

The quiet achievers and change makers - Social Entrepreneurs and Voluntary Workers making an impact

While successful entrepreneurs, managers and civil servants are well known in the community, we must not ignore “the quiet achievers and change makers” - people in NGOs and social community service organizations engaged in creating jobs for the underprivileged, as well as those who have dedicated and committed to voluntary work quietly and yet steadfastly over the years. They build the backbone of the community and their efforts have contributed to the stability and harmony of the community through nurturing a donation and contribution sub-culture, thus strengthening the basic fabrics of Hong Kong which often times go unnoticed. As Mahatma Gandhi has rightfully put it, “A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history”. Margaret Mead was also full of admiration of these quiet achievers and change makers. She said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” And Pierre Omidyar was full of praise of this group of people, stressing that “: We exist for one single purpose: so that more and more people discover their own power to make good things happen. We are building a network of participants, because we cannot do this alone.”

Over the past sixty plus years since the end of the Second World War, and particularly since the early seventies of the last century, we have seen many graduates from the University of Hong Kong offering themselves to this stream of social change, not for pursuit of fame, status, recognition nor monetary reward, but for selfless contribution and the well being of the deprived. Their devotion gradually extended beyond Hong Kong and since the late eighties of the last century, we have seen many of them went to the Mainland in the pursuit of their quiet achievements as they instigated social changes in mainland China. Many of them donated heavily in the medical and educational fields as well as care for the elderly and the orphanage in the inner provinces where their assistance was most needed.

We therefore reckon it is important that we do not forget this group of alumni of the University of Hong Kong in our impact study. **Despite the fact that this group of quiet achievers and change makers may not be conferred medals such as Bauhinia Award or titles such as Justice of Peace, their collective efforts and contributions must not go unnoticed.** We have a vast number of alumni who over the years have been supporting social enterprise development, investing in social enterprises and offering incubation and support services for social enterprises, researching and promoting social

enterprise practice in Hong Kong and the region, researching and promoting civic society development, integrating art and animal charity, helping and contributing to the visually hampered and enabling them to fulfill their dreams, empowering young people to make a difference, pioneering impact investing, transforming food waste into organic fertilizer, promoting venture philanthropy, promoting core value education, showcasing abilities of disabled people, promoting fair trade products, providing employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups, promoting alternative environmentally friendly and healthy lifestyles, promoting organic farming, pioneering environmental protection, serving on a wide spectrum of NGOs and civic organizations, alleviating poverty through trade, providing training and consulting services to social enterprises, enabling less privileged people to restore self worth, dignity and hope through craftsmanship, introducing modern educational methods to mainland China schools, pioneering sustainable local food production targeting at low emission and waste, promoting independent media, promoting ethical consumption, training and empowering a new generation of talented youth, inspiring and preparing young people towards success and transforming them into responsible global citizens, providing alternative education for the mentally impaired, providing affordable barrier free transportation, providing employment opportunities for the elderly, donating special purpose clinics and rehabilitation services to the sick and the elderly, promoting home safety and terminal care for the aged, providing speech therapy services to children of low income groups, offering long term medical care to low income communities, offering free legal aid to the under privileged, as well as endeavoring in efforts towards enhancing Hong Kong's composite competitiveness.

With the restoration of Hong Kong's sovereignty by the Peoples' Republic of China in 1997, we have seen an irreversible trend of convergence and integration between Hong Kong and the rest of China. We are convinced that this group of quiet achievers and change makers will continue to make an impact to both Hong Kong and China, and ultimately will contribute towards building a more caring, enlightened and harmonious community for the betterment of the Chinese people at large.

While most of the people in this admirable and respectable group would prefer to remain anonymous, we consider that it is nevertheless not inappropriate to at least briefly mention some of them and highlight some of their achievements here (albeit not necessarily the most significant with the greatest impact to-date).

CHUA Hoi Wai is business director of the HK Council of Social Service in which he oversees the work related to policy and social research as well as development of

social enterprises. He is in charge of the HKCSS key researches on poverty and social security. He set up the HKCSS-HSBC Social Enterprise Business Centre in 2008 to provide capacity building, joint marketing and exchange platform for local social enterprises. He is a social worker by profession, President of the HK Social Workers Association and also Founding Director of the People's Council on Sustainable Development and HK Social Entrepreneurship Forum.

TSE Ka Kui is a management consultant and president of HK Society for Training and Development. He is founding editor of Social Entrepreneurs Newsletter, editor of the first book on social entrepreneurship in HK, chairman of the HK Social Entrepreneurship Forum, member of the Ashoka Support network in HK. He has also co-founded a social enterprise to bring “dialogue-in-the-dark” to HK and China. He organized the Chinese translation of the book “Everyday Legends: Stories of 20 Great UK Social Enterprises” which came out in Chinese in 2008. He has been a pioneer in the promotion of social enterprising since 2000.

Ernest LEE Shu Wing has dedicated himself to a wide range of community services over the past 30+ years strenuously and is appointed Commissioner of the Civil Aid Service since 2008. He is also member of Rehabilitation Advisory Committee, member of Committee on Access (promoting affordable barrier free transportation), and member of the Mental Health Tribunal.

Angie TSANG has been pushing the development of social work in Mainland China since 1988 through her HKPU capacity. Besides the numerous training and exchange programs that she has delivered, she has also launched a Master in Social Work program in collaboration with Peking University and has nurtured more than 160 graduates who are mostly professors from various universities in China. She has also launched the China Social Work Research Center in Peking University.

CHAN Kai Ming is a medical doctor and is now with CUHK. He has been quietly contributing to the community in the medical field for years, and he started a project called “Stand Tall China” after the Sichuan earthquake in 2008. It is a rehabilitation program to help the young victims whose arms and / or legs were amputated in the earthquake to cope with the trauma and to live their new lives with employment opportunities for this group of disabled and disadvantaged earthquake survivors.

Vincent KWAN Pun Fong has been an ardent contributor to social community service organizations since his youthful years and he is dedicated to quietly help the

underprivileged especially the visually impaired since 2000. He is currently honorary treasurer and council member of Retina HK, honorary treasurer and council member of Project Vision and Vision for Action, council member of HK Society for the Blind and member of its finance committee. He is member of the Chan Dang Social Services Foundation fund (set up by his late father-in-law in 1997) which donates to the needy from time to time in Hong Kong and China, in a wide variety of medical, educational and rehabilitation for the elderly, helping people in distress and despair. He is well connected with social enterprises and has been promoting venture philanthropy. He has developed a web based system with focus on audio capability for HK Society for the Blind which helps the visually impaired to learn more effectively and is in the process of introducing modern educational methods to mainland China schools.

Thomas TSO Man Tai has been instrumental in inspiring and preparing young people towards success and transforming them into responsible global citizens over the years, enhancing the composite competitiveness of the younger generation. He has been instrumental in organizing programs for youngsters in HK to take up training and internship programs in mainland China, thus encouraging them to understand about the motherland. His efforts have been facilitated by his official position as resident representative of HKSAR Government in Beijing.

Stephen LAM has been active in assisting self-help groups suffering from long term diseases for many years. CHONG Chan Yau has been promoting fair trade and serving on a wide spectrum of NGOs and civic entities. HA Siu Pang has been enthusiastic in helping the Social Enterprise Summit which acts as a conduit between fund providers and social entrepreneurs. Saretta KAM, despite her suffering from the hereditary eye disease of Retinitis Pigmentosa, and TAM Sai Hung, despite his inability to see, have been inspiring and preparing young people towards success and transforming them into responsible citizens. HA See Hung has developed an audio based system for the blind people to communicate via computers, with tremendous impact in restoring hope and brightening up the hearts of the users. Maureen TAM has spent her past 21 years working in Hong Kong Society for the Blind. She has been developing and launching new services for the well being of the visually impaired, as well as promoting and advancing rights and equal opportunities to meet their genuine needs for dignified living.

Perhaps the most impressive of all was the contribution by Dennis S C LAM, a renowned ophthalmologist. He has set up the famous Project Vision Charitable

Foundation in 2006. Project Vision strives to provide sustainable and quality eye care services in rural China through establishing charity eye centers and providing intensive trainings on surgical skill. Project Vision's ultimate goal is to avoid all unnecessary blindness and free the patients and their families from the burden. With the support from all sectors of the society, Project Vision has been setting up charity eye centers in remote and rural areas in China to provide high quality, affordable and sustainable eye surgeries for the poor and the needy. To eliminate cataract blindness remains its primary mission. The Project plans to establish a total of 100 charity eye centers, train 1,000 "rural" eye doctors and perform 1 million cataract surgeries in China by year 2020 in support of the global initiatives "Vision 2020: The Right to Sight" initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB). The mode of operation of Project Vision is typical of a social enterprise, with a global vision. It works upon the following principles:- "Teach a man to fish, and he will eat for a lifetime", one-off donation for continuous development, "multi-tier pricing system" to support affordable high quality surgery, centralized purchasing to reduce costs, and one stop at a time to eliminate avoidable blindness.

Dennis S C LAM has also set up the Action for Vision Eye Foundation (AFV) in 1999, a tax-exempted charitable organization dedicated to enhancing the standard of eye care and helping the needy suffering from eye diseases. It is always AFV's commitment to helping the prevention and elimination of blindness in Hong Kong and China. The AFV Eye Foundation aims to develop and provide more outreaching programs for the community, provide public education on important eye care issues, nurture and provide high quality training and development programs for eye care professionals in Hong Kong; develop new treatment techniques and strategies for patients with currently "incurable" eye disorders; undertake advanced and innovative research and development programs; and help in upgrading the standard of eye care in China and its neighboring region through development programs for the professionals in mainland China.

(Reported by Vincent KWAN Pun Fong)