

“Serve, learn, and change” - Knowledge Transfer to Promote Social Changes: City-Youth Empowerment Project

Date of Submission

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Department

Applied Social Sciences

Principal Investigator

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Project duration

01 September 2012 - 31 August 2015

Source of funding

Teaching and Learning Fund

Link

<http://www.cityu.edu.hk/youeprij/>

Description

City-Youth Empowerment Project (CYEP) was established in 2005 as a non-credit bearing service-learning project open to ALL CityU students, mobilizing them to serve the underprivileged, to enhance civic and social commitment, and to integrate community practice-oriented knowledge to the academic field. With an overarching mission of promoting social changes in communities around us, understanding of structural obstacles and socially-exclusive values that are obstructing social inclusion are gained through community volunteer services. From April 2012 to date, 1,642 students have enrolled, 90% of enrolled volunteers are non-SS students. Thus CYEP takes up the role of providing opportunities for non-SS students to learn about social services and social issues, transferring core social work values to the whole university platform – which in itself, is a process of inclusion and knowledge transfer within the academic setting. Interactions between the SS students (10%) and non-SS students (90%) are also a transfer of knowledge and skills that enriches the service-learning platform. With over 30 community organization partnerships and through ongoing support provided by project staff, CYEP provides ongoing services for –

- New arrivals children and youth
- Children and youth from low-income households
- Children and youth from single-parent families
- New arrivals single mothers
- Children and youth with disabilities
- Children and youth from ethnic-minority background
- Women in emotional crises
- Men with family problems
- Adults with mental illness

- Hidden elderly
- Community engagement with the homeless
- Disability rights advocacy

The project is a platform integrating the university and various interest groups and communities - through implementing holistic service-learning experiences that are not only geared toward the service aspects, but also oriented in learning the changes needed to build a more inclusive society for marginalized individuals and groups.

Expected outcomes

***Student Outcomes:**

- Transfer of knowledge to non-SS students on effective helping skills, social consciousness, respecting the underprivileged, and understanding people with disabilities
- Aligning personal values to community goals through identifying with CYEP
- Developing critical thinking and problem solving skills through service experiences
- Enrolled SS students take on the leadership role on transferring skills and knowledge through services

***Community Outcomes:**

- Attaining community empowerment through collaboration with other social sectors and linkage to resources
- Increase resource base for communities in need
- Integration of community-based research into academic setting

***Social Changes Outcomes in Specific Areas**

- Academic support and mentoring with underprivileged children and youth: marginalized youth are more inclined to pursue their goals of obtaining higher education through building relationships with university students and early integration into the university platform (thus increasing upward mobility), reducing systemic obstacles in educational and work settings that stemmed from cultural and language barriers, connection to university platform ameliorates social exclusion
- Working with individuals with disabilities: volunteers will learn about the importance of a barrier-free society and the advocacy that is involved, issues of stigma and discrimination are addressed through the social integration, students gaining knowledge on social activism and disability rights advocacy
- Working with hidden elderly: promotes active aging through interactions that allow elderly to pass on their life experiences to younger generations – instead of the passive role only to

be served and helped. The participatory role provides the elderly a continuity of an active social role.

- Community engagement with the homeless: through a community-to-community relationship, further understanding of the issue's structural roots that require systemic changes, expanding perspective on homelessness as an issue of social injustice rather than mere predicaments caused by individual failings.