HKU students are fighting to eradicate poverty, promote equality, ensure sustainability...

They are building a better world in their own unique ways.
To Serve

Ghana

Do small things with GREAT Love

A group of HKU students went to Ghana to teach English, computer, personal hygiene and life skills in an orphanage. At first, they were discouraged by the lack of electricity and water supplies, not to mention the bugs, mosquitoes and the blazing sun.

When they started teaching, they found that the children did not have textbooks or stationery.

“In Hong Kong, everything is within our reach and it is easy to take everything for granted. In Ghana, the lack of resources was the biggest problem,” said Catti Lee, a third year arts student. “During the computer lessons, we described the different parts of a computer on a drawing board; the children read the names of the parts out and memorised the terms. However, many of them had never seen a computer.”

“My friends asked me why not just donate to local NGOs. My belief is: if I never reach out and be with them, I will never take a step forward to contribute more.”

Sri Lanka

Give, Take and Love - STEPS II

Volunteer work is not a one way act of charity. It is an act about learning and love. It is also the driving force behind the service work of six students: Janice Cheung, Kenny Choi, Benjamin Ho, Lee Sau-mei, Christie Tsang and Yeung Sui-hung who were involved in Steps To Embrace People (STEPS II) in Sri Lanka.

They began by researching the history and impact of the civil war on Sri Lanka and focused on relief work for the war-affected population.

Their trip coincided with a serious flood that affected the Eastern province of Sri Lanka. They joined the local branch of the Red Cross to provide immediate relief and support to the local people in Batticaloa.

They helped with cleaning and sanitising work for a hospital and at a camp for the homeless.

They extended the project to include relief work, which is aimed at fighting against flood problems, and how they could offer financial support for the activities of the NGOs.
The “Better Health, Better Lives, Better Future” Project (BBB) was launched in January 2012. It aims to improve water quality and hygiene awareness in orphanages in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The initiator, Cherry Zhang, a PhD student in Medicine, visited the orphanages in Siem Reap last year. After returning to Hong Kong, she invited her classmates and friends at HKU to form the BBB committee, in order to make a change in the poor living conditions of the children.

At the orphanages the BBB team built a long-lasting water purification and storage system, performed health checks on the children to assess their nutritional and physical wellness, and taught the children about basic personal hygiene and first aid techniques. They also provided the children with first aid kits and daily necessities, including second-hand clothes, recycled soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes.

The BBB team is recruiting more students from various disciplines. With their collective efforts and combined skills, they hope the children will soon have better health, better lives and a better future.

“In Hong Kong, we worry about grades and smartphones, but in Cambodia they worry about food and other basic necessities.”

Cherry Zhang 張瑩瑩 (PhD student in Medicine)

“Even though we have group mates studying architecture and civil engineering, we still needed a mason to teach us how to build with bricks! We realised that several years of learning from textbooks becomes zero when we needed to build a tank by hand.”

Katherine Lee 李君儀 (BNurs, Year 2)

“We always complain about the little problems in life. But, when we step into others’ shoes, we will find that the grudges we were holding onto are not significant at all. There are a lot of people and issues in the world that are more worthy of our attention.”

Queenie Wong 黃君兒 (BA(ArchStud), Year 2)
Busy university life has become my excuse not to serve. This trip has reminded me to serve with my heart and ACTION.”

Carmen Chang 鄭雅文 (BBA(Law), Year 2)

In June, a group of 25 students from the Rotaract Club participated in a wide range of services, including tree planting, teaching, and a visit to children with Down Syndrome and orphans.

Jenny Lau, a third year education student, said, “Although some of the children may be seen as underprivileged, they appreciate what they enjoy in their lives. And they are happy. A boy was chosen by AC Milan for football training. Unfortunately, he suffered from kidney cancer and the orphanage was not able to raise enough funds to support his medical needs. He remained positive and kept showing us his love for football by demonstrating his football skills. There are many similar stories in Mongolia; although we may not be able to help much, we learnt to appreciate what we have.”

“Through the service trip, I made many good friends in Mongolia, and all of the team members were very thankful to the Rotaractors in Mongolia, who took care of every trivial arrangement in the 11-day trip. Being curious about Mongolian cultures, I often asked questions, which provided me a chance to interact with local people.”

Carmen Chang, a second year BBA(Law) student, recalled that “Mongolia children do not understand or speak English, so we relied on local university students to translate for us. We communicated with body language, eye contact and expressions. I had to pay a lot of attention to the children, to observe their every single body movement, and try to understand their feelings and what they wanted to share with me.”

“I met a boy in the State Orphanage who loved drawing and playing brass instruments. I love drawing and playing trumpet. We drew and played together.”

“Before I left the orphanage, we took pictures and gave each other a big hug. I tried my very best to show him my support, encouraging him to continue to do what he likes. When I left, I could see tears in his eyes, and I was sure he could also feel my love and support. I also experienced the power of silent communication.”

“Give the world the best you have and it may
We could live our lives in a much simpler way and be more environmentally friendly. We are all able to live with significantly fewer resources and in a sustainable manner.

Bryan Ho 何兆賢 (PhD student in Biochemistry)

This summer, a group of 14 students participated in Project PAEAN, which aims to raise awareness among students of the difficulties and challenges faced by the underprivileged in rural villages in Xiushui, and cultivate a sense of social responsibility for the betterment of the deprived groups. In June, they carried out field studies and provided services to the villagers. After the trip, they reported on their observations and shared their experiences. This will be a continuous effort. Students are developing projects to continue changing the poverty situation in Xiushui.

“There is indeed still much to be done and it seems that a lot of problems have to do with policies, existing structures and the lack of resources. If we can move ahead in this direction, I am confident that we can create a positive and lasting impact on the community,” said Alexander Chan, a third year engineering student.

Pankaj Parajuli, a fourth year civil engineering student from Nepal, together with fellow student Sarabe Chan, whom he met on a service trip to Indonesia, started the Rural Technology Transfer project. The idea of the project is to take a simple technology, find a way to improve it, and take it to the villages in Nepal.

With support from local NGOs in Nepal, they were able to go to Nepal with eight other HKU students. There the team built small fan-assisted stoves, which are very efficient, using just one third of the fuel that the old ones did. They also made sure the stoves had proper ventilation, as the burning wood from the old stoves gave the women many health problems.

“As there was no equipment, we had to become manual labourers, not only making the ovens by hands but also mixing the cement by foot. To make sure the chimneys were straight, we improvised a plumb line with a piece of string with a stone tied to the end,” Pankaj said.

The team had manually built 15 stoves and improved the lives of 15 families. Pankaj felt they really achieved a lasting impact in just 10 days and they are planning the next project.

More services stories: http://100.hku.hk/service100

never be enough. Give your best anyway.”

Mother Teresa (Hon DSoSc 1993)