

“Good Health and Wellbeing in the World’s Richest City Hong Kong”
2019 Hong Kong Shared Good Values Sustainable Development Goals Summit
19 September 2019

About the Summit

In 2017, Hong Kong overtook New York to be the city with the largest “ultra-high net worth population” - people who are HK\$233.8 million or more in net worth. Hong Kong also jumped three places to top as the most expensive city to live in this year. Despite the glamour and glitter in growing individual wealth and soaring property prices, the same city is also experiencing one of the highest hospital death rates for elderly in the world, has its prime-aged labour force working the longest hours (50.1 hours per week) among 71 cities around the globe, and more and more of its full-time students taking their own lives due to academic pressure. The summit’s three panels explored why and how these health and well-being challenges are plaguing the different age groups in Hong Kong, and what are some potential solutions different parties and sectors, especially businesses can adopt to help alleviate or address the situation.

Panel 1 (The Young)

“Study Pressure on Youth - Recalibrating Hong Kong’s Educational Culture”

Speakers:

Mr. Chu Tsz Wing

Chief Headmaster, St. Hilary's Primary School

Dr. Jimmy Lau

CEO, Richfrom Holdings Ltd

Facilitator:

Mr. Eugene Fong

Chairman, HK.WeCARE Research Group Sub-Committee

Education-field researchers, policy-makers, and commentators have long-criticised Hong Kong for its exam-oriented learning environment, lack of administrative support for teachers, and a strong emphasis in academic achievement in popular parenting culture. This panel offered a snapshot of issues faced by students, parents and educators in Hong Kong and will look at the possibility of building alternative educational culture in a high-pressured city.

- Mr. Chu Tsz Wing shared his experience of running hands-on experiential learning classes for his students to “jump out of their textbooks” and better understand what kind of problems and solutions are be addressed and devised in real life workplaces. Mr. Chu lined up companies to design his course curriculum with his school as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme. Companies would provide students with actual machines and equipment that are related to business issues they would like to resolve or improve and send their staff to interact with students who are coming up with improvement plans. Mr. Chu believes this type of education makes classes more interesting and realistic for students, and can better equip them to face challenges in the real world.
- Dr. Jimmy Lau shared his experience of designing his company policies which make it easier for colleagues to address their family needs. He founded his company based on two guiding measures: 1) Caring for People as a Business Strategy; 2) A Company as a Legal Person should also fulfil its responsibilities towards the community. For example, Dr. Lau has introduced birthday leaves not just for the colleague himself or herself, but also for his/ her immediate family members (e.g. parents, siblings, children, grandparents) of colleagues, so that colleagues can give their family members a “surprise” on their birthdays. Dr. Lau also introduced an employee benefit (parents’ gratitude allowance) which directly transfers 500HKD each month to the bank account

of either the mother or the father of a colleague. The 500HKD dollar is sponsorship to encourage families to have a meal together each weekend, along with many other policies such as shadow-your-mum/ shadow-your-dad internship programme, summer vacation sponsorship, etc. These policies showed care and love to colleagues, supported colleagues in navigating the right balance between work and family needs better. Dr. Lau also shared that as employees' work satisfaction is high at his company, the turnover rate is very low and colleagues' productivity is very high even amidst economic downturns.

Panel 2 (The Prime-aged)

“Building Good Work Culture for the Mutual Benefit of Employees and Employers”

Speakers:

Mr. Dennis Ho

Manager of Workplace Consultation Promotion Division, Labour Department

Ms. Miko Cheung

Human Resources Director, LAWSGROUP

Facilitator:

Dr. Candy Powell

Officer-in-Charge, New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association

Work satisfaction and work engagement are two strong indicators of how great a work culture is. According to a pilot research study conducted in Hong Kong, respect, fairness and sense of belonging are the top three values employees treasure the most at their workplace. This panel will identify key hindrances to building good work culture and explore potential solutions to creating happier and more efficient workplaces.

- Mr. Dennis Ho shared that Hong Kong is among cities with low unemployment rates and sound industrial relations - the number of strikes, labour claims and disputes are also low. Mr. Ho elaborated that the Hong Kong government has been pushing for happy work culture in the city. Among its policies is the Good Employer Charter, a charter that stresses on the idea of co-production in a workplace that is open to honest discussion, changes and also respect for different perspectives and opinions. Launched in 2018, the charter has acquired 540 signatories so far.
- Ms. Miko Cheung shared LAWSGROUP’s happy work culture policy direction, which is to promote the concept of H.I.T. inside their company. H.I.T. refers to happiness, integrity and teamwork. Colleagues will be invited to events and trainings which are designed to equip the whole office to explore topics such as passion at work, positive thinking, high ethics, effective communication, and group cohesiveness. Its human resources department also invests time and efforts in conducting surveys so as to understand the job preferences and works needs of its colleagues by age groups – GenZ (aged 16-19), Young Millennials (aged 20-24) and Mature Millennials (aged 25-38).

Panel 3 (The Elderly)

“Cultivating a Supportive Community for Active Ageing and Preventive Health Care”

Speakers:

Dr. Lam Ching Choi SBS, JP

CEO, Haven of Hope Christian Service

Ms. Joyce Mak

CEO, Gingko House

Facilitator:

Mr Timothy Ma, JP

Chief Consultant, Ma Kam Wah & Co.

By 2041, one in three people in Hong Kong are expected to be elderly aged above 65, and the demand for medical care and services relating to active ageing here is on the rise. Studies also suggest every one dollar spent on home care for community dwelling elders can save eight dollars in hospitalization costs. This panel will explore how professionals, corporates, community and social workers can work to better serve the elderly in districts, or even at homes to better enhance elderly well-being in Hong Kong.

- Dr. Lam Ching Choi shared some overview research on ageing and ageing-in-place challenges in Hong Kong. Though Hong Kong people crown themselves as the city which enjoy longevity that beats many other world cities, the quality of life elders enjoy is not satisfactory as elderly tend to be hospitalised in their old age and later years of their lives before they die. Dr. Lam shared that a key determinant of elders' quality of life is how loneliness is being addressed. He also stresses the importance of community care and social connection in addressing elders' need for companionship if the ageing in place and quality ageing should be achieved in the city.
- Ms. Joyce Mak shared how Gingko House grew from a depression support hotline for elders into six restaurants focusing on elderly employment, an organic farm, a senior band called “Wonderful Band”, a central kitchen, a catering unit and also an elder shop. Its business stresses on addressing elderly quality of life and social issues through empowering elders – giving them a flexible work schedule that suits their physical needs, as well as financial income to sustain their dull and often economically strained retirement life. As of 2018, Gingkok House has employed over 2,000 elderly in the past 16 years. Its existing number of elderly staff 153, with their average age at 68.7. Their eldest employee is 83 years old and the youngest is 55 years old.