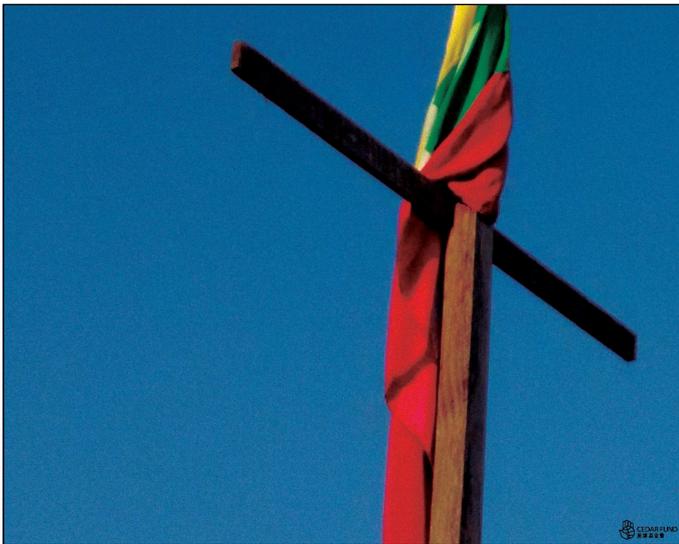


S H A R E

 CEDAR FUND 施達基金會 From Church - Through Church	Suite 504, Rightful Centre, 12 Tak Hing Street, Kowloon, Hong Kong		October - December 2017
	G.P.O. Box 3212 Hong Kong	TEL (852) 2381 9627	FAX (852) 2392 2777
	WEB www.cedarfund.org	EMAIL sharing@cedarfund.org	FACEBOOK CEDAR Fund



FOCUS ~ CHURCH AND COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

Local Churches—the Local Power of Community Development

Written and edited by: Tsun Wan Yan, Jojo Poon

The act of poverty alleviation often gives the impression of aid workers carrying with them gifts of livestock and funds sponsoring children and their education to some remote villages. However, have you ever considered that the local churches are better suited in bringing continued and sustainable development and support to the people in need?

To address the root causes of poverty for the poor, we must help the poor learn how to fish instead of relying on outsiders' help. To prevent dependency on foreign aid, which would consequently hinder community growth, the average span of a development project is usually five to 10 years, and the development organisation will exit the scene once development goals are fulfilled. Local churches are made up of local people, and the church is part of the community which has resources readily available for community development. So the church itself has the power to drive social changes.

Starting from 2013, CEDAR has been supporting and equipping the churches of Nepal, Myanmar, and Bangladesh with Bible-based community development knowledge and techniques. Despite community development progress, we humbly learned that God always has a specific plan for every

church, community, and believer that brings unique transformation.

Myanmar: From Scattered to Linked

Among the 150 families in the Ok Kyin village of Ayeyawaddy in southern Myanmar, the majority are Buddhists, only 15 families are Christians and another 15 families are Catholics. Most of them are farmers whose young ones have gone to work in surrounding towns or in Yangon. Our partner, the Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC), started hosting trainings in the region since 2011 which helped churches to connect with the local community.

“The weekly Bible study helped us understand the Bible, and as a result, there has been a revival in our village and more unity,” says one of the Christian trainees. The pastor who joined the training started partnering with a Catholic church and held youth events that encouraged youths with different faiths to connect. They were also encouraged to try new things, such as making soap and bamboo vinegar, hence, bringing new income for the village and churches.

Since 2015, MBC extended its support to local churches. They began to equip churches to become sustainable drivers of community development, responding to issues such as poverty, child rights, Disaster Risk Reduction, gender equality, public health, and environmental protection. We gladly witnessed churches realising their visions and roles in the community after second stage of training. They have since set up self-help groups with community members, communicated with government about their problems, and even led the disaster relief for the region last year.

Nepal: From Individual to Community

Nepal has one of the fastest-growing Christian populations in the world, but the numbers did not correlate to the level of connections between the church and the community.

“Have you ever experienced hate, bias, exclusion, and discrimination from society?” asks Pastor Dev Bahadur Rana, whose neighbours in his village, out of fear of punishment, cut ties with him as a result of his faith in Christ. No one offer any help when crop fails and when he got sick. He lived years of social exclusion until more families in his village come to Christ. But his experience has planted bitterness, hatred, and revenge in his heart.

What CEDAR and its partners are after have always been more than mere development, but we also hope to facilitate



reconciliation to mend broken relationships between man and God, himself, others, the society, and the earth, caused by poverty and injustice. We saw God's plan through this Nepali Pastor to not only use the church's advocacy and action to bring hope to the poor, but also to use His servant's life to bring about reconciliation and development.

Pastor Dev Bahadur Rana's church participated the church training programme held by CEDAR's partner, United Mission to Nepal (UMN). The Bible study and training inspired him to reconsider the true calling from God, "I should not just become a pastor of the church but a pastor for all, the salt and light of the world." He began to slowly let go of his deep-seated hatred and forgave the ones who discriminated against him. He started to work with different people to serve the community. He led the electricity generation project for his village, making use of nearby river. He also advocated for Creation Care among the believers and planted tree saplings in the forest and along the roads.

There are around 10,000 churches in Nepal, many of which are in remote villages. UMN believes that the rural churches, if being exposed to and mobilised by Integral Mission, would become indispensable development power of their respective communities through teaching, responding, serving, and following God's lead.

Besides preparing Integral Mission training materials and providing training for the churches, CEDAR has supported UMN in developing community leaders and in utilising their own resources to serve the poor. We also train young Christians, especially those from remote areas and poor families, to become the long-term community developmental leaders.

Bangladesh: Loving the Church, Caring the Community

Bangladesh is one of the slower developing countries in South Asia, impacted by poverty, political instability, and constant natural disasters. Christians make up 0.3% of the population, most of whom struggle to put food on their table, which affects their church lives, and causes dependency on aid. Tearfund Bangladesh (TFB), one of CEDAR's partners,

started training local churches in 2011 by first reestablishing their spiritual lives through regular Bible studies, then further planning to bring practical changes within and outside the church.

Tusher and his wife, Shipra, are faith leaders in their church. After the training, they started a Bible study group to encourage believers to love God and their neighbours. They also set up a women self-help group to regularly save money, manage their resources, and support the community. They later used the saved money to buy 6 goats and 6 pigs and lend them to the impoverished women in the community. They made some profit from the livestock, and they are planning to keep it up and serve their community in more ways.

Salomi's church was also a participant of the training. She experienced firsthand the blessing that came from her church practising the teaching of "love thy neighbours". She was a member of the church's prayer group, and she fell seriously ill that required a medical expenditure she and her husband could not afford. When the church heard about her situation, the members donated faithfully and sent her to hospital for treatment. "I'm so blessed here. The teaching of 'love thy neighbours' is truly transformational!" says Salomi.

The Mission of Christ's Church

Christ has set up the Church on earth as His body, and commended it to follow the Holy Spirit in extending His work on earth—to proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Luke 4:18-19). May God exercise His love and justice through His church; may CEDAR and all its partnering organisations and churches around the world continue to follow God humbly and faithfully for His Mission.



BACK TO THE BIBLE



We saw Clearly that the Lord Was with You (Genesis 26:1-32)

During the past 10 years, the Church was able to integrate into the Chinese community through the government's social service policy which encouraged non-profits to reach its residents. Yunnan was one of the pilot areas. Pastor Daniel Ding, Social Ministry Officer of Yunnan Christian Council, stressed that integration does not mean altering the truth we preach to fit in, but the challenge is to find a way to let our core values prevail. Isaac did not have a gleaming resume, but he reminded Pastor Ding how God could reveal Himself through us when we stand firm in our faith (v.28).

Isaac obeyed God's direction (vv.1-3) and lived out a unique faith. Pastor Ding thinks that churches in China should do the same in seeking God's will, to restore God's order through Jesus' teachings, biblical principles, guidance of policies, and to bring glory to God. Social service should not be a trend-chasing or profit-seeking act, but it should be an exercise for the Church to speak God's truth and let people see His glory (v.28).

Isaac planted crops during a famine and reaped a hundredfold (v.12) for he believed in God's power of creation. Jesus always awed the crowd for a bigger purpose, where men were asked to cooperate with him in faith and by contribution, like how he fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fishes as a result of a pure-hearted child's offering. Once the Church shifts its focus from what it lacks to what it could give, and believe firmly in God's promises and keep on ploughing like Isaac did, we will find opportunities in crisis.

Isaac's multiple instances of letting go of his hard-dug wells (vv.18-22) might come off as a sign of weakness, but he actually showed mercy towards others. Such mercy can also apply when we serve the community. Serving the community is a collective effort; an act of inclusion and empathy through God's eyes towards every individual He created. When we face resource deficiencies and still share, it is like walking the extra mile with the needy, and believing He will reward us.

Genesis 26 started with famine and ended in abundance (v.12). When Gerar and his adviser said: "We saw clearly that the Lord was with you" (v.28), they were amused by the testimony of Isaac. May we do the same by living out our faith in serving our community, and others will see clearly that the Lord is with us!

Read full article: <http://bit.ly/cedar-share226-biblestudy-e>

JOIN HANDS JOIN HEARTS



Child Rights for ALL Children

In Bangladesh, Dalits, who belong to the lowest social status group according to the caste system, are often discriminated against by the society, and have limited ways to sustain themselves.

In slums of Dhaka, CEDAR and partner, SATHI, are educating Dalit children and youths about their rights and the importance of education. The project has empowered youth like Taslima (middle in above photo) to become Peer Educator to advocate for child rights.

Read Taslima's story: <http://bit.ly/cedar-share226-cm-e>

TAKING ACTION



The Church and the Public—Three Pastors on Social Ministry

Written and edited by: Tony Chan

We interviewed three pastors: Rev. Anders Chan Ming-chuen (Associate Senior Pastor of Mongkok Baptist Church), Mr. Jonathan Au (Lecturer of Christian Ministry Institute; Deacon at Kai Tak Peace Evangelical Centre), and Ms. Teo Yun-sarm (Conference Parish Worker of The Methodist Church, Hong Kong) on their experiences in mobilising the Church to serve the community. The three all reached a conclusion that the Church should be a public space.

In recent years, more people started to pay attention to how

churches in Hong Kong are participating in social matters. Mr. Au urged us to think about the church's role in the community. Some people felt that the Church is like a private club, but Mr. Au suggested that the Church should actually be a public space, a space given by God to the community, of which the pastors and believers are stewards of the space, where everybody are welcomed to come in and enjoy.

Mr. Au's church operates a community centre that serves the local residents including Southeast Asian immigrants. He recalled that his church's initial purpose was to spread the Gospel through social service; they later learned through serving more and more people that serving is, in fact, an important mission itself.

"The most beautiful picture of the Church is not a gathering of similar people," Rev. Chan echoed. He wished the church could be a place that exercise social inclusion, where people of different race, class, and background could become friends and share freely. Not only could the wealthy give to the poor, but the poor could also support the wealthy in other ways, walking alongside each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Moreover, great relationships between the church and the community could never be achieved by only caring for those who decided to come inside church. Ms. Teo said it is important for brothers and sisters to be aware that taking care of newcomers is not just the responsibility of pastors and ushers, because we all share the ownership of the church space, it belongs to everyone who decided to come together and support each other.

Lastly, we discussed how the church and its leaders could provide support for believers who are involved in social matters, and the three all agreed the importance of spirituality in social service. The Church plays a major role in helping believers to connect faith with social participation, to which including more social elements in sermons is essential.

Read full article: <http://bit.ly/cedar-share226-hk1-e>



Mobilising Churches: From a Social Organiser's Perspective

Written and edited by: Tsun Wan Yan

The Church's role in Hong Kong's social development dates back to early missionary times. However, in recent years, churches in Hong Kong were often accused of being absent from major social discussions, except issues that spiked its interest. Daniel Man, Organiser of social organisation HK Citizens, thought that many churches participate in social services lack knowledge about their surrounding communities, hindering

them to understand the root causes of social problems. HK Citizens organises community to work together for common good, which involves mobilising churches within the community. Community Listening is their main approach in listening to community members' voices, helping them to learn about social problems and causes firsthand, then to work out further responses. Daniel shared a case with us about a partnering church. Many visually impaired people walked pass the church's parking lot exit regularly, but there were no guide paths to indicate the structure, thus creating difficulties for the visually impaired to beware of cars coming out of the parking lot. Daniel encouraged the church to meet with the visually impaired and listened to their needs to think about ways the church could help. Daniel said that this was a good start, since the conversation has strengthened the bonding between the church and its neighbours.

The Church has long been criticised for its exclusiveness, but Daniel had a different view, the Church need to first unite its members—every staff and member should listen and get to know each other. He shared a case that a pastor hosted a listening session after the church's Sunday service, and after the session, a sister said it was her first time to hear from an elderly, whom she saw every Sunday, to share about how he spends his day by just sitting on a bench at the park. She realised she never knew anything about him. Daniel hoped that HK Citizen's events can encourage Christians to listen and care for others in church, equipping them to eventually serve their communities.

In June, HK Citizens organised a guided tour in Shek Kip Mei, hoping that participants could learn how the Church had serve the community in the past and know that they can do the same today. Daniel believes that democracy is not just about politics and elections, but it is a lifestyle. He urged the Church to reflect on what democracy and social engagement mean, and motivate believers to start caring for and engaging in their communities, helping them to identify the root causes of social problems.

Read full article: <http://bit.ly/cedar-share226-hk2-e>

FULL VERSION OF THIS ISSUE



OPERATING STATEMENT

			Jul – Aug17
Income	Donations	HK\$	1,418,097
	Grants		-
	Appeal for Relief		46,737
	Other Income		3,447
			HK\$ 1,468,281
Expenditure	Projects	Asia	1,660,461
		China	798,571
		Africa	1,170,471
	Disaster Relief &		-
	Rehabilitation Projects		
	Education & Promotion		320,928
Administration		129,421	
			HK\$ 4,079,852
Surplus/(Deficit)			HK\$ (2,611,571)

►Remarks:

- The annual budget from 7/2017 to 6/2018 is HK\$17,317,310.
- From July to August, there is a total spending of over HK\$3.6 million, and
- reserve fund was used to cover deficit.

