


S H A R E

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FOCUS ~ FEATURE INTERVIEW

Interviewing the new Chief Executive—25 Years in the Making

Interviewer and editor: David Ho

Profile of Raymond Kwong
Name: Raymond Kwong
Family: The eldest brother of his family, married with a junior high son and grade school daughter.
Church: Baptized in the Kowloon Tong Church of the C.C. & M.A. Tai Hang Tung Church in 1991; Member of the Kowloon Tong Church of the C.C. & M.A. Tin Yiu Church; Currently attending the The Church of Christ in China Hop Yat Church (Ma On Shan)
Education: DipBA, MBA, DipCS. (Singapore Bible College), Doctor of Ministry (Bakke Graduate University)
Working experience: Banker (15 years), Compassion International (9 years), Mission to New Arrivals, Trans World Radio, CEDAR
Calling: Rekindling the hope of those in despair

The Making of a CEDAR Chief Executive

Raymond was a fresh grad and fresh baptized who work in a bank during the time of CEDAR's establishment. God used a full 25 years since then in preparing him to become the Chief Executive.

"To support the family's finance, my mother worked as a babysitter when I was young. I used to help her, and so I am comfortable holding a baby. When our eldest son was born, my wife was afraid to hold him up but I didn't have that problem," said

Raymond, whose college volunteering also involved visiting children homes. He had such proficiencies in interacting with children which certainly contributed to the birth of his ministries to them. Being the eldest son in the family, he wanted to be mentored but the need was not met, so he hoped he could provide that to the next generation.

"By the 7th or 8th year in the bank, I was sure I didn't want to stay there for life. Business cards piled up in boxes each year, but only a few of the people became real friends. I was thinking to become a teacher," Raymond said. He told God that he would finish MBA followed by a degree in the seminary, and eventually went to Singapore when he was studying DipCS.

"I didn't think I deserve to serve as I thought I was immature," said Raymond who was only trying to study Christianity systematically. His plan was disrupted one day, while a guest speaker whose name he had already forgotten, came to him out of the blue and asked, "Have you ever thought of becoming a pastor?" That question was stuck in him for days that followed. His wife's initial response was, "I'm not going to be a pastor's wife!" After a year of prayers, they could not deny that it was in fact a calling from God that has to be obeyed.



Raymond thought it was only logical to go through a pastoral training program if he was to serve, but the application form found its permanent home in his drawers as there was no confirmation in prayers. The next option is to look for a field where he could serve, but he could not find a church or organization in need of a banker without any pastoral experience either. Raymond came to ask God for a position that could at least utilize half of his expertise. At that time, a Christian international humanitarian organization, the Compassion International (Compassion), was relocating from Malaysia to Hong Kong, and was in great need of a manager to oversee the works in the Asia-pacific area. The job description matches 90% of Raymond's resume, and he took this job that is tailed for him in just 3 months from the time he

saw the advertisement.

Compassion is a large organization involving in children ministries and other anti-poverty and developmental projects. In the 9 years of his serving in Compassion, Raymond almost wore every hat possible in managing, supporting, and frontline planning. He was even the interim director in the Philippines for a year. After about 8 years, he felt being called to spend more time in Hong Kong and China. However, Compassion did not have any projects in China or Hong Kong. So, following a year of prayers, Raymond eventually resigned in order to pick up other trainings and challenges.

First, he worked for the Mission to New Arrivals which served the poor new immigrants in Hong Kong with other churches, mainly cooperating with the churches' social welfare and endowing departments. Then he worked at the Trans World Radio which focused on spreading the Gospel to Chinese across the globe. His went from practicing a service-oriented Gospel to a proclamation-oriented Gospel, and started to cooperate more with the evangelizing departments of churches. He gained tremendous insights in the integration of words and deeds, and the actualization of Integral Mission, through the tempering and discipline involved in his change from a potent poverty fighter to a verbal proclaimer.

Twenty-five years have passed, and Raymond was in active discussions with CEDAR's Board Members and its former Chief Executive, Dr. Chan Nim Chung about the succession of his post. It was not until then that he realized God's plans in him, that through working in different positions in the past decades, he was being prepared to be here today.

Rhapsody in CEDAR

Q: Centuries before there were no NGOs, just churches.

What do you make of the relationships between them?

The Bible says God established the church but not NGOs, and the church was catholic [in its universal sense]. Theologically speaking, NGOs could really cease to exist if the church could perform its functions, but the church reaches out like an octopus to so many facets of the disciple's life such as his life journey, work, health, etc. Large churches have more resources, but at the same time require more of them in pastoring their own audiences. NGOs could go deep in specific fronts and supplement churches in helping them to see further. CEDAR has been such an organization in the poverty-fighting field that promoted the Integral Mission for over 10 years, but there are still churches that struggle operationally in the integration of that and their evangelical visions. CEDAR works as a harbinger in testing the practical ways that we could involve in and serve as a form of encouragement to the church.

Q: There are missionaries who are ready to practice Integral Mission, is there room for CEDAR to cooperate with missions?

We have always kept an open mind to this since CEDAR thinks it is possible, just that it is not easy to establish a model of cooperation. The problem lies within the general dependencies on the missionaries. If we have to start a development project in a certain place, how long does it take for us to meet a missionary with the same vision? It will be perfect if we could find a match right away, but when that does not happen, it takes a lot of effort to look for that one person. Moreover, we have to guarantee that the missionaries would spend a large amount of time establishing the development programs, or else if they leave the place or suspend the works, the ones being helped would become even more hopeless.

Q: Your doctoral dissertation was about the practice of the 4S's, how could it help CEDAR?

The 4S's are Shema, Shalom, Sufficiency, and Stewardship. It is a guideline in planning and evaluating a development ministry.

Shema ("Hear" in Hebrew) means we have to acknowledge the authority of God in our works, and obey His orders for us to love our neighbors. The ministry has to represent God's goodness and people's need to mend their relationships with Him. Shalom ("Peace" in Hebrew) could be achieved when the creation reaches its original balanced state, and ministries have to be both socially and relationally guided. Sufficiency involves a person's ability to perform his social responsibilities without fear when he enjoys dignity and equality, and we have to fulfill the emergency needs and sustainability of the ones being helped, to give them a chance to flourish. Stewardship not only includes the responsible use of resources and managing our environment, but also includes the stewardship of the ones being helped, where ministries at their infancy should already be thinking about how to help the target in becoming stewards of themselves. The general yearly funding and operation model of NGOs tend to lead the leaders to thinking in short-term. I hope the 4S's could help us counter this tendency and plan our projects in a broader perspective.

The Man Himself in Flesh

"[When I was young,] I had a weird sense of responsibility where I always turned in my homework on time but always revised for my exams till it's last minute."

"I have a lot of limitations—I'm not familiar with fund raising, my schoolmates in the seminary are all outside Hong Kong so I don't have a strong local church network, and I'm not a sociable person which isn't exactly helping CEDAR's profile."

"I'm like a rabbit, with long ears that like to listen. I don't repeat what others are already saying. I was impatient and would be all over the office—a habit formed when working in business organizations—I'm getting much better the past decade."

"I don't like to work in one position forever. If I'm in a textile factory, and I was allowed to sew buttons for two years, sew collars for two years, and make cardboards for two years, I'm good."



STEP INTO THE WORLD

We Can Find the Risen Lord Among the Poor

In 1991, CEDAR was born with a Christ-guided vision to alleviate global poverty, during which the rise of globalization and the internet had made the vision ever approachable.

Jesus said, "The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me." (Matthew 26:11) The outlook of poverty seems positive as the population under poverty has decreased from 1.9 billion to 840 million in the past 25 years. Yet during the same period, our workers at CEDAR were overwhelmed by cases where the environmental conditions and resources were still degrading for the underprivileged, due to over-extraction from other countries, climate changes, and civil wars. For some of the people we came to know, safety and dignity were such a luxury when \$1.25 USD was all they have. The poor is still here with us, often as a deflating thought.

When Jesus said "but you will not always have me," He was referring to the fact that his disciples would not have a second chance to prepare for his funeral, but he also revealed earlier that we could still serve Him by serving the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, and those without home, as He said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40). The founders of CEDAR saw Christ in those living in scarcity from afar, and had been answering the call ever since.

There are great philanthropists who recognize the needs in the battle of poverty, but only the church would see Jesus in the needy, and only the church would define giving as a form of worship. The "Christian response" to poverty has been the cardinal value of CEDAR. Initiated by the Micah Declaration on Integral Mission and further established in Lausanne III, the church ought to uphold the personal, social, and global aspects of the gospel. CEDAR was privileged to join forces with churches in the "Education" of integral mission.

"Go and make disciples" are the only imperative verbs in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). To be a disciple, one must fulfill the Law (Matthew 5:17) which includes the exercise of good will toward those who became poor and sell their property. They were not to be slaves, and their relatives were to redeem the sold land, otherwise the buyers were to return the land no matter what in the Jubilee. There were also clauses pertaining to the wellbeing of foreigners and the land (Leviticus 25). In the present age of globalization and consumerism, we often turn a blind eye to the damage done to our land, and to those exploited by international monopolies. While we are trying to care for the indigents, Pope Francis reminded us that "weeping for other people's pain does not only mean sharing in their sufferings, but also and above all realizing that our own actions are a cause of injustice and inequality."

God has come to us in this end times to call us to repentance and restore our relationship with Him. Our dignity before God are to be restored, the oppressed freed, and the land healed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18), such is the "Development" of the era; the effort to eradicate structural evil and proclaim God's words to the world is our "Advocacy"; and we are tasked to bring "Relief" to the wounded land, be it from the curse casted on our ancestors, the climate changes brought by our irresponsibilities, or natural disasters.

Last but not least, we must unite. There is no longer any poverty we couldn't reach in this age, only the Jesus we refuse to reach. Let us come together as one with the same vision, regardless of our denominations and distance, and prepare ourselves to become the perfect bride when He returns.



"E" - Education

Since 2014, CEDAR has launched "Global Discipleship Programme" with Hong Kong churches, focusing on nurturing disciples to develop a deeper sacrificial passion for God and to magnify His glory through exposing them to global poverty issues.



"D" - Development

Through child rights' youth groups, Bangladeshi girls can break out of customs and gender inequalities, decline early marriage and child labor and fight for education opportunities, to develop her own life and self-value.



“A” - Advocacy

Facing the violence against women (VAM), such as kidnapping, involuntary marriage, domestic violence and acid attacks, CEDAR's partner CGDC actively work with local churches to raise the awareness of gender violence and mobilize Christians to take part in fighting against VAM.



“R” - Relief

Flooding has always been a problem during rainy seasons in Bihar, Northern India, that causes many deaths every year. Dharam, 10, participated in a flooding drill hosted by EFICOR, partner of CEDAR, learning precious swimming and survival skills. He became enthusiastic in teaching other villagers on swimming and survival skills.

DONATION & PARTNERSHIP

CEDAR would like to appeal to churches and Christians for regular donations so that CEDAR can continue to support ongoing projects.

Direct deposit> HSBC 600-385678-001

Cheque> Payable to 'CEDAR FUND'

Autopay> <http://cedarfundeng.wordpress.com/donations/>

Online donation> <http://bit.ly/cedar-online-donation-eng>

OPERATING STATEMENT

		Jul 15 - May 16	
Income	Donations	HK\$	12,569,037
	Grants		913,664
	Appeal for Relief		2,563,199
	Other Income		308,196
		HK\$	16,354,096
Expenditure	Projects	Asia	4,640,236
		China	2,748,036
		Africa	1,479,605
		Relief Projects	4,657,255
		Education Ministry	1,577,803
		Administration	1,416,505
			HK\$
Surplus/(Deficit)		HK\$	(165,344)

Please remember the needs of CEDAR and partner, through prayers and donation, to ensure all the project to be implemented. 🙏