
FACT SHEET

Youth development through volunteer services

1. Introduction

1.1 This fact sheet provides information on youth volunteering to facilitate the Home Affairs Panel's deliberation on this issue at its meeting to be held on 12 June 2009.

1.2 In the 2000 Policy Address, the Chief Executive enunciated four areas of responsibility for social development by the Government. Two of them, "to create an environment where participation and fair competition are open to all, with special emphasis on the education and healthy development of the young" and "to encourage those in our society with sufficient means to show their concern for the community by organising, participating in, or supporting different kinds of voluntary work so as to build a harmonious and energetic society", have become the cornerstones of government policies in the promotion of youth volunteering in Hong Kong.

2. Youth volunteering

2.1 According to the Government, volunteering enhances youth participation, which in turn fosters the development of a caring society. Since volunteering allows for community participation, young people may learn civic values and practice citizenship, appreciate the needs of the disadvantaged, and develop a sense of social responsibility. Through volunteer services, youngsters may learn the value of being concerned about others and being committed to the community.

2.2 In 1998, the Social Welfare Department launched a territory-wide Volunteer Movement jointly with the Hong Kong Council of Social Services and various non-governmental organizations. Volunteers may take part in various services that they are interested in, such as serving the elderly, disabled, patients, needy families, children/youth, street sleepers, offenders/drug abusers, environment protection, fund raising and research. The number of registered volunteers under the Volunteer Movement has been increasing since then. As at 31 December 2008, 352 808 volunteers in the age of 13-25 were registered, as compared with the overall total of 799 559 registered volunteers.

Table 1 – Number of registered volunteers aged 13-25 and total number of registered volunteers under the Volunteer Movement, 1998-2008

Year (as at 31 December)	Number of volunteer aged 13-25 (person)	Total number of volunteers (person)
1998	78 277	173 144
1999	80 777	180 388
2000	105 590	236 969
2001	115 615	265 640
2002	158 234	351 422
2003	203 370	442 710
2004	216 799	470 854
2005	240 278	527 777
2006	270 890	602 150
2007	299 430	675 418
2008	352 808	799 559

2.3 To recognize the commitment and contribution of youth volunteers towards the society, the Steering Committee on Promotion of Volunteer Service of the Social Welfare Department has organized the Hong Kong Outstanding Youth Volunteers Scheme annually starting from 2001. Every year, the Steering Committee selects a group of outstanding and committed youth volunteers by nominations. Those selected volunteers will participate in promotional work on volunteering in Hong Kong and exchange their volunteer experiences with youth volunteers overseas.

2.4 The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups also maintains a Youth Volunteer Network (VNET) to provide young people with basic training and service opportunities. Active volunteers will be given awards and certificates. Founded in 1998, VNET is the first network to foster youth volunteers in Hong Kong. Any person aged 6-35 can register to become a volunteer of VNET. Over the years, the number of volunteers has steadily increased, and VNET has offered an increasing number of service opportunities and training, both to volunteer managers and leaders, as well as to volunteers. By March 2008, a total of 124 529 volunteers were registered under the scheme, and the total service hours contributed in 2007-2008 was 507 600.

Table 2 – Number of registered youth volunteers (aged 6-35) and total service hours under VNET, 2003-2008

Year (as at 31 March)	Number (person)	Total service hours
2003-2004	70 625	435 586
2004-2005	87 590	519 711
2005-2006	99 630	569 651
2006-2007	112 300	593 404
2007-2008	124 529	507 600

2.5 Youth volunteers of VNET have been involved in a range of volunteer services, from organizing community and educational programmes to participating in mass events such as "Operation UNITE" (a caring-in-action campaign during the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), the "Heart of Hong Kong" event at the Hong Kong International Airport, and the "Dragon Jamboree" celebrating the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

3. "V-are one" – Wing Hang Youth Community Service Project

3.1 The "V-are one" Community Service Project was initially launched by the Steering Committee on Promotion of Volunteer Service of the Social Welfare Department in 2002. The aims of the Project were to encourage young people (aged 6-24) to participate in volunteer services, so as to widen their horizon and foster their holistic development. The Project provided assistance to youth organizations and groups in starting up volunteer service projects. During 2002-2005, the Social Welfare Department spent HK\$1 million, sponsoring about 400 community-based volunteer services through this Project, involving a total of 12 000 youth volunteers and more than 120 000 people in the community being served.

3.2 In 2007, the Project was renamed as "V-are one" – Wing Hang Youth Community Service Project which was co-organized by the Social Welfare Department, Wing Hang Bank and the Hong Kong Outstanding Youth Volunteers' Association. Wing Hang Bank has become the sponsor of the volunteer service projects under "V-are one". The aims of the Project have remained unchanged, i.e. to widen the horizon of the youth and to encourage the younger generation to care about the society at large. The Project sponsors volunteer service projects organized and implemented by young people (aged 6-30) in Hong Kong. Eligible applicants should be registered schools, welfare organizations or volunteer groups under registered social organizations.

3.3 The "V-are one" Wing Hang Youth Community Service Project adopted the same theme in 2007 and 2008 – "Make use of creativity, Build a harmonious Hong Kong". The maximum amount of funding appropriated was HK\$4,000 per service project in 2008, and HK\$3,500 in 2007. Applications are subject to the final decision of an evaluation committee formed by the Social Welfare Department, Wing Hang Bank and the Hong Kong Outstanding Youth Volunteers' Association.

3.4 Under the Project in 2007, 130 volunteering projects were sponsored, with 2 600 youngsters participating in and planning such projects, and 26 000 needy persons being served. In 2008, Wing Hang Bank donated HK\$500,000 to support 184 youth volunteer services projects under the scheme, involving more than 8 500 youngsters and 35 000 beneficiaries.

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