alex Kwan

'Lao Zi said: 'Nature does not act from any wishes to be benevolent ; it treats all things equal.' (老子曰：「天地不仁，以萬物為芻狗。」) The Universe has no color, no appearance, and no compassion; its operation is simply natural, free and open. No matter how ruthless the world is, people always struggle with it. In the Sichuan earthquake, again we heard the earth's mercilessness, but we still persist in keeping the dignity of love and sincerity in our human world."



Dr. K.K. Leung, Co-convenor of Project Rebuild

"The Project provided golden opportunities for participants' collaboration with Southwest Jiaotong University. It was not only rich in content, but inspiring and envisioning. I personally found the learning most enjoyable even with a bit of sadness while seeing the aftermath of earthquake."

*Ms. Kathy Leung,
Coordinator of Training*



"For Sichuan earthquake victims, imminent threats are gone, but the challenges ahead are no less overwhelming and disheartening. The lives of peasants in mountainous rural areas in China have always been very difficult. They have to rely on their family and pieces of small land claimed from the hill, with little or no formal support from the Government, not to mention the damage of different natural disasters, let alone corrupted government officials. Given this assumed self-reliance, our country is very reluctant to set up a comprehensive pension scheme for peasants. As a result, the old-age security of the peasants in rural China is standing on very thin ice."

What I have done in Project Rebuild so far is too little to be significant."

*Dr. T.Y. Lee,
Co-convenor of Project Rebuild*



A BSSSW Year 3 student, Sonya Kan Wing Yin was invited to SKH Bishop Mok Sau Tseng Secondary School to share her volunteer experience in Sichuan on October 20, 2008. In the sharing, Sonya helped students further understand the situation and encouraged the students to provide help to the victims in the long run. Here is part of her sharing:

"...After having joined the field study group in the trip to Sichuan with a closer contact with the victims, I could see them facing the future positively in spite of many uncertainties. The trip helped me understand myself as well as my social work profession more..."



地震无情人有情 抗病防病业于勤

Rehabilitation and Employment of the Disabled



Toby Yip

Since 31 August 2008, the People's Republic of China, including Hong Kong SAR, has been a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities. People with disabilities should be entitled to equal opportunities of employment and to enjoy fair returns for their contributions. However, what are the current trends and developments related to the employment of people with disabilities? The answers can be found in interviews with

a social work major, Toby Yip, and with an expert in rehabilitation, Dr. Joseph Kwok, Associate Professor of the Department of Applied Social Studies.

Toby Yip is a final-year student majoring in social work. He is now on placement, and works with chronically ill patients on vocational rehabilitation. Despite his own physical disability, he wants to get a good job after graduation, like all students studying at CityU. However, he has foreseen the potential obstacles of employment that he could face due to his disability:

"To be honest, a person with a disability like me has to cope with more limitations than others, both physical and environmental. The physically disabled may not be able to engage in certain kinds of activities as readily and easily as people without such disabilities do. For example, it is difficult for me to engage in certain kinds of activities, such as a study tour and a home visit. In addition, working overtime is too harsh for me because sitting for more than eight hours is too exhausting."

"To be honest, a person with a disability like me has to cope with more limitations than others."

Apart from the difficulties arising from the particular physical condition of a disabled person, a typical work environment may also have some barriers facing people with a disability:

"Taking my placement agency as an example, at the beginning of the placement, I could not enter the centre because it provided no access for people with disabilities. Although the problem was solved afterwards, it reveals the fact that many organizations do not have barrier-free access for people with physical disabilities yet," Toby added.

The aforementioned physical limitations and environmental barriers do not remove all hope for the physically disabled. According to Dr. Joseph Kwok, an expert in the rehabilitation field, the Government 2007 Rehabilitation Program Plan adopts a tripartite approach, and intensive and continued efforts are being launched by the Commissioner for Rehabilitation and



by the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee to build and strengthen tripartite networks to promote the work and employment of people with disabilities. Since October 2008, in-depth exchanges have been held by concerned governmental organizations with business and professional networks in the private sector, with District Councils, and with major NGOs to map out action plans and to share good practices. One example of cross-sectoral collaboration is that of the selective placement service of the Labor Department, which provides different kinds of employment services for those with disabilities, including vocational counseling and assessment, job matching and referral, as well as follow-up services. All these measures and endeavors are likely to focus on and improve the career prospects of the physically disabled.

“I am happy to see that more resources from the Government and NGOs are being allocated to help employment for those with disabilities,” Toby said. However, he thinks that the Government should invest more resources in promoting the idea that people with disabilities are competent in many respects, so as to build up employers’ confidence in employing people with disabilities, and also to encourage employers to offer funding support to sustain the employment of those with disabilities in the private sector.



Dr. Joseph Kwok

With regard to the society at large, Toby thinks that the public should learn to accept and get along with those with disabilities. In fact, employers’

The competence of people with disability should be recognised. With equal opportunities, people with disability can contribute to the society as much as others.

acceptance and an open attitude toward people with disabilities are the most important considerations for people with disabilities: “With the acceptance of employers, it is easier for other employees to accept people with disabilities, and to help us integrate into a new working environment,” Toby added.

To conclude, many people with disabilities have special talents and are well-respected in our society. Despite the limitations and challenges they face in life, people with disabilities can still contribute to society when given suitable opportunities. Although constrained by his own physical disability, Toby is, in a number of ways, as competent as or even more competent than other people. People with disabilities deserve equal employment opportunities, to promote their competence and to gain respect from the general public.

Reported by Mike Ng

REFERENCES:

1. <http://www.rehabsociety.org.hk/6.0.html>
2. *Asia's world city - Cross-sectoral Collaboration to Promote Employment for Persons with Disabilities*

Department Highlights

The SS Department has successfully organized a series of conferences over the past few months:

15-19 DECEMBER 2008

Over 15-19 December 2008, the SS Department organized an international conference, "Social Capital and Volunteering in Modern Ageing Cities: Building Intergenerational Inclusion." The conference addressed three issues confronting modern cities and their inhabitants, service providers, and policy makers. These three issues were: social capital, volunteering and other forms of social participation, and ageing.



4 & 5 DECEMBER 2008

An International Conference – Social Risk and Social Policy in Changing Asian Societies – was organized on 4 and 5 December 2008. The theme of the conference was around the concepts of risk and a risk society, and their application in selected Asian societies, including Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China.

2 OCTOBER 2008

On 2 October 2008, the SS Department and the Correction Services Department (CSD) of Hong Kong co-organized a forum for the public and for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to help them better understand the concept and operation of social enterprises and how this relates to offender rehabilitation.

AUGUST 2008

In August 2008, Dr. Xiaodong Yue (Associate Professor of SS Department) delivered a talk on the topic of "Adolescent Idol Worship – Exploration, Discussion and Recommendation" to share views with the public on the phenomenon of idol worship among young people and its psychological, social, and cultural factors.

MAY 2008

To enhance the sharing, discussion, and collaboration of the "Quality of Life" research, the Department co-organized the "Asian Chinese Quality of Life Conference 2008" in May with the Hong Kong Society for Quality of Life, Guangzhou University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and Sun Yat-Sen University.



X-Consequence, Project X:

A new momentum of “learning excellence” prowling among SS’s first-year and final-year students

This year’s freshmen in SS have found a new place to hang out, ask questions, and find support during the first few months of their university education and on. This place is not a physical location but a cognitive conjecture, a project called “Project X,” created to provide SS’s first-year and final-year students with all the comforting resources, motivating role models and instructors, and stimulating services that they need to excel in their academic studies and in their professional preparation.

“Learning Excellence” is the project’s name, but you would hear SS people referring to it as “Project X”. As deputy project coordinator, I reveal to you what the project has done and will continue to do to create in our students a new momentum of “learning excellence.”



Started Right Where We Were.

Project “X” is only new in terms of its program name and infrastructure. In fact, it has been built upon the LPG (Learning and Personal Growth) course. In 2006/07 and 2007/08, SS’s former LPG had been offered to all CityU’s first-year undergraduates. In early 2008, writers of the original LPG (Professor Sik-Hung Ng, Betty Eng, Raymond

Chan, and Anthony Yau) proposed to formulate LPG into a full-course learning-enhancement program for all SS’s first-year and final-year students. Now, Project X, with Alice Chong as project coordinator and a conceptualizing team of instructors (Anthony Yau, Vincci Lau, Jo Wu, Stephanie Lai, Remus Kwok, and myself), has formally evolved into two new co-curricular courses branded with official course codes (XSS A001 for first-year students, and XSS P001 for final-year students).

With such expansion in scope and vision, additional goals have been set forth in three areas of development: personal, interpersonal, and academic/professional development. In the personal realm, students are motivated to become lifelong learners (the program aims to hone their learning skills and learning motivation); in the interpersonal realm, students are inspired to become community contributors (the program aims to develop their interpersonal and public relations skills



Remus Kwok

Katty Ho

Alice Chong

Stephanie Lai

Ricky Cheung



and deepen their sense of awareness to needs of community); in the academic/professional realm, students are sharpened into well-prepared job candidates (the program aims to enhance their job hunting skills and help them better transit from school to work).

the OBC, students can discover their leadership potentials, nurture their team-work spirit, and develop endurance to solving survival and many other types of tasks that life would bring.

Project X is a place to build career-oriented networks of students, alumni, and professionals. To give current undergraduates a sneak peek at the job market and various types of occupational opportunities, a formal career-talk and high table dinner is designed to meet this purpose. Distinguished guests from all walks of life will be invited to talk about definitions of effectiveness in job performance, and students will, in turn, increase their awareness of their choices and potentialities.

How Are Students Inspired toward Excellence?

Project X is a place built upon learning communities (LCs). LCs are a popular form of undergraduate activities taken place at many universities overseas to arouse intellectual- and interpersonal-connectedness among students and between students and the university. Our learning communities do not just gather scattered students together by year and discipline but also offer them personalized support to help them adapt to university's demands and prepare themselves for the future job market.

Project X is a place to foster students' intellectual curiosity on topics that are usually not elaborated in their disciplines but are very important and relevant to their academic/professional development, such as paper writing, presentation, job hunting, and interviewing skills.

Project X is a place to train up students' leadership, team work, and problem solving abilities. Two types of co-curricular activities will serve this purpose: the Outward-Bound Camp (OBC) and the Community-Awareness Projects (CAPs). Through organizing CAPs and solving hands-on problems at

X-Consequence?

When will we witness the "X-consequence" resulting from Project X? We will have to wait for its participants to reveal it to us. So, please stay tuned for more reporting on Project X. X-Consequence?

Reported by Katty P. Ho

