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SHARE Newsletter

JANUARY 2019

## Education on Helping the Poor Starts from a Young Age

Interview with The Rev. Eugene Leung of E.F.C.C. Jachin Church

Written by: Edward Lai

"How many clothes do you have in your wardrobe?"

You probably don't remember the exact number, and you'd probably say: "I don't know." The truth is possibly that there are numerous items.

Like many people in Hong Kong, The Rev. Eugene Leung owns more clothes than he needs. When a staff from CEDAR raised the question at a church gathering, The Reverend, who was present, realised that he owned the most clothes.

That said, isn't it normal to own more than what you need?

Eugene Leung said, "I'd never thought about whether I needed that many clothes. The way the fashion industry works these days is that when I'm replacing my old clothes with new ones so quickly, I'm actually (indirectly) exacerbating the oppression of the factory workers in developing countries."

Social justice in fashion has long been a global initiative. In 2013, a factory collapsed in Bangladesh that caused over a thousand deaths exposed fashion brands sacrificing the

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*"Collaborating with CEDAR has changed me significantly as a preacher. I realised that when a preacher learns to love the environment and makes changes in their lifestyle, they can motivate others to do the same and bring about positive changes to the whole community."*

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An experiential activity of “Human Trafficking” CEDAR held at the Church’s youth camp

safety of factory workers in exchange for lower production costs. In August last year, CEDAR’s staff, Tony, went to E.F.C.C. Jachin Church (Jachin Church), where Eugene served, and discussed with teenagers and young adults about the relationship between individual consumption and biblical justice.

Tony said, “I talked to them about Isaiah 58:5-7 and we discussed the type of godliness that pleases the Lord. We then watched a documentary and reflected on the devastating consequences that our individual consumption may have. These heavy prices are often paid by the environment, which does not have a voice, and the voiceless workers and poverty-stricken people in developing countries.” He continued, “Before we buy cheap and fashionable clothes, can we stop and think about how they are made and by whom? Can we consume responsibly?”

## Stop and Think

“Stop and think” means to reflect upon our relationship with the impoverished in other countries and the Earth; to reflect upon the loss of that relationship under the influence of consumerism and the lack of awareness about our unrestricted use of resources.

“The youngsters and I have had some deep self-reflections. I used to think that being environmentally-friendly is a personal lifestyle choice. After hearing Tony’s sharing, I realised that if I don’t protect the environment, I’m actually inflicting pain and suffering on others in developing countries,” said Eugene.

In Eugene’s opinion, it is against the teaching of the Bible for us to ignore or even increase the suffering of others for the sake of our own pleasure. In other words, it is not acceptable by the Christian faith if the impoverished have to “pay the price” to satisfy our desires.

Education needs persistent efforts and an opportunity to apply the knowledge learned to the real world. Apart from the sharing session on social justice in fashion, CEDAR also held a human trafficking experiential activity in the Jachin Church’s youth camp. In addition, CEDAR also promoted the message of caring for the poor in two youth worship sessions. Through different channels, we tried to broaden the young people’s religious horizons and encouraged them to practise what they believe.

Eugene said there have been noticeable changes in the young people’s behaviour after a whole year’s effort. Some requested not to use disposable cutlery; whilst others tried to use less air-conditioning. One of the youth groups even decided to feast less and cut their Christmas party budget by a quarter so that they could donate the rest to

support CEDAR’s work.

## “You Didn’t Go Shopping Again, Did You?”

An example that demonstrated the change in the youngsters most perhaps is this one: Eugene posted a “snap” of his outfit on Snapchat one day, and a teenager immediately replied, “You didn’t go clothes-shopping again, did you?” As a pastor, Eugene was very pleased, even though the clothes in the photo were old.

Young people learn from their peers. When the youngsters from Jachin Church learned that some Christian workers were risking their lives to fight against injustice and to save the oppressed in other countries, they felt that it was their duty to do something to help and be involved – they either made donations to CEDAR or encouraged their friends to act responsibly in their daily lives and social activities.

This is why CEDAR persists in educating the younger generations in churches.

(Read full article: <http://bit.ly/share231-feature>)

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The Rev. Eugene Leung



## Whose Neighbours Do I Want to Become?

*Written by: The Rev. Anders Chan  
(Board Member of CEDAR, Pastor of Mongkok Baptist Church)*

The parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 is a well-known passage of scripture. An expert in the law asked Jesus to provide an objective definition for the word “neighbour”, but his real intention was to justify his xenophobic point of view – there were people whom he did not have the obligation to love (to him, “neighbour” probably only referred to other Jews). This reflected the sense of national superiority of the expert in the law and his moral values. Even though the Jews did not have their own country at the time, they still prided themselves in being God’s people and discriminated against foreigners.

Jesus answered the expert in the law with a parable and reversed his idea that he was the victim in the topic. It is true that Jesus did not really answer the question “Who is my neighbour”, because that was not the point. He made it clear that the subjective emotion of “having mercy” was the essence of the parable – the Samaritan did not segregate the injured man, but did his best to help him because he was injured. Jesus deliberately changed the discourse from having a definition to having a perspective. There are three points about the parable of the Good Samaritan that we should reflect upon:

- I. Whose Neighbour do I want to Become?**
- II. Guard our merciful hearts**
- III. Not just money**

(Read full article: <http://bit.ly/share231-biblestudy>)



Rakhi (centre) and her parents

## Let the Community Be Responsible for Their Children’s Education

Education is a very important part of eradicating poverty. Yet, many children living in low-income countries do not have the opportunity to receive proper education. Their parents are usually occupied by work to earn a living to put food on the table, thus they seldom think about the future of their children, who they thought would likely share similar fate like them. Because in their eyes, earning income to support their families is more important than getting an educational access for their children.

We understand that if parents do not see the importance of education, they will not send their children to schools. Therefore, CEDAR has worked with World Concern Bangladesh and churches in the country to start the “Community Engagement Programme for Sustainable Education” project in local communities to encourage parents to get involved in children’s education. Rakhi’s parents are one of them.

Rakhi and her parents live in a 100-square-foot room in a slum in Bangladesh. Her father sells train tickets at night with a monthly salary of only 3,000 Taka (about HK\$275). Such amount of income can barely support the living of their family, not to mention supporting Rakhi to school.

Under this project, adults from local communities have been invited to participate in school management as members of school committees. They held regular parents’ meetings to improve their understanding of education. Thank you Lord! Rakhi’s mother has been joining the parents’ meetings to learn about the importance of education and realise Rakhi studying hard in the primary school we supported.

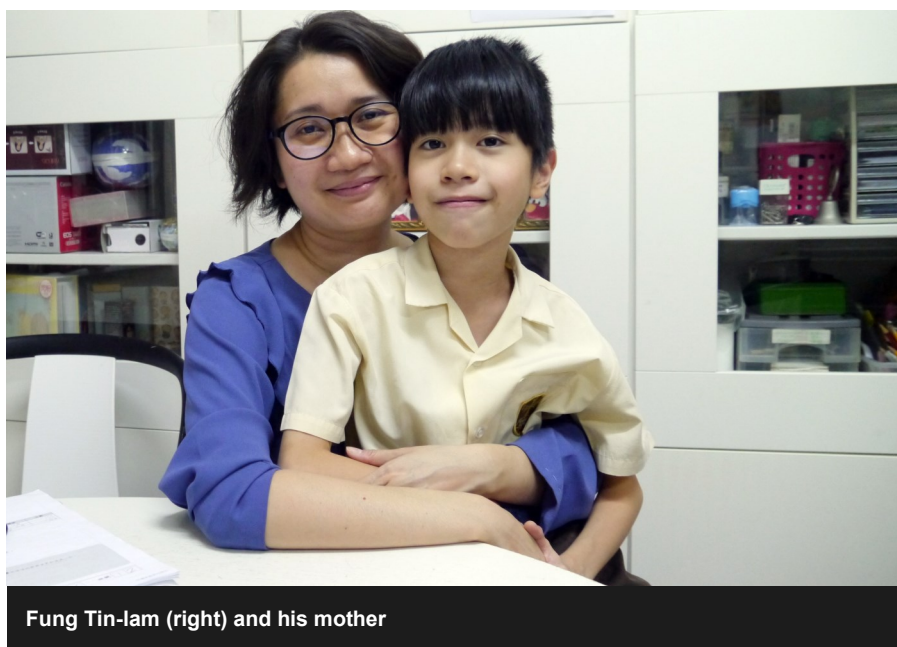
Our project experience tells us that community support is an indispensable factor in bringing children back to school. The above project has been running for 6 years, and currently there are about 1,029 children and 421 kids attending primary schools and pre-schools respectively. Last year, 64 students sat for the primary

school national examination in the country. Nearly half of the students got Grade A. This is an astonishing result!

Rakhi's story illustrates that when parents' are able to look further than their current predicament and education becomes a common concern of the local communities, children can have a brighter future.

CEDAR also has collaborated with our partners to build and renovate 10 primary schools and 20 pre-schools, so that children in the slum communities can have the opportunity and better environment to study in.

Let's continue to pray for the slum communities in Bangladesh!



Fung Tin-lam (right) and his mother

## A Story of the \$100-Red-Packet

*Written by: Edward Lai*

"This year, will you be willing to donate your red packet money to the underprivileged people in other countries? "

"Yes, of course!" Fung Tin-lam answered confidently.

Ting-lam, a third-grader, is like any Hong Kong boy we know. His daily routine includes school, homework, and playing his favorite toys before dinner. His life and his world, never overlap with those who live in developing countries away from Hong Kong. Even though Tin-lam has never met them, he has determined to save up part of his red packet money to share with them.

100 dollars may not be much to a lot of people; but to Tin-lam, it is a significant amount for a new toy or good savings. His mother, Mrs. Fung, shared that Tin-lam has been faithful in giving away part of his red packet money every year, since she could remember. Then, last year, Tin-lam insisted that he should give HK\$100.

"I am worried that lesser amount would not be enough, so I wanted to give the largest note I had," Tin-lam explained sheepishly.

"Did you mean you're worried that the people receiving your gift do not have enough?"

Tin-lam did not answer. He remembers some years ago staff from CEDAR came to his church and told him and other children about the Red Packet Campaign. That was when he realised that a red packet can be shared with people in need.

"I wish that God will make use of the small money I give to cause change, in turn to improve their lives, and bring them happiness," Tin-lam said. Though Tin-lam cannot explain who "they" are, what kind of "lives" they have; he understands that somewhere out there, there are those (underprivileged) who God loves and cares for.

Tin-lam's parents seldom try to educate him about why they should care for the poor. They taught their children by actions: whenever the school, church, or other charities call for donation, they always support as a family. Mrs. Fung wants her kids to know one biblical truth: we are only stewards to the earthly resources.

She said, "Having developed a habit to give at a young age, it will help Tin-lam to become a generous person when he grows up. On the contrary, a strong sense of possession could lead to selfish spirit who is difficult to let go. We need to know that (God) can give freely, and He can also take away as He wishes."

Tin-lam smiles as he listens to his mother. Tin-lam's Chinese name means "Heaven Comes" – Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

**Full version of this issue:**  
<http://bit.ly/cedar-eshare231>



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