

# YOUTH VOLUNTEERISM IN HONG KONG

RESEARCH PAPER PUBLISHED BY MWYO





**“Only a life lived for  
others is a life  
worthwhile.”**

*Albert Einstein*

# Youth Volunteerism in Hong Kong

**Volunteering** is one of the most direct forms of contribution to society. Through citizens' voluntary service, community as a whole accumulates social capital, which include trust, harmony, as well as communal cohesion and support. Besides, volunteers themselves benefit from the service as much as the service recipients. The benefits are countless and invaluable, whether they are psychological – such as sense of wellness, efficacy and satisfaction – or practical – like the social network, knowledge and skills gained.

2. Due to these reasons, volunteerism is an integral part of any civilised society, the manifestation of civility as well as humanity, and the realisation of universal values – liberty, philanthropy, and respect for human rights - which transcend differences in race, gender, social status and other attributes.

3. To cultivate volunteerism in a society, like promoting other societal values, youth should naturally be the primary target. Planting the volunteering spirit in youth, through appropriate encouragement and support, not only can we ensure a sustainable supply of volunteers, but also cultivate their affinity to society as well as a positive and constructive mind-set to tackle social issues, thereby creating a more harmonious society.

4. Coincidentally and unsurprisingly, volunteerism and youth development overlap in many aspects and are complementary in nature. Through interacting with people from diverse walks of life, voluntary service constitutes a practical platform for youth to learn outside classroom and build their self-awareness and identity. The experience, skills and knowledge acquired through voluntary service will continue to impact youth in their future professional endeavours.

## Purpose

5. The above given, this paper aims to map out the landscape of youth volunteerism in Hong Kong and proposes ways to better it. However, it should be recognised that while all volunteers serve community in one way or another, their commitment levels, motivation factors, needs and wants differ. There can hardly be any generic solutions to boost volunteers' participation and enhance their experience. Therefore, this paper ventures to categorise youth volunteers into three groups according to their volunteering behaviours in order to understand how specifically their needs can be better catered for:



- 1) Ad-hoc: those who participate in voluntary service on an ad-hoc basis;
- 2) School / Corporate: as required by school / workplace; &
- 3) Committed: long-term and high-impact volunteers.

This paper will focus on the specific needs of these three types of volunteers and how those needs are met currently, with a view to:

- a) encouraging more youngsters to participate and experience volunteerism;
- b) increasing the commitment level of the existing volunteers; and
- c) enlarging the impact of the existing committed volunteers.

6. Before diving into the need analysis, this paper will first give an overview of status quo of youth volunteerism in Hong Kong and discuss the benefits of volunteering for youth development.

## Status Quo

7. Thanks to the concerted efforts of government policy support and heightened promotion and public education, volunteerism has gained momentum in the past two decades. According to the figures of the Social Welfare Department, the number of registered volunteers has increased more than six folds from 173 000 in 1998 to 1.27 million in 2016. The gross amount of volunteer hours has also increased from 3.8 million man-hours in 1998 to 24.2 million man-hours in 2016<sup>1</sup>.

8. Youth take the largest proportion of registered volunteers. In 2015, among the 1.27 million registered volunteers, 43.5% or more than 547 000 of them were youth aged 13 to 25. More than half (55.4%) of the youth in the age bracket were registered volunteers<sup>2</sup>.

9. A few factors may have been conducive to the drastic increase in registered volunteers:

a) Proactive government policy support

The Government has been committed to promoting volunteerism in Hong Kong and actively doing so since the later part of the 1990s. It set up a Central Office for Volunteer Service in 1997<sup>3</sup> to develop the ecology for volunteer service in a more coordinated manner. District Co-ordinating Committees on Volunteer Service were set up in the 11 districts under the Social Welfare Department to assist in the implementation of the promotional strategies. The Social Welfare Department also set up a designated office on volunteer service in each of the 11 districts to provide assistance and support to agencies or organisations interested in setting up volunteer teams.

b) Civic-mindedness awakened by catastrophes

Hong Kong, the Mainland and the Asia Pacific region were faced with a few major catastrophes in the past two decades. During those times of difficulty, the people stood together and rose to the challenges, and the collective memory formed during those times have forged the civic-mindedness in Hong Kong people and kindled their volunteering spirit.

The SARS epidemic that broke out suddenly in 2003 claimed hundreds of lives in Hong Kong and overseas. Without a known cure, it created panic both locally and regionally. But Hong Kong people demonstrated their quality by upholding integrity steadfastly and sharing a strong community spirit. In particular, the Agency for Volunteer Service collaborated with the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) to recruit volunteers during the epidemic to assist in public education for anti-SARS prevention, caring for the disadvantaged communities, and supporting the anti-SARS work of community organisations. The initiative recruited more than 6 000 volunteers in few days, and gradually the number of participating volunteers reached 45 000<sup>4</sup>. This has left a distinct mark in the history of volunteerism in Hong Kong.

The South-Asian Tsunami in 2004 and the Sichuan earthquake in 2008 took hundreds of thousands of lives. Hong Kong responded swiftly to these disasters by providing both monetary and in-kind donations as well as volunteers for humanitarian relief. The empathetic responses of Hong Kong people and their keen reactions to those in need at these catastrophes have fostered their understanding of humanitarianism and Samaritan attitude.

c) Large-scale public events cultivating the volunteer pride

In these two decades, Hong Kong and the Mainland have held numerous large-scale international events, which required and attracted a large amount of volunteers. The Beijing Olympic Games in 2008, the Olympic Equestrian Events in Hong Kong in 2008, and the East Asian Games in 2009 were supported enthusiastically by thousands of volunteers, especially the young<sup>5</sup>. The sense of pride attached to these events made volunteering for them honourable and unmissable. Many of the volunteers have continued volunteering in other activities after these events.

d) Implementation of the New Senior Secondary curriculum

Since the New Senior Secondary curriculum was implemented in the 2009/2010 academic year, schools have been required to provide Other Learning Experiences (OLE) to students in five areas, i.e. aesthetic and physical education, moral and civic education, community service and career-related activities. In particular, schools are required to arrange for students to complete 135 hours of activities in community service, moral and civic education, and career-related experiences. As a result, many students have been exposed to voluntary service whilst they are at secondary school and understood the value of community service to themselves and others.

10. Despite the spike in registered volunteers number, it is noted that many of the volunteers may not be active. According to a survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2013, among youngsters aged between 15 and 24, only 20.6% of them have volunteered in the past 12 months<sup>6</sup>. It shows that efforts in mobilising volunteers, especially young ones, need to be intensified.

11. Volunteerism and youth development are two closely intertwined subjects with many complementary components. This paper will now turn to discuss their relationship.

## Benefits: volunteerism and youth development

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12. Youth development is a multi-faceted subject, cutting across a wide range of issues, from education, job-readiness, whole-person development, life skills and value education, to empowerment for civic responsibilities. Volunteering, with its diverse experiences offered to youngsters, is a multi-faceted platform supporting youth development holistically in many of the above-said aspects.

### Job-readiness

13. Volunteerism complements formal education in teaching youth practical knowledge and social skills required for the job market. These important qualities, such as leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, planning, management, creativity, communication and negotiation, are competencies highly sought after by employers in the twenty-first century.

14. Skilled volunteering is a new branch of volunteering starting to gain momentum in recent years. Rather than contributing their time for non-professional voluntary services, volunteers are invited to work on professional projects, using their day-job skills or professional knowledge acquired through formal or vocational education, for non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Oftentimes, these service projects fall within areas in that NGOs lack expertise. Examples of such areas include communication plan formulation, IT infrastructure revamp, digital marketing, as well as legal and accounting advisory.

15. Youth who volunteer for such skilled volunteering can use their professional knowledge in a different context to that of their employment, thereby enhancing their applicability of knowledge. As the projects are usually of a smaller scale and a less complex nature than their paid professional projects, youth will be able to take up more prominent roles in planning, leading and execution, which not only helps consolidate their knowledge, but also trains them up for skills that are needed for higher positions.

### Identity formation and value education

16. It is an old saying that one helps others to help oneself, and it still does hold true. Volunteers through their service connect themselves with people from all walks of life. By interacting with people who have different needs and come from different backgrounds, one gains more empathy and know the world better. Through understanding others from their standpoints, one can be more aware of one's own identity. Many young volunteers told stories of how they discovered their fundamental values, what they care about most, and what they want most in life, through voluntary services. Their heightened self-awareness will continue to be beneficial to them throughout their lives.

### Empowerment for civic activities

17. Volunteerism is an important and increasingly popular mechanism for young people to effect changes. It allows youth to see the impact of their service readily, cultivating their sense of efficacy in resolving social issues. Through voluntary service, youngsters also gain sense of belonging to society and develop their positivity, which will encourage them to participate more in civic activities. According to a study conducted by Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (TWGHs), highly engaged volunteers tend to live more happily and find society harmonious<sup>7</sup>. Volunteerism is likely to result in both constructive societal improvement and social cohesion.

18. Volunteering also encourages youngsters to extend their care for global issues. The United Nations has identified volunteerism as a key process for achieving its 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda<sup>8</sup>, and actively encouraged adopting a bottom-up approach in which young people were engaged and their voice heard through volunteerism. There are numerous overseas volunteering opportunities offered by international organisations, NGOs and student societies for youngsters, nurturing global citizenship among youth and realising the universal altruistic value of volunteerism.

## Analysis

19. Hong Kong youth are familiar with the idea of volunteerism. According to the statistics of the Social Welfare Department, there are 547 000 registered young volunteers, representing 55.4% of all youth in the age group between 13 and 25. These volunteers have different behavioural patterns (i.e. volunteering frequency, regularity, activity preference)<sup>9</sup>. Bearing in mind the danger of generalisation, this paper proposes to categorise volunteers into three groups, set out below.

### Ad-hoc

#### Pattern

20. This group refers to those who participate in voluntary service on an ad-hoc basis. They agree with the value of volunteerism and are willing to help the needy. Due to various reasons, such as lack of time, family constraints, and lack of a specific area of interest, they treat volunteering as a meaningful pastime, family activity or a hang-out event with friends. They usually receive information regarding volunteering opportunities online or through friends, family and community networks (such as the church and district offices of politicians).

#### Needs

**21. The service opportunities for these volunteers should therefore be abundant, varied and flexible, with information accessible to them effectively and appealingly. To attract these volunteers to serve more, the service programmes can be multi-serving in nature, so that participants can achieve other purposes (such as learning skills and spending time with friends and families) while volunteering.**

22. From focus group discussions with volunteers, it is noted that while the benefits of volunteerism are manifest, only actual experience can motivate youngsters to volunteer. While the majority of young people in Hong Kong are registered volunteers, there are still a large number of young people who have not volunteered due to various reasons. To enlarge the pool of young volunteers, **it is therefore critical that appropriate incentives be given to attract these young people to make the first step, have an initial taste of the benefits and then be encouraged to devote more time and effort into volunteering.**



#### How the needs are being met

##### Flexibility and variety

23. Currently, the voluntary sector provides a wide range of service opportunities to volunteers, such as elderly services, child care, environmental protection and animal rights. While some of these service opportunities require regular and long-term commitment, many of them are organised on a one-off basis, leaving flexibility to participants to decide whether to continue to serve on other opportunities.

24. Online volunteering has become a new global trend, with the heightened promotion by the United Nations Volunteers<sup>10</sup>. With the advent of information technology, volunteers can now contribute their expertise in skilled areas online, breaking geographical and time constraints. Currently, there are limited online volunteering opportunities in Hong Kong to attract youth who need flexibility in their volunteering schedule to help out.

##### Access to information

25. To provide timely information on the available volunteering opportunities, the Government, numerous NGOs and social enterprises have set up online platforms facilitating matching between volunteers and opportunities. However, not all of them are designed in a format appealing to youth volunteers and have meaningful value-add functions. Often-times, the opportunities posted on these platforms overlap. Given online platforms are the primary channels for this group of volunteers to look for volunteering opportunities, it is vital that these channels must be designed and run effectively and appealingly.



26. Focus group participants were invited to review few better known volunteer-matching online platforms. In general, it was observed that -

a) **these platforms were able to provide a great number and a wide diversity of volunteering opportunities**, perhaps because community organisations would post their volunteering opportunity on multiple platforms indiscriminately to maximise exposure;

b) **the target audience of these platforms were often unclear**. Without a clear definition of audience target, the platforms would be ineffective for both the recruiting organisations and the volunteers to get matched. The design of the interface of the platform and the choice of digital channels (i.e. desktop website, mobile app, or social media sites) would also depend on the target audience; and

c) the quality of the design and user experience of these platforms varied greatly. To appeal to the digital savvy population of Hong Kong, youth especially, it was suggested **that the platforms should review and make their design and user experience more youth-relevant and cool**.

#### Multi-serving in nature

27. Currently, voluntary service has been incorporated in various youth development programmes, such as leadership development and student award schemes, and as a requirement in some scholarship programmes. This has obligated students participants or scholarship and award recipients to take part in voluntary service. However, since these participants or recipients are usually the “elite” students who may have already had ample voluntary service experiences, this practice of incorporating voluntary service in youth development programme may not be effective in enlarging the pool of youth volunteers.

28. According to a study commissioned by TWGHs, the primary reasons for youth not to volunteers are namely, lack of interest and time as well as lack of company<sup>11</sup>. The voluntary sector can consider how to combine volunteering with other activities that interest youth and incorporate more socialising elements in programme planning.

#### Incentives

29. Currently, the incentives provided by the voluntary sector to volunteers can broadly be grouped into two types: practical and experiential. Practical incentives are usually relevant to the trends and needs among youngsters, such as tickets to the amusement parks, free subscription to entertainment services (e.g. music streaming applications) or other services. In recent years, voluntary sector has also been providing experiential incentives, including participation in large-scale popular events (e.g. sports event) or fun activities (e.g. outdoor adventures) and specially curated meetings with heavy-weights in the public and the private sectors.

#### **Case study: Time Auction**

*Time Auction is a platform set up with an aim to incentivise volunteers by rewarding them with opportunities to meet with celebrated individuals in society. Volunteers, having accumulated a certified number of hours of voluntary service for any social service organisations, can use those accumulated hours to apply for meetings with individuals with experiences that suit their own developmental needs and interests. Since its inception, Time Auction has organised meetings with notable individuals including Mrs Anson Chan (former Chief Secretary of Hong Kong), Mr Anthony Leung (former Financial Secretary of Hong Kong), and other figures in the business sector.*

30. From focus group discussions, it was learnt that the voluntary sector could consider social media opportunities as incentives for youngsters to join their programmes, leveraging on the popularity of social media platforms. More of this will be discussed at a later section of this paper.

## School / Corporate

### Pattern

31. This group of volunteers provides their services in compliance with school requirements or is encouraged by company culture. In the new senior secondary curriculum, students are required to provide community services within the Other Learning Experiences (OLE) framework. This has become one of the main reasons for youngsters to take part in voluntary services during their secondary school years.

32. The increasing emphasis placed by companies on their fulfilment of corporate social responsibility has also led to an increasing number of corporate volunteering activities. Employees are encouraged to participate in such activities. This creates a corporate culture as well as peer pressure obligating employees to volunteer.

33. While the original motivation for this group of volunteers to take part in voluntary service may not exactly be related to the altruistic purposes of volunteerism, one cannot deny that they are equally creating positive impact through their service to the needy in society.

### Needs

34. Due to the original motive of their participation, this group of volunteers is more inclined to notice the practical gains from volunteerism. As an incentive to attract them to volunteer more regularly, **in the service design, appropriate emphasis can be placed on enhancing the professional and personal benefits to the participants, such as enhancement of professional skills, networks, team building, business opportunities, and image building.**

35. On the other hand, it is important that these volunteers will be inspired from the “obligatory” voluntary service to commit to volunteerism in the future. In fact, research has shown that most of the people who were initially obligated to volunteer indicated that they would volunteer as much or for even more service hours after the obligation expired<sup>12</sup>. **The voluntary service sector is therefore well placed to inspire these volunteers’ commitment and encourage them to continue serving, by making sure that the voluntary service programmes are meaningful to both the participants and the service recipients.**

### How the needs are being met

#### Professional and personal benefits

36. Corporate volunteering programmes are increasingly popular among companies and their employees as part of the companies’ corporate social responsibility programme, team-building exercise and business networking effort. Corporates have been engaging the organisations in the voluntary sector to tailor-make corporate voluntary programmes for volunteers from their own company and business partners, maximising the professional benefits (i.e. networking and relationship management) from the programmes, alongside the social benefits to the participants and service recipients.

#### **Case study: HandsOn Hong Kong**

*Founded in 2007, HandsOn Hong Kong is a non-profit organisation dedicated to supporting the social sector by mobilising volunteers. Annually, it organises more than 1 600 volunteer activities and works with more than 70 non-profit partners.*

*Apart from recruiting volunteers for its non-profit partners, HandsOn Hong Kong also runs corporate programmes for corporate partners to achieve CSR and community engagement through a range of customised volunteer opportunities for their employees. With a fee, it provides full service to its corporate partners, which includes planning, organising, and managing projects, which are tailored to meet specific corporate requirements, such as incorporating team-building elements, skills-based volunteering or including customers or family members.*

37. Apart from corporate volunteering programmes, which are usually large-scale one-off events directly serving recipients, there are more young people devoting their time and effort to skilled volunteering, helping NGOs on aspects requiring their professional skills and knowledge, such as digital marketing, communications, and information technology. This will help the young volunteers expand the applicability of their skills, accumulate professional experiences and spice up their office work routine. However, this has thus far not yet been mainstreamed in Hong Kong.

## Meaningfulness

38. The psychological benefits of voluntary services, such as self-awareness, change of worldview, and personal growth, can only be felt effectively if volunteers are guided to reflect on the service experience and how it relates to themselves. Such self-perceived psychological benefits are crucial rewards to retain volunteers. From focus group discussions, it is noted that the majority of the corporate and school volunteering programmes were not placing enough emphasis on debriefing, therefore not yet maximising the meaningfulness of the programme.

39. It is also noted that whether it was school or corporate voluntary service programme, participants were seldom involved in the planning and selection process of service topics and delivery methods. This has resulted in half-hearted participation among uninterested youngsters.

## Committed

### Pattern

40. This group of volunteers are hard-core fans of volunteerism recognising the values and benefits of volunteering to society and themselves. Usually they have specific causes of interest, such as animal rights, child development, and care for homeless people. They are often attached to NGOs to provide regular and long-term voluntary service.

### Needs

41. For this group of volunteers, they are attracted to volunteer service due to both the developmental gains and altruistic satisfaction from participating. In focus group discussions, it was noted that committed volunteers appreciate that volunteering would enhance volunteers' interpersonal, communications and empathetic skills, provide them with insight into social issues and experience in civic engagement, and let them create impact on society through sustained services.

**42. It is important that they are properly recognised, so that their stories and learning can inspire other youngsters; they should have opportunities appropriate for their motivation and levels of competency and experience to enlarge their impact gradually; and support should be given for them to raise their own initiatives and call for support.**

## How the needs are being met

### Recognition

43. While recognition is generally not the key motivating factor for committed volunteers, it would be beneficial if their stories and experience can inspire their peers and mobilise more youth to volunteer. Currently, the Volunteer Movement administered by the Social Welfare Department runs a three-tier recognition scheme acknowledging volunteers' contribution according to their service hours. Apart from the recognition scheme, more can be done to enhance society's awareness of the impact made by these committed volunteers.

### Enlarging their impact

44. Hong Kong people are known for their professional competitiveness. With a strong career mind-set, high importance is being placed on climbing up their professional career ladder and creating greater impact through their jobs. While many understand and agree with the value of helping others through voluntary services, it appears that society is unaware that the same career mind-set can apply to voluntary service, whereby volunteers should be provided with opportunities to enlarge their impact gradually. Currently, there are no clear "career" paths where volunteers can take up more and higher-level responsibilities within the voluntary sector.

### Raising own initiatives

45. While many of these volunteers are attached to NGOs for regular and long-term service, they may also consider taking their own initiatives to organise voluntary service programmes themselves. At present, there are very few platforms where volunteers can propose their own ideas and call for community support.



Due to limited materials, we can only offer a maximum of 6 spots. If you are unable to attend after you have RSVP'd, please change your status of RSVP to 'NO' at least 48 hours before the event date to allow other volunteers to join.

See you there!

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\*Want to get more involved?\*

We're also seeking volunteer Chapter Leads to run micro-volunteering events around the city, just like this, but the options are endless... Get in touch if you're interested! Just e-mail Esther at [esther@causecorps.co](mailto:esther@causecorps.co) :)

#### Attendees (5)

[See all](#)



**Florence**  
Member



**Solomon Ho**  
Member



**Minnie**  
Member



**Yanam T**  
Member  
1 shared group



**Esther Wong**  
Co-organizer

🕒 Thursday, March 15, 2018  
3:00 PM to 5:00 PM

📍 **The Vault Cafe at Fringe Club**  
G/F, 2 Lower Albert Road (Entrance on Wyndham Street) · Central  
Look out for the green Cause Corps T-Shirt!



(Source: [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com))

## Suggestions

46. With the abovementioned analysis, this paper now turns to make suggestions on how to facilitate youth volunteerism in Hong Kong, specifically on ad-hoc, school / corporate and committed groups of volunteers as well as improving the ecology as a whole.

### Ad-hoc

*Adding social media elements on the volunteer-matching platforms*

47. Socialising is of primary interest to youngsters. According to the research commissioned by TWGHs, lack of company is among the top reasons for youngsters not to volunteer. This is corroborated with inputs received from focus group discussions that the most effective way to call for volunteers was through friends' referrals. On the volunteer-matching platforms, it is noticed that currently the social media play limited roles in publicising volunteer opportunities.

48. **Volunteer-matching platforms can consider partnering up with social media sites, and in doing so, letting participants know the potential participant list and share their participation on their own social media page** to call for their friends' support and participation. Online socialising platforms such as [meetup.com](http://meetup.com) or [couchsurfing.com](http://couchsurfing.com) use similar tactics in drawing participants, from which the volunteer-matching platforms can take reference.

#### **Case study: Meetup.com – a site for social activities**

*Meetup.com is a social activity website in which members can propose activities and invite fellow members to participate. The activities range from interest classes, tours, sport events, discussions and voluntary service. On this site, members are required to set up profiles with personal details (such as age, gender, interests, and hobbies). On the activity pages, it will show the details of the members who have signed up to the event, so that participants will know whether they have any friends participating and prepare for who they will meet at the event.*

### *Facilitating the participants' use of the social media in the programmes*

49. The social media is no doubt the most popular “hang-out” avenue for youth nowadays. On average, youth spend 7.7 hours per week on social media, sharing news, liking each other's updates as well as posting photos and videos about their daily lives. Apart from the recruitment process, the voluntary sector can consider enhancing the social media opportunities in the voluntary service programmes, which can serve as incentives to attract the social-media-oriented young crowd.

50. Suggested methods include **devising hashtags specific to the event, engaging photographers to take photos for participants (for them to post on the social media), choosing venues that are “instagramable”, tagging participants on the photos from the organisations' accounts.** The voluntary sector is suggested to engage their young volunteers to understand how they use the social media and devise a comprehensive set of social media guidelines for their programme planning.

### *Incorporating volunteering elements in interest classes / the practicum of qualification courses*

51. While the online world is dominating the lives of youngsters nowadays, interest classes, such as arts, music, crafts and cooking classes, remain as popular chill-out options for youngsters, be they as extracurricular activities for students or social gatherings for young professionals. Addressing the issue of lack of time and company, the voluntary sector can consider **incorporating volunteering and service elements in the interest classes, such as adding social service as an objective of the courses, tailoring the course content with the needs of service recipients in mind, and at completion, providing the final products to them.** This will enhance the multi-serving nature of voluntary service, letting youngsters have fun and learn while serving others.

52. Another way to enhancing the multi-serving nature of voluntary service is to include voluntary service in the practicum of professional and vocation qualification courses. Currently, some qualification courses require students to gain practical experience and apply the skills they have learnt in actual work setting, before they can obtain the qualification. **Consideration can be given to include voluntary service as part of the practicum requirement of the qualification courses in appropriate fields such as beauty and hairstyling, health-care, elderly services, counselling, information and technology, and design.**

#### **Case study: Hair-dressing course with a volunteering element**

*The Hong Kong Association of Hair Design provides certificate courses on hair-dressing which train students with a view to helping the elderly for hair cut in the future. Students will be equipped with the foundational hair dressing skills and be arranged to help the elderly at the end of course to put their learning into practice.*

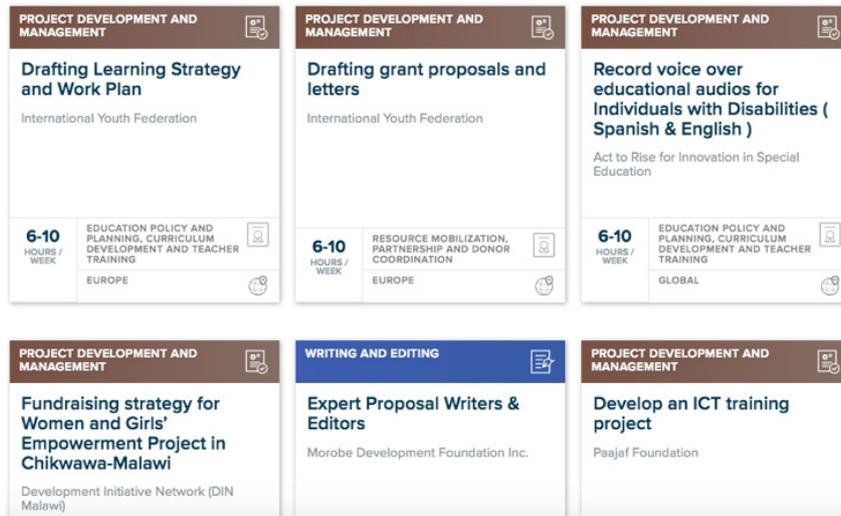
### *More online volunteering opportunities*

53. While the popularity of the Internet affects the way youngsters spend their time, it also opens up service opportunities for youngsters to help out online. Online volunteering is a global trend, where volunteers can flexibly provide services anytime and anywhere they wish using information technologies, such as online counselling, database management, translation services, website building, designing, and client servicing. **The voluntary sector can explore how to engage volunteers for online service opportunities.**



# 11 opportunities open

Displaying 1-11 - [Filter list](#)



(Source: onlinevolunteering.org)

## Case study: UN Volunteers online volunteering opportunities

A keen promoter of online volunteering, the UN Volunteers programme contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide and online. Online volunteering allows organisations and volunteers to team up to address sustainable development challenges anywhere in the world. As such, the UN Volunteers programme runs an online platform, where online volunteer opportunities are posted to invite participation from volunteers worldwide.

## One-social-issue-per-student

56. Schools are well-placed to instil in students the benefits of volunteerism and encourage them to participate in voluntary service. One of the aims of the new senior secondary curriculum is to enhance students' sense of civic mindedness, with the introduction of the Liberal Studies subject and OLE components. As part of the Liberal Studies curriculum, students need to complete an Independent Enquiry Study Report on a chosen subject of their interest. Students are also required to provide a certain number of hours of community service within the OLE framework.

## School / Corporate

*Corporates to consider providing voluntary service leave*

54. With the majority of their time being taken up by professional work, young professionals may find it difficult to start squeezing their personal time for voluntary services. However, if the voluntary services are provided within their usual school or work hours, they will likely be more receptive to the idea of serving and helping others.

55. It is therefore also suggested that corporates provide, as a CSR initiative, volunteering leave for its employees, to encourage employees to use their work time to volunteer. While this has been the practice for many multinational companies, local business and SMEs are yet to adopt this practice widely.

57. **It is suggested that schools can consider advocating a one-social-issue-per-student policy among its students** (similar to the advocacy for one-artistic-pursuit-per-student and one-sport-per-student policies), **where students from a young age can anchor on a social issue they are interested in, continue to learn about it throughout their secondary school life, choose relevant social service to fulfil the OLE requirement and use it as the subject of their Independent Enquiry Study.** This will link up the social elements in the secondary school curriculum, deepen students' understanding on social issues and encourage them to put their knowledge into practice, thereby not only promoting volunteerism but also achieving the aim of holistic education.

### *Incorporating debriefing elements in the programmes*

58. While it is common to include reflection and debriefing exercise in voluntary services with a strong youth development element, they usually go missing in corporate volunteering programmes. **It is suggested that when designing the volunteering programmes, organisers can consider adding debriefing and reflection elements as appropriate to reinforce the participants' learning and satisfaction from the service.** The beauty of volunteering is most evident when the participants can see the impacts they make on the service recipients. **In the debriefing process, emphasis should be placed on letting service recipients provide feedback to the volunteers direct.**

### *Involving volunteers in the service planning*

59. **Corporates and schools are suggested to consult employees and students on the types of voluntary services they are most interested in participating.** Currently, many of the service opportunities provided by the schools and companies are chosen and organised by school teachers, and the CSR Department or the Human Resources Department in company. If students or employees were consulted on the types and format of voluntary services they would like to participate in, it would give more ownership to the volunteers, inspire them to work for their passionate issues, and create a more meaningful experience, thereby retaining their volunteer spirit.

60. It is important that volunteers can help on projects and causes that they are passionate in. **To diversify the types of volunteering activities offered to corporate volunteers, corporates can consider partnering up with certified volunteer matching platforms,** which can help source volunteering opportunities that their employees are interested in from different NGOs.

### *Partnering up with professional firms for skilled volunteering*

61. As outlined in paragraphs 13 to 15, **NGOs can consider providing more skilled volunteering opportunities to youngsters.** It is a win-win situation, where youngsters can consolidate their professional skills while NGOs can enjoy support on areas in that they do not specialise. It is suggested that the voluntary sector partner up with professional firms and schools to recruit skilled volunteers for professional voluntary service.

62. **Corporates can also consider incorporating skilled volunteering in their staff training programmes** to enhance the applicability of young employees' skills in different setting as well as their other soft skills. Given the value-driven nature of the younger work force, allowing young employees to work on charitable initiatives can also improve their sense of belonging to the company as well as corporate image.

## **Committed**

### **Case study: Skilled volunteer matching platform**

*Local Motion is a matching platform ([www.localmotion.hk](http://www.localmotion.hk)) for skilled volunteers and suitable voluntary service opportunities, ranging from marketing, media planning and communications, for environmental and social organisations. The projects typically take 10 to 30 hours to finish, and can be done online and remotely. As a matching platform, Local Motion also provides consultancy services (including project management, vetting of volunteers, and volunteer communication and management) for social organisations.*

### *Proper recognition of their services*

63. While recognition should not be the prime source of motivation for the committed volunteers, if properly recognised, their precious experiences can be leveraged to disseminate the benefits of volunteerism as well as the impacts one can achieve through voluntary service, in turn motivating others to volunteer. As such, in designing the recognition programmes, consideration should be given to building a credible and transparent mechanism to attract applicants with meaningful and impressive volunteering experiences and enlarge the public relations impact for their stories. Organisers could also consider how to engage the public at an earlier stage in the process to arouse their interests in knowing the applicants' stories.

### **Case study: Volunteer recognition schemes in Hong Kong**

Currently, there are few organisations in Hong Kong that run recognition schemes for volunteers. Some are purely based on the amount of service hours served, while some include qualitative evaluation of the volunteers' services in their selection criteria.

The Government's Steering Committee on Promotion of Volunteer Service renders certificates to volunteers who have accumulated certain amount of service hours served in a year, by three levels: 200 hours for a Gold Certificate, 100 hours for a Silver Certificate, and 50 hours for a Bronze Certificate. Participants are required to keep a record of their services as certified by NGOs to apply for the certificates.

The Agency for Volunteer Service has been running a biennial Hong Kong Volunteer Award since 2005 to recognise volunteers who are outstanding in the following aspects – their contribution to community, their performance in the services, their involvement level as well as other special consideration factors such as capacity to overcome difficulties and break personal limits and barriers (such as physical ability, resources and qualifications) to achieve the objectives of their services.

### *Opportunities to take up more responsibilities gradually*

64. For many of these volunteers, given their passion and experience, they will be motivated if they are given opportunities to take up higher level responsibility and make larger impact. **NGOs are suggested to establish a “social career” model, encouraging and grooming volunteers to take up higher positions in the organisations** as they progress with more experience and skills. This can be done by **i) establishing more voluntary positions in all levels of NGOs' organisational structure, ii) presenting to volunteers a clear “career ladder”, including the responsibilities and the experience required, and iii) making it a policy to identify committed and capable volunteers at their day-to-day activities.** This will not only provide sustainable, committed additional human resources to the NGOs in all levels in their organisational structure but also create a greater sense of belonging among the volunteers toward the NGOs.

65. A whole-society approach should be adopted to create a **social career movement**. NGOs and voluntary organisations should review their organisational structure to see how volunteer positions can be established at different levels of responsibility and governance. The Government and voluntary organisations should join hands with the media in promoting and recognising the work and contribution of volunteers, creating more respect for the impact they drive

at their social careers. Employers should be encouraged to recognise the benefits of their employees having a social career to both the employees and the company, and accommodate as much as practicable. **A social career charter can be advocated among volunteers, NGOs, corporates, the Government and the media.**

### *Support to take their own initiatives*

66. With their history, experience with community and goodwill, NGOs are able to organise voluntary services that are predominantly agreeable and supported by community. Also due to these characteristics, some volunteers consider that NGOs may be less flexible in responding to social issues and may even show signs of conservatism. By organising their own voluntary services, volunteers can inject creativity in devising solutions to social issues, referring to their own professional experiences and knowledge gained from other exposures in life. This will have a catalytic effect for enhancing innovation and agility in social services.

67. That said, without community network and resources, it will be difficult for volunteers themselves to actualise their plans. It is suggested that **district-based online crowd-funding-and-sourcing platforms be set up** where volunteers can raise their own initiatives to tackle social issues and invite support from community partners, such as NGOs, District Councillors, schools, and the business sector. Working like a classified for voluntary service projects, volunteers can match up with suitable community partners who are experienced and able to offer advice, manpower, and in-kind support specific to the partners' business, functions, and expertise. For the community partners, there will be diversified and more innovative social service opportunities to choose from when they look for community relation and CSR activities.

68. To test out the responses of volunteers and community partners, it is suggested that the online crowd-funding-and-sourcing-platform can be piloted at one to two districts. Ideally, the pilot districts should have:

- i) a large pool of potential / existing volunteers, such as students and young professionals; and
- ii) obvious social issues that require innovative solutions.

**It is suggested that given the above consideration factors, Wan Chai and Shum Shui Po districts can be the trial districts. Social media or internet service providers can be lined up to set up district-based online platforms with easy-to-use, professional user interface. Targeted promotion will be conducted at district level, with a focus on schools, NGOs, and local businesses, to create a wide user base and build a community support network.**

## Ecology

### *Corporate support on volunteering*

69. With their financial resources, branding and manpower, corporates play an irreducible role in advocating volunteering. Apart from providing volunteer leave, corporates should consider how to create more volunteering opportunities by leveraging different professional expertise in the business community. It is suggested that **the Government can collaborate with the Hong Kong Council of Social Services and the Agency for Volunteer Service, to set up a Corporate Volunteering Platform**, and invite the participation of business chambers and companies to deliberate on corporate citizenship, innovative solutions to social problems and good case practices on employee-volunteer management.

#### **Case study: Canadian Corporate Council on Volunteering**

*In Canada, the Corporate Council on Volunteering was established for business innovators from all sectors (with companies such as Accenture, American Express, Deloitte, Manulife and PwC) to exchange views and synergise on organising voluntary services, conduct research, and promote the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement.*

### *Awareness on the economic benefits of volunteering*

70. Volunteering produces goods and services that are not captured by conventional economic statistics, such as the gross domestic product (GDP). Since the value-add by volunteers are not included in the GDP, the economic effects of volunteering are often ignored. The United Nations has called for governments and NGOs to quantify the economic contributions made by volunteering so as to increase social recognition for volunteers and their work.

71. Currently, there is no regular study on the economic effect of volunteering in Hong Kong. **It is suggested that the Government should conduct relevant studies regularly and promulgate the findings in order to raise society's awareness of the economic benefits brought by voluntary services.**

#### **Case study: UN Manual for measuring economic value of volunteering**

*The UN Volunteers programme supported the introduction of the Manual on the measurement of volunteer work, published by the International Labour Organisation and the John Hopkins University (JHU). The manual provides internationally recognised guidance for generating reliable, official data on volunteer work using a common definition and approach, for reference by national statisticians worldwide.*

## Concluding remarks

*"The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honourable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well." - Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

72. Indeed, an apathetic life would be much easier to lead, but like shooting stars, only by living with purpose and compassion as well as putting our lives to good use can we make our fleeting lives illuminating and meaningful.

73. In a modern society, where social circles are self-isolated and people segregated, through volunteerism we put our guards down and open ourselves up to connect with people from different backgrounds, fulfilling our respective basic needs of caring for others and being cared for. It adds strokes of starlight on our lives, the brightest when our lives' trajectories cross.

74. May our youth shine through working together to create a better society.

# YOUTH POLICY MATTERS

將聲音化為實踐，一份最切身、  
好貼地、夠長遠的青年政策，  
即將誕生。



youthpolicy

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# MWYO's Research Projects

#LetsTalkAboutIt - Sexuality Education in HK

June 2016

*Sex and relationship education (or "sexuality education") is essential to helping young people become happy and healthy adults. As they grow up, they have to deal with changes in their bodies, while trying to connect with their peers and making sense of conflicting messages from the world about relationship "shoulds" and "should nots". This study explores how technology has affected young people's dating norms, and more generally, their attitudes towards sex and relationship. It is suggested that sexuality education programmes should be reviewed and updated to take into account practices such as online dating and sexting, and be more expansive to address issues like gender roles, stereotypes, and sexual orientation.*

<http://mwyo.org/index.php/english/analyses/dating>

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Youth Financial Literacy in HK

August 2016

*This study examines Hong Kong youth's financial knowledge, behaviour, motivations and attitudes by way of a survey among 500 respondents aged 15 to 18. Findings show that there is a strong need for financial education for youth from low-income families. It is suggested that financial education should start young, and should be holistic and go beyond conveying knowledge, in order to foster proper attitudes towards money among youth. While schools should be the pioneer in promoting financial education, parents' role in encouraging good money habits is also important.*

<http://mwyo.org/index.php/english/analyses/literacy>

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Youth Financial Independence in HK

February 2018

*This survey aims to examine the situation of youth financial independence in Hong Kong and their views on the subject. The project consisted of two parts: (1) street intercept survey, which interviewed 1,073 Hong Kong residents aged between 21 and 35; and (2) focus group discussions, which consisted of three groups with 6 to 10 people each. Findings indicate that youth from different backgrounds might have different interpretations on 'financial independence.' Some want to be independent of parents' financial support; some want sufficient income to cover daily expenses and have enough savings for the emergency, and some hope to use their money and wealth freely.*

<http://mwyo.org/index.php/english/analyses/independence>

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