

2012

## Programmes - Discover the different side of Tsuen Wan

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### Recommended Citation

Programmes: Discover the different side of Tsuen Wan (2012). Asia Pacific Institute of Ageing Studies Newsletter, 1, 10-12. Retrieved from [http://commons.ln.edu.hk/apias\\_nlj/vol1/iss1/12/](http://commons.ln.edu.hk/apias_nlj/vol1/iss1/12/)

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# Discover the different side of Tsuen Wan:

Climb Ha Fa Shan to bridge urban-rural gap

## Discover the different side of Tsuen Wan

The Asia-Pacific Institute of Ageing Studies (APIAS) have successfully bridged the rustic community of Ha Fa Shan to the urban city area of Tsuen Wan by bringing material assistance and attention to the Village.

In collaboration with government representatives, non-governmental organizations and education organizations, APIAS arranged university students to evaluate the situation and needs of the village inhabitants. Assisted by professionals from various sectors, students from Lingnan University offered immediate help to the villagers.

Students of the Social Problems and Social Welfare in Hong Kong (SOC 327) offered by the Department of Sociology and Social Policy, Lingnan University had volunteered to conduct a survey on the living conditions, public facilities, quality of life, social network and health

of the Ha Fa Shan residents after having received training on research methods and basic gerontology from APIAS.

The average age of Ha Fan Shan residents is 58, with ages ranging from 23 to 89 years, where more than half of its residents are elderly over 60. Through profiling of villagers, Ha Fan Shan was also found to be mainly populated by "empty nest" elders who were living under substandard conditions as compared to contemporary general living standards of Hong Kong.



"It was utterly unrealistic to hear of someone living in such underprivileged conditions amidst the bustling city of Tsuen Wan," said the Ha Fa Shan Project Coordinator Ms. Amber Chung. "Nearly half of the villagers don't have fixed line phone service installed in their shacks, and one-fifth of them don't have mobile phones. There are a handful of these villagers being cut off from the outside world."

The loosely distributed settlements and a poorly constructed dirt-road system lead to safety concerns and hamper social interaction amongst the neighbourhood. When a 2-hour walk is needed to reach the city, most of the villagers are kept isolated from the bustling town where most public facilities and medical services can be accessed.

## The helping hands

In response to the Commission on Poverty in the investigation into the prevalence of elderly living alone in 2007, APIAS joined hands with the Office of Service Learning to launch a Revitalizing Ha Fa Shan Project through the scheme of Knowledge Transfer. Through the "train-the-trainer" approach, students of Lingnan University were first trained, who then applied their learnt knowledge to serve the community.

Having analyzed the collected information from our field study, APIAS invited several collaborators to tackle

designedly the particular needs of the village folks, where our research findings of Ha Fa Shan were shared amongst our partners to make the project sustainable.

Tsuen Wan Home Affairs Department was invited to draw authoritative attention to the marginalized and neglected region, while the Yan Chai Hospital Social Service Department offered their medical assistance by sending in a team of Chinese medicine practitioners to provide medical diagnosis and to provide complimentary healthcare advice.

Women Service Association was also amongst one NGOs who offered "A-Call-A-Day" service where volunteers would show care and compassion towards the elderly as an attempt to reduce the sense of solitude and isolation. Safety Alarm Services were also introduced to the "inaccessible" villagers.





## Balancing urbanization and rurality

APIAS "co-operated with Ho Koon Nature Education cum Astronomical Centre to document the culture, history along with the ecological environment of the Ha Fa Shan Village in preparation for its revitalization through ecological tourism in the future."

Having received 6 hours training in botany from the nature education centre and in photography skills from a renowned butterfly photographer Mr. Yiu Vor of the Hong Kong Lepidopterists' Society, 12 student ambassadors were recruited from Lingnan University to record the population of plants, insects and animals, as well as places of historical and cultural importance.

With help from the enthusiastic and hospitable Village leader Mr. Li Wo-cheong, students were able to gather the narratives collected from villagers and to write an oral history.

"The Project not only helped to bring a compassionate atmosphere and a good sense of neighbourhood in Ha Fa Shan Village, but it also deepens society's understanding in the ecology of the region," observed Dr. Leong Che-hung, ex-chairman of the Elderly Commission. "It encourages the promotion and development of ecological tourism, which will infuse vitality into the village through the attraction of tourists."

A post-production pamphlet will be designed to introduce the rich cultural significance of the village. Through a 3-hour walking trail around the outskirts of the village, tourists can learn about the village without disturbing its residents' livelihood.

"The Ha Fa Shan case may be the tip of an iceberg, that resembling problems are very likely to be found in other villages all over Hong Kong," warned Ms. Chung the coordinator, but not without hope. "Yet through the success of this piloting project, I hope the good traits as shown by the Ha Fa Shan dwellers, including determination and persistence, simplicity and joyfulness, confidence and hospitality, can be felt by all visitors."

The Ha Fa Shan Revitalization Project is still ongoing and the cases are continually followed by the Home Affairs Department and other NGOs. There is a plan to explore the possibility of "agritourism" in the village.



### Facts:

- 20% have no mobile phone
- 30% feel that their properties are not protected
- 50% have water leakage in their homes
- 80% farm
- 50% experienced animal threats in the village
- 70% think emergency call service is not sufficient
- 60% claim that they have not been visited by any government representatives
- 60% thinks the outsiders have offered insufficient help

Knowledge Transfer Programme: "Cooking MaMa Series"  
Ms. Fanny Chan Hiu-yan, Project Officer (Research)



# You are what you eat!

Hong Kong is a bustling city, where busy schedules are common to many such that they are not allowed to eat punctually, or have the luxury to cook.

Or, are we too lazy to cook?

Hong Kong is a food paradise, where gourmets of a vast variety are so convenient to access, that many food lovers take their liberty to enjoy.

But sometimes, we eat without restraint.

As most of the geriatric diseases are induced by the poor lifestyles since early life stages, it is vital to address health problems from a life-course perspective that an appropriate living habit must be established.

## Food Matters

"Many think they know how to keep themselves healthy, but they don't," commented Ms. Chan Hiu-yan, Fanny, Project Officer of Asia-Pacific Institute of Ageing Studies. "In accordance to the spirit of knowledge transfer, we'd like to spread the knowledge of health-keeping to as many people in the community as possible."

Organized by our Project Officer Ms. Fanny Chan, APIAS has launched a health-oriented programme under the canopy of Knowledge Transfer Project, namely "Cooking MaMa Series".

Many have found it interesting to see an institute of ageing studies to address the food issues.

APIAS has observed that very few have paid attention to their own health conditions related to the consumption of food and the eating habits.

