

THE CHANGES

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蛻變 PROJECT
計劃 CHANGE

Supporting Our Youths

Though five years have already passed since the 2019 protests, the reverberations are not yet over. The majority of the 10,000 arrestees are youths who are either on trial, serving sentences or in limbo not knowing if they will be charged or not. Many of the arrested young people feel lost. What will their lives be like in the future? Will they still be able to utilize their talents?

To prepare for their future, some of the incarcerated youths are actively equipping themselves by applying to take public examinations. In recent years, the Correctional Services Department (CSD) has made efforts to improve the learning environment for them resulting in some incarcerated youths achieving outstanding results in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE).

However, due to security and disciplinary considerations, the process for incarcerated candidates to prepare and apply for public examinations is often complex and time-consuming. In some cases, candidates received relevant textbooks, past examination papers, and stationery less than six months before their examinations. There were restrictions on the quantity of assignments and teaching materials they could receive, making it difficult for them to prepare adequately. Some even received the needed stationery only after their examinations.

We understand that CSD has already made strides to assist incarcerated students taking public examinations. However, if the arrangements for taking public examinations takes too long or starts too late, it becomes difficult for incarcerated students to adequately prepare for their examinations. We appeal to the authorities to further streamline their arrangements.

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For those who were arrested when they were minors, prolonged investigations mean that many will be 21 years old or above by the time they face possible prosecution and sentence. This group would then be treated as adult rather than youth and risk facing longer sentences served in an adult prison where they will not receive the same level of support for learning that is available in juvenile institutions. They will also carry a criminal record, which would make future rehabilitation more difficult. For these cases, we appeal to the authorities to allow reductions in length of sentence as far as practicable, and also improve educational and learning opportunities in adult prisons.

Finally, we suggest that the SAR government should not shy away from taking the lead and show a willingness to embrace rehabilitated youths. The SAR government and public bodies should make it plain that they would not reject across the board rehabilitated applicants because of their criminal record. Rather, they would hire young people who are determined to become law-abiding and contributing citizens based on ability. Over the past year, we have encountered many employers and managers in the private and professional sectors who are well-intentioned but would hesitate to offer jobs or assistance to rehabilitated youths due to the fears of unfair and irrational criticisms.



▲ Yun Wing SUNG

We hold the view that to retain our much-needed talented youths, the government should assume the role of facilitator and encourage professional and licensing bodies to give rehabilitated youths a second opportunity so that they may return to the fields of finance, insurance, accounting, law, healthcare, and even social work and education, in spite of their criminal records. We firmly believe that these young people can become self-reliant again, and can contribute to our society by utilizing their strengths.

In 2025, we hope that every young person in Hong Kong will be able to leverage their strengths to write their remarkable life stories.

Co-Founder of Project Change
Yun Wing SUNG

Come · Together

Since its establishment in 2020, Project Change has provided counselling and assistance to over 360 arrested youths and their families or loved ones. Over these four years, we have realized that relying solely on our own efforts is not enough; we need more people to join forces in accepting and providing opportunities for these young people. Only then can they reintegrate into society and contribute to Hong Kong.

In the past year, we have invited several members of the community to film short videos, publicly calling for more people to ignite hope for these young people. The video series is titled "Come Together", which embodies the hope that more people in society will stand together and work in unison, as well as the urgent call to take action immediately.

Bernard CHAN: Do the right thing

Project Change has engaged with individuals from various sectors in our society. We deeply feel that many people care about and are willing to give opportunities to released youths. However, their hesitation due to concerns about being misunderstood often prevents them from stepping forward, leading most to adopt a wait-and-see approach. As Bernard CHAN, Chairman of Our Hong Kong Foundation and former convener of the non-official members of the Executive Council, stated: "Everyone wants



▲ Bernard CHAN

to do something, but they are also worried: 'If I act alone, what will others think of me? Will they judge me as supporting a certain position?' Everyone is apprehensive."

Bernard acknowledges the concerns and has received feedback from friends regarding these issues. He stated, "I do not have authoritative information on how the central government perceives the young people involved in the incidents of 2019." However, he added, "My personal understanding is that the central government has always placed great importance on our youth and has consistently emphasized their significance over the years." He affirmed, "The central government certainly hopes that anyone willing to contribute to Hong Kong and continue their development here should receive support." Bernard expressed his hope that employers will consider giving opportunities to young people who are qualified and demonstrate a strong work ethic.

"Do not let suspicion hinder us from doing what we should as members of society. Otherwise, in the end, our entire society will lose a group of young people," he urged.

Link to the Bernard CHAN's interview: <https://youtu.be/eM0n-i2bGgk?feature=shared>

Christine IP X KK IP: Faith, Hope, Love

Both Mrs. Christine IP, a veteran senior banker, and her husband, KK IP, a pastor, serve as life mentors for a youth supported by Project Change. During the interview, they shared a story about their recent cruise trip in Europe.

During their journey, they received a letter from their mentee, who wrote, "If you send me a postcard, I will be very happy." In an age where smartphones allow us to instantly share photos of our surroundings with friends and family, Christine recalled that when they first saw postcards for sale along the way, they wondered who would buy them. Little did they know that at that moment, they would receive a message expressing a desire for a postcard.



▲ KK (left) and Christine (right)

When the cruise docked, KK said, "Before we disembarked, my first thought was: even if I buy a postcard, can I send it? Even if there's a mailbox, how do I get a stamp?" However, once they disembarked, they were greeted by "a large post office right in front of you; you can't miss it. The post office is quite big, with a yellow sign that you definitely won't overlook."

This amazing experience greatly encouraged Christine and KK, offering them profound insight. KK remarked, "I can't believe it was such a coincidence. In religious terms, it was a grace from God—when you are in need, He places what you require right in front of you, truly making things happen."

As a veteran banker, Christine noted that the young people she met through Project Change have demonstrated that when given opportunities, they will find ways to seize them and move forward. She urged, "Never give up on them, and they won't give up on themselves."

Link to Christine and KK's interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKTLthrXVcY&t=1s>

Elsie LEUNG: Care for HK youngsters

"It is crucial to offer them a second chance to reintegrate into society. If you only punish, it will not change their perception of society," said Ms Elsie LEUNG, former Secretary for Justice and former Deputy Director of the Basic Law Committee of the National People's Congress.

Link to Elsie LEUNG's interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBI2kBBNMJ0&t=4s>



▲ Elsie LEUNG



▲ Irons SZE

Irons SZE: Hope to inspire others

'We hope to inspire others through our work, so that our society can come together to help these youngsters and accept them into our community,' said Mr. Irons SZE, Member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee, CPPCC & Permanent Honorary Presidents of the HKCPPCC (Provincial) Members Association.

Link to Irons SZE's interview:

<https://youtu.be/ZBvRM4MDCqg?feature=shared>

Philip X Peter : a released youth & a retired AO

"It is important to send young people with a clear message that shows society is willing to help them, allowing them to get back on track in life" said Philip CHAN, a retired administrative officer.

"I hope these actions can inspire more people to follow suit, letting this positive energy gradually spread" Peter (a pseudonym), a mentee, expressed.

Link to Philip X Peter's interview:

<https://youtu.be/P8tPPPgfhmQ?feature=shared>



▲ Philip CHAN (left) and Peter (right)



▲ WK LAM

WK LAM: Give them a second chance

"From a social and macro perspective, if an individual or a group makes a mistake and is written off and treated as a negative asset, is this a loss or a gain for the society as a whole? It's obvious, isn't it? No one wants to see an increasing number of negative assets in a society; everyone hopes for societal growth and value enhancement," said W K Lam, a former senior government official.

Link to WK LAM's interview:

<https://youtu.be/EU-6a86NIHs?feature=shared>

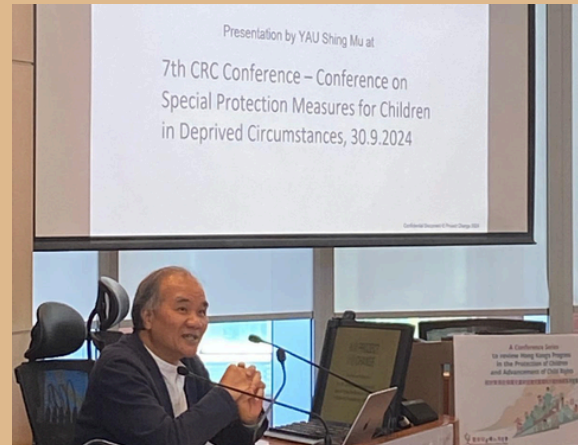
We would like to express our gratitude to Ms. Elsie LEUNG, Mrs. Christine IP and Mr. KK IP, Mr. Bernard CHAN, Mr. Irons SZE, Mr. WK LAM, Mr. Philip CHAN and his mentee Peter (a pseudonym), for agreeing to shoot a short film to make this appeal.

Activity Highlights

To ignite hope for young people and to support them, we cannot rely solely on our own efforts -- we need the support of various sectors of society to make it happen. Over the past few months, we have been meeting with different professional groups and chambers of commerce, explaining our work in the hope of deepening mutual understanding and getting more people to accept and support rehabilitating youths.

The Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights

Mr. YAU Shing-mu represented us at a meeting of the Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights. He introduced our work to the attendees, shared service experiences, and called on society to offer greater acceptance and opportunities to rehabilitated young individuals who were imprisoned during the anti-extradition movement, allowing them to stand tall once again.



▲ YAU Shing Mu

Hong Kong Club Charity Showcase

We extend our gratitude to the Hong Kong Club for their support, which allowed us to participate in their Charity Showcase and introduce our works to their members. Many members visited our booth, showing interest in learning more about our work, and some even expressed their support and encouragement. Among the visitors were the former Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr. Geoffrey MA, and the former Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, Mr. Norman CHAN.



▲ Geoffrey MA (left) and YAU Shing Mu (right)

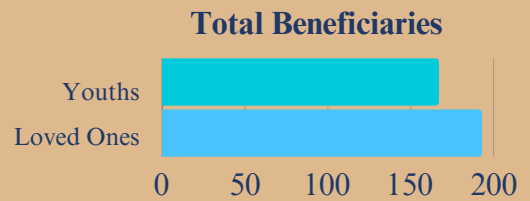


▲ Norman CHAN (left) and YAU Shing Mu (right)

2024 Year in Review

Our Work

Project Change has consistently provided counseling and various forms of support to our arrested youth. After they have served their sentences and been released, we assist them in the reintegration process, including returning to school, seeking employment, and restoring professional qualifications. To date, we have served approximately 360 individuals.



Counseling Service

Over the past year, our professional team has continued to provide various forms of psychological counseling services to our youth in need. These include one-on-one counseling sessions and group art therapy workshops, helping them develop a positive mindset to face challenges and facilitating their early reintegration into society.

We have also taken a step further by offering group counseling sessions for the parents of them. These sessions provide a safe and supportive space for parents to share their experiences and build mutual support networks.

Reintegration Program

We continue to work diligently to help our youth to reposition their lives after release from prison. Our efforts include matching them with mentors, assisting them in resuming their studies or restoring professional licences, organizing company visits (pictured right), and supporting them in finding internships, jobs, and opportunities to develop their talents.



One notable success this year was helping an engineer restore his membership with the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers, enabling him to contribute to the city's engineering industry in the future.

Stakeholders Engagement

We continue to actively engage with stakeholders, including professional bodies such as the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers, NGOs like the Hong Kong Children Foundation, and business associations such as the Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong (pictured right). Through these interactions, we aim to raise awareness about our work and appeal for their support for young individuals affected by the anti-extradition movement.



Media Coverage

Our success stories (pictured right) and the "Come-Together" Series have been featured and reported by mainstream media. These reports have sparked discussions in society about arrested young youths, helping the public gain a deeper understanding of their struggles and challenges. Through this, we hope to inspire more people to extend opportunities to these youths and join us in igniting hope for Hong Kong.

