

Tongxing project – upholding the spirit of community participation in HIV prevention and care

Background

'Tongxing' carries with it different meanings at different times to staff and friends of Red Ribbon Centre. It was the name of the theme song of media publicity campaign for World AIDS Campaign 2003. In the year 2004, 'Tongxing' became the name of a nine-month health promotion project of Red Ribbon Centre.

The theme of World AIDS Campaign 2003 was 'Stigma and Discrimination'. A media campaign was jointly produced by Red Ribbon Centre, National Institute of Health Education of Ministry of Health and Radio Television Hong Kong. It included a 13-minute educational film titled 'Love under the Sun' produced by filmmaker Mr Johnny To and casted by 38 artists from both Hong Kong and Mainland China. They came together, made an appeal to public on the importance of HIV prevention and acceptance of people living with HIV/AIDS. The theme song 'Tongxing' was composed by a Hong Kong based musician, and its lyrics created by a youth volunteer from Beijing. It was sung by Hong Kong artists Andy Lau and Sammi Cheng. The film has been publicised in various channels including premiere shows and screenings as Announcement in the Public Interest (API).



The film and the song were received positively by the public. We made further use of them and designed a spin off project titled 'Tongxing project'. As 'Tongxing' literally means 'walking together' in putonghua, promotion of community participation in HIV prevention and care work is the guiding principle of the project. We hope that different organisations and individuals from all walks of life would join us toward a dual goal of promoting acceptance of people living with HIV and preventing the spread of HIV infection in the society.

Objectives

The objectives of the project therefore were to foster community participation by government in the organisation and individual level, to encourage and support HIV prevention and care activities in Hong Kong, and to instill innovations in health promotion in community setting. We had identified the AIDS NGOs as the 'Tongxing partners' where publicity materials of the project were displayed. Other community groups including mainstream NGOs and schools were also informed about the project and given the project pamphlets. Throughout the implementation period, anyone who indicated that he or she had participated in any AIDS related activities after being certified by the partner organisations would be given a VCD featuring the film 'Love under the sun' and the song 'Tongxing' as a token of gift.

Programme Components

'Tongxing project' was softly launched in March 2004 through advertisement made in various websites and newspapers. Two months later, the project was formally launched at a carnival held in a public entertainment venue. The carnival was officiated by Director of Health, Dr PY LAM and Chairman of the Advisory Council on AIDS, Dr Homer TSO. The full version 'Love under the Sun' was once again shown in the public (it was shown under the bright sun that day!). Mr JT Lee, the former head of Radio 2 RTHK, vividly described to the audience the speedy filming (in just a few days!) and the fulfilling experience of making the film. Though being sweaty under the sun, the audiences were again impressed by the joint effort from different parties in producing the film. The carnival was a success with participation of nine NGOs¹ and ten game booths were held for public participation. Two hundred and sixty three VCDs were distributed on that day, and 3,000 other souvenirs were also given away.



Between March and end of December 2004, a total of 12,545 VCDs were distributed. Among them, one quarter (3,096) was distributed through Red Ribbon Centre and the remaining three quarters (9,536) through different community organisations and schools. Forty-eight percent of the total VCDs were distributed through mainstream NGOs, 20% through NGOs working directly on AIDS, 5% through school activities and 2% were distributed to organisations in the region. The number of VCDs distributed reached its top in May (more than 2,500 VCDs distributed in a month) during the launching ceremony and slowly declined towards the end of the year.

More than 9,000 participants responded to the question on the type of activity they participated in relation to AIDS prevention and care. Ninety-eight percent (9,152 people) indicated participation in AIDS related activities such as seminars and publicity shows. Most of these activities were organized by mainstream NGOs (60%), followed by Red Ribbon Centre (24%), schools (7%) and AIDS NGOs (4%). The remaining 2% (77 people) admitted show of care to people with HIV/AIDS such as volunteer to support the patients. Three persons stated that they had made donations to AIDS related organisations.

The project ended with the year 2004 - the year that marked the twentieth year since HIV/AIDS first hit Hong Kong. As compared to the early days, perhaps the difficulty to get the community support in HIV prevention work now would be the low HIV prevalence coupled with the apparent optimism towards the effective anti-retroviral treatment available nowadays. 'Tongxing Project' was considered an innovative initiative aiming to facilitate the community response to AIDS through collaboration with the different agencies. On the one hand we are glad that almost 30 agencies and some 13,000 people were with us walking towards a common goal. On the other hand, we believe there shall be room for improvement especially in terms of the coverage of the programme. Were we doing inadequate publicity? Was the reward (i.e., VCD) unattractive? Or, do people in Hong Kong care about HIV at all?

'Tongxing' is the transliteration of 'walking together' in putonghua, and it precisely rephrases the spirit of community participation in any successful HIV prevention and care programme, and promoting the acceptance of people with HIV/AIDS.

It is estimated that 3,000 people are living with HIV in Hong Kong. Every year approximately 250 people are reported to be infected with the virus. "Reach out your hand. Take my hand. We march on as one." the song 'Tongxing' brings the message to all those affected by HIV/AIDS that they will be accompanied in all times. Let's hope the spirit of 'Tongxing' will be with us and the community at all times.

List of 'Tongxing partner' organisations and agencies

- AIDS Concern
- Buddhist Wong Fung Ling College
- Caritas Hong Kong
- Caritas St. Joseph Secondary School
- Chan Shu Kui Memorial School
- Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Christian Alliance College
- C.H.O.I.C.E.
- Christian National's Evangelism Commission Fellowship Church
- City University of Hong Kong
- Hong Kong AIDS Foundation
- Hong Kong Boys and Girl Association
- Hong Kong Children and Youth Services
- Hong Kong Girls Guides
- Hong Kong Red Cross
- Hong Kong Salvation Army
- International Service, Hong Kong Branch
- Leung Sing Tak College
- Po Kok Primary School
- SKH Lam Woo Memorial Secondary School
- St Johns' Cathedral HIV Education Centre
- The Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA)
- The Society for AIDS Care
- The Society of Rehabilitation and Crime Prevention, Hong Kong
- The YMCA of Hong Kong
- Tuen Mun Hospital Community Service Centre
- United Christian Nethersole Community Health Service-Health Centre of Hong Kong Institute of Education
- University of Hong Kong
- World Vision China Office

Promotion poster of the 'Tongxing' Project:



如欲獲取由38位本港與國內著名藝人為關懷愛滋病病毒感染者／患者合力演出而製作的「愛在陽光下」音樂電影及由劉德華、鄭秀文合唱的主題曲「同行」錄像光碟，請即成為『同行』工程的一份子，積極參與愛滋病預防及關懷愛滋病病毒感染者／患者的工作。詳情請瀏覽網站 www.27802211.com 或親臨 紅絲帶中心 查詢，電話：2304 6268，地址：九龍聯合道東200號，橫頭磡賽馬會診所二樓。