Supporting Divorced Families – Inspiration from Singaporean Experience

Report Back on The 3rd Regional Symposium of Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region (CIFA) cum Study Visit

Delegation (12 persons)

CHAN Kam-hing Hong Kong Family Welfare Society
CHANG Chee-wei Hong Kong Family Welfare Society
CHEUNG Ka-man, Carol Hans Andersen Club
CHUI Yuen-fun, Angela The Hong Kong Catholic Marriage Advisory Council
KO Man-wai, Irene Hong Kong Family Welfare Society
LI Yuk-Kuen Hong Kong Family Welfare Society
MUI Wai-keung, Moses The Hong Kong Council of Social Service
SUEN Suk-yin, Christina Hong Kong Family Welfare Society
WONG May-kwan Hans Andersen Club
WONG Suet-wing Hong Kong Family Welfare Society
YIP Yin-wan, Amarantha Hong Kong Family Welfare Society
YU Wai-yuen Hans Andersen Club

Today’s Programme

• Latest Development of Family Work in Asia Region
  – Highlights of the 3rd Regional Symposium of CIFA and 3A Project 2012
  – Insights from the Agency Visits in Singapore

• Thematic Sharing
  – “Supportive Services for Family Mediation in the Judiciary”
  – “Children in Divorce Families”

• Open Forum
Highlight: 3rd Regional Symposium of CIFA
- When: 11-13 December 2012
- Where: National University of Singapore
- What is “CIFA”?
- The 3rd Regional Symposium of Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region

Highlight: 3rd Regional Symposium of CIFA
- 4 Plenary Sessions:
  1. Challenges & Innovation in Present Asian Families;
  2. Family Polices;
  3. Family Crisis;
  4. Cross Regional Research on Couples
- Speakers from Singapore, HK, Beijing, Australia, Japan, Philippines, Taiwan, Korea

Highlight: 3rd Regional Symposium of CIFA
- 4 Paper Presentation sessions:
  1. Children, Adolescents and Elderly in Family Context
  2. Family Therapy
  3. Practice & Research Innovations (couples & families)
  4. Family with Medical/Psychiatric Problems

Highlight : 3A Project
- 3A Project 2012 Adjudication
  “Asian Award for Advancing Family Well-being”
- Give recognition to outstanding & innovative projects
- Promoting sharing & exchange
- 27 entries from 6 regions
- Panel included: CIFA Chairperson, sponsors, professionals, academia
3A Project-Second Round Result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Object of Project</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Tyng Wah Group of Hospitals</td>
<td>Healthy Start Home Risk Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Hong Kong Children &amp; Youth Services - tung csim Integrated Family Service Centre</td>
<td>Sleep In Beauty - Women’s Maternal Scheme</td>
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<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Family Matters Limited</td>
<td>Family - friendly, happy together</td>
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<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>The Boys’ &amp; Girls’ Clubs Association of Hong Kong</td>
<td>Project Youth - 2nd Social Service for Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender youth and their families in Greater China</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association</td>
<td>Seeing is O.P.S.3-family based Counseling &amp; Support Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Family Service</td>
<td>Promoting Positive Life Attitudes among Families with Special Needs children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Social Fund for Children and Families</td>
<td>Family Development Account Program: An Approach to End Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Social Welfare League Foundation &amp; O.C.</td>
<td>Working with Bereaved Children and Their Families affected by Disasters</td>
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</tbody>
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3A Project Sharing

• It provides an invaluable regional platform,
• Creates momentum among professionals in different countries
• The winning project is very impressive: how to work with bereaved children and families affected by earthquake in Taiwan

3A Project Prize Presentation

Insights from the Agency Visits in Singapore

• Family Service
• Specialized Service
• Divorce Issues
Insights from the Agency Visits in Singapore

• Family Service

Family Service Centres in Singapore

38 government funded FSC, run by VMOS (voluntary Welfare Organisations)
Pilot project in 1991
FSC model confirmed in 1993

THK FSC@Tanjong Pagar

The agency operated 62 programmes/projects in Singapore. It runs 4 FSC.
The centre in Tanjong Pagar is one of the pilot project of FSC.
FSC is a professional agency that promotes and strength the social well being of the family.

It serves as a neighbourhood bases focal point of family resource which anyone can turns to for help on any matters related to the family.

Core services:
- information and referral
- casework and counselling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Financial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>892</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Manpower: 3 Directors, 10 social workers, 7 supporting staff

Supervision: 10 supervision hours per month

Salary: monthly pay with mid year and year round bonus
Programmes / projects

Low income/ Dysfunctional Families
- Family Achievement Award
- Healthy Start
- Home Ownership Plus Education
- Intensive Case Management

Marital/ Family Violence
- Give Another Lifeline (at the Legal Aid Bureau)
- Family Violence mandatory counseling
- Syariah Court Marriage Counselling Programme

Pathological Gambling
- 1800 X-Gamble (1800 944 253) Helpline
- Debt & Problem Gambling Counselling
- Family Exclusion Orders facilitation
- Responsible Gaming Operators Support
- Public Education

Pregnancy/ Adoption
- Project Cherub
- Local Adoption Facilitation
- Litigation Counselling-Hope Scheme
- Mum-to-be (1800 686 8623) Helpline

Others
- PRC Scholars Support
- Art Therapy
- Psychological Assessment/ Treatment
- Alarm Alert System
- Project Home

Community Outreach Efforts

- Mps @MPS
- Grassroots
- Schools
- Religious orgs
- VWO
- Police
- Self Help Groups
- CDCs
- Needs Assessment

Observations

1. The model of FSC was served as the blueprint of 家庭綜合服務中心 of Guangzhou China
2. Subsidized FSC was set up with standardized format of service delivery, manpower strength, funding and content of services
3. FSC works closely with community leaders and government
4. Mandated counselling services will be provided for couple intended to get divorce and abusers of DV cases
5. Extra funding will be granted upon extra cases opened and successful cases on family planning
6. Social work practitioners are required to receive 100 hours of professional training annually
Observations

7. Mutual help within same ethnic groups, instead of relying on government, is promoted. Chinese Development Council, Malaysia development Council, etc play the major role in providing financial assistance for the deprived groups of their own clansmen.

8. Respect and sensitivity to cultural and religious diversity are adopted in the process of service delivery.

Insights from the Agency Visits in Singapore

• Specialized Service

About PAVE

1. Background
   Started in 1999 by a project of FSC. Established in 2002.

2. Vision
   To be the lead organization in the provision and development of integrated services against interpersonal violence and to lead in the promotion of healthy relationships in our society.

3. Mission
   To promote a healthy community, free from violence through empowerment, collaboration and advocacy.
About PAVE

4. Goal
   - To promote positive alternatives to violence in the lives of persons experiencing interpersonal violence through a comprehensive provision of services.
   - To forge partnerships with key community stakeholders in the elimination of interpersonal violence.
   - To promote a well-informed community on issues of interpersonal violence through public education and awareness programs.
   - To develop professional competence in the management of interpersonal violence issues through training and research.
   - To provide consultative services to social service professionals who work with individuals or families experiencing interpersonal violence.

Service Provided

1. Casework / Counseling
2. Information and Referral Services
3. Video Conferencing for Application of Personal Protection Order (PPO)
4. Group work
5. Public education
6. Advocacy and Research
7. Volunteers
8. Training and Consultancy Service

Observation

1. PPO Service
   - An innovative service provided to abusee to apply PPO in a safe place.

2. Establishment & funding
   - PAVE started by a project in FSC and established after 2 years trial. Except their service is meaningful, sufficient funding from government and other local funding is another reason that they can continue the service.

3. Mandatory Service
   - Singapore government requested abuser, abusee and children to receive mandatory service. It was not only provide the income to the organization, but also facilitated users to have a second thought to their behavior and response.

Photos for PAVE
Suicide prevention

Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)
- established on 1969
- 24-hour confidential emotional support thinking of suicide or affected by suicide
- Vision: To be an available lifeline to anyone in crisis.

Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)
- Mission:
  - provides confidential 24-hour emotional support by trained volunteers to people in crisis, thinking of suicide or affected by suicide.

Goals:
- Prevention
- Intervention
- Postvention
**Singapore Suicide Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
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**Suicide in Singapore**

- 1 suicide death every day on the average
- 1 young person aged between 10 and 19 die by suicide every month on the average
- 361 people died by suicide in 2011
- 992 people arrested for attempting suicide in 2011

**Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)**

**Services:**
- 24-hour Hotline: 1800-221 4444
- Email Befriending
- Counseling
- Support After Suicide

**Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)**

**Services:**
- Training and Education
- Case Consultation for Agencies
- Volunteerism
Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)

- “Train up all people, not only professionals”
- 182 full-fledged members (31/3/2012)

Training Programmes

- Emotional First Aid (EFA) talks and workshops
- Suicide Awareness Talk (SAT)
- Gatekeepers Intervention Workshop (GIW)
- Suicide Intervention Workshop (SIW)
- Suicide Postvention Workshop (SPW)
- Youth Support Youth (YSY) training programme
- Other customised training programmes
  - Hotline Training
  - Working with Suicidal Youth

How to retain volunteers

- Comprehensive training, comprising weekly sessions over a 1-year period.
- One-to-one supervision.
- Opportunities for learning, self-growth and development.

How to retain volunteers

- Support from professional staff.
- Great friendships with other like-minded people.
- Cooking classes and hiking activities
“Home feeling” for the volunteers

Insights from the Agency Visits in Singapore

• Divorce Issues

Part III Divorced Issues
Background

Singapore is facing a drastic and increasing rate of divorce.

- parental conflicts over the custody of children
- sometimes interests of their children become secondary to the personal interest of the parents, the division of matrimonial assets and maintenance
- Children are at risk of being used by their parents as mere tools for advancing their personal interest
- adverse effects on children psychological and mentally
- child focused and innovative service are then initiated jointly by Singapore Judiciary, Government, voluntary welfare organizations

The Family Justice Division constitutes

- Family Court (set up on 1 March 1995 and aims at providing Child-focused service)
- Family Resolutions Chambers
- Counseling and Psychological Services
- Family Registry

The Family Court

- to deal with all family proceedings in Singapore
- Its jurisdiction covers:
  1. Adoption proceedings
  2. Divorce, nullity and judicial separation proceedings
  3. Guardianship, custody, care and control of and access to children
  4. Division of matrimonial assets
  5. Personal protection orders
  6. Spousal and child
  7. Enforcement of maintenance orders made by Singapore courts, the Maintenance of Parents Tribunal and the Syariah Court
  8. Reciprocal enforcement of maintenance orders made by foreign courts or tribunals

The Family Court (Con’t)

- Mandatory counseling for couples with children when divorce is processed
- Voluntary counseling for couples without children
- All divorce mediation is done by the judge (22 family judges and 4 judge mediators at present)
- Counseling rooms and Kid’s corner with nannies are set up
- Social service stationing at the court arranged by the Ministry of Social and Family Development to provide information on divorce and tangible service
- The maintenance order for divorced couples, and those with conflicts on financial issues
- Maintenance mediation of the Maintenance Mediation Chamber to provide early intervention on disputation over maintenance
- High resolution rate with effective case management tool
Project HEART

- Singapore stressed on “marriage first” as stated in the Women Charter (Advanced), a gender neutral charter
- Project HEART is targeted at couples who are at risk of divorce and those who have already filed for divorce, but are willing to consider reconciliation
- Couples are referred to selected counseling agencies in the community where trained therapists will work with couples towards resolution of their problem

Mediation

- For those filed cases to Family Court to apply divorce would arrange mediation by the Judge Mediators in the Resolution Conference
- Co-mediation by Judge Mediator with Psychologist/Counselors in the Joint Conference.
Child Focused Resolution Centre (FCRC)

• Stresses on child focused facilitates parents to gain insight to work together
• Mandatory counseling for families facing divorce

“You can’t divorce with your children”

Counseling And Psychological Services (CAPS)

• Set up in March 2002
• To provide holistic and integrated approach to the resolution of family-related cases with multi-disciplinary teams, including social workers, counselors, and psychologists
  ✓ Programmes to assist the Family Court in making decisions, to help families and individuals manage their emotions and resolve conflicts before, during and after the court process
  ✓ Programmes to confront issues such as family violence, substance abuse, divorce and children’s issues in the community
  ✓ Involvement in research in the Criminal, Family and Juvenile Justice Divisions of the Subordinate Courts
  ✓ Appropriate programmes to be designed or fine-tuned to achieve the Family Court’s goals of preventive, transformative, and deterrent justice.

Center for Family Harmony

• Supervised visitation, access, transfer, counseling related to access issues (Contact Service)
• Assistance from the neutral third party would facilitate effective visitations on children, and to ensure children’s right to access their parents, with safety of parents and children guaranteed
• Best interests of children would be considered for parents with great emotional issues
Early Assessment and Intervention in Community Mental Health (REACH)

- Programme to develop a mental health community network for children and adolescents under the National Mental Health Blueprint for children of school-going age
- Delivered by a community mental health team for children and adolescent, named the RESPONSE
- Led by the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MOE), voluntary welfare organizations (VWOs), and the National Council of Social Services (NCSS)

Implications

1. Role of government
   - Role as head gear of Singapore Government and Judiciary → divorce mediation, Mandatory counseling and mediation; “social control” ??? (Controversial of applicability in HK)
   - Child focused approach
   - Multi-disciplinary team
   - Created societal norms of help-seeking behaviors of families in needs
   - Sense of responsibility to look into the special needs of those needy families was cultivated by the Singapore Government
   - Partnership between Government and the voluntary welfare organizations (VWOs) instead of a boss to subordinates
Implications (Con’t)

2. The culture

• Cultural identity being a Singaporean might also create an atmosphere for citizens to make more contribution to funding bodies to benefit the social service development.

• VWOs could also establish new initiatives and service development with easier funding application.

• Evidence-based approach provides foundation for development and initiatives of new and innovative services.

• Varieties of specialized and uniqueness services, e.g. the REACH and The Centre for Family Harmony.

• Worth for Hong Kong to borrow and develop a comprehensive services including some distinguished and specialized service.

Conclusion

• Visit in Singapore of various units related to the divorced families is worthwhile to broaden the sense and perspectives of the delegates.

• The sharing with the Judge, Counselors, Social Workers are insightful and fruitful that facilitated full understanding on the legal system, the mandatory mediation, counseling, and the contact service with supervised access, etc., for the at-risk/divorced parents and their children.

• The adoption of child focused perspective is significantly impressed the delegates as well as to equip the advocacy of divorce service in Hong Kong.

Thank You...