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The Incubation of Social Entrepreneurship in Hong Kong

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Abstract

There has been an unprecedented wave of growth in social enterprise (SE) worldwide in the last decade. Social enterprises are social mission driven organizations which apply market-based strategies to achieve a social purpose. In Hong Kong, work integration social enterprise (WISE) is the dominant form of social enterprise which aims at creating employment opportunities for people who are being marginalized and excluded from the labor market. In recent years, there are positive signs to show the incubation of entrepreneurship in Hong Kong, though the sustainability of WISEs is becoming increasingly difficult after the financial tsunami in 2008. Social entrepreneurs are pragmatic dreamers who have the visions, talents, and skills to bring about changes to the world. Show cases, though small in number, are found in Hong Kong. They exhibit all the skills of successful business people as well as a powerful desire for social change. Successful social entrepreneurs in the world shared some common attributes of social entrepreneurship - moving away from a grant-dependent and philanthropic culture, embracing a change-oriented mission, translating social problems into opportunities, learning from mistakes and adopting innovative ways of operation. While the Hong Kong government assumes a supportive role in providing start-up funds for social enterprises, the civil society appears to be the greatest driving force in promoting social entrepreneurship in Hong Kong. Inspired by successful social entrepreneurs around the world, there were growing interests and degree of participation from civil society organizations, business sector, and educational institutions in the promotion of social entrepreneurship.

INTRODUCTION

The growth of social enterprise is a worldwide phenomenon, noticeably since 2000 (Borzaga & Defourny, 2004; Johnson, 2000; Kuan, 2006). The emergence of social enterprise was driven by many social and environmental factors, such as the crisis of the welfare state, the need for new solutions for major social issues, and the adoption of social investment approach to help the vulnerable groups in the society (Leadbeater, 1997; Midley 1995 & 1999; Nicholls, 2004). Work integration social enterprise (WISE) has flourished in Hong Kong since a decade ago along with the declining economy, the availability of start-up funding from the government, as well as the need for non-government welfare organizations (NGOs) to explore new welfare alternative to integrate the vulnerable groups into the society (Chan et al, 2006; Commission on Poverty, 2005).

A number of local research studies have been conducted to understand the development of social enterprise in Hong Kong, particularly WISEs operated by non-government organizations (Chan et al, 2006; Ho et al, 2010; HKPRI, 2008; Tang, 2005; Tang et al, 2008). The study by K.T. Chan and his team examined the role of WISEs in poverty alleviation in Hong Kong, highlighting factors which have facilitated or impeded its development (Yuen-Tsang, Chan, Ho and Cheung, 2006). Other studies attempted to contextualize and conceptualize the models of social enterprise in Hong Kong; and presented systematic analysis on the challenges confronted by social enterprises in achieving the double bottom line (HKPRI, 2008; Tang et al, 2008). It is generally agreed that WISEs did provide employment opportunities and enhancement of employability for those who are economically disadvantaged and excluded from labour market, facilitating social integration and social well-being (Ho & Chan, 2010; Chan & Sit, 2010). The operation of WISEs in Hong Kong, however, is a risky business. Among the many perceived constraints identified in local studies, acquisition of entrepreneurial mindset and the long-term sustainability of WISE are the two greatest challenges to be overcome (Chan et al, 2006; HKPRI, 2008). NGO-run social enterprises were sometime perceived by the business sector and the public as inefficient and charitable (HKPRI, 2008). Due to the conflict of social values, lack of training in business knowledge and skills, these operators were criticised for not having the right 'mindset' in business operation. These factors might result in their trajectory of development substantially different from business in the market.

Based on the above findings, many constructive recommendations have been made by scholars and practitioners to keep social enterprises alive in Hong Kong. While some scholars focus their attention on the conditions pertaining to the success and sustainability of WISEs ¹, others advocated the importance of mind-set change and nourishment of social entrepreneurs (Chan et al, 2006; HKPRI, 2008; Tang et al, 2008; Yuen, 2004). Indeed, to achieve the double bottom line of social enterprise, the cultivation of social entrepreneurship is an immanent task in Hong Kong. This paper will discuss the conditions which may accelerate the incubation of social entrepreneurship in Hong Kong. The key attributes of social entrepreneurship are discussed in the first part of the paper. Timothy Ma and Deborah Wan serve as show cases of successful social entrepreneurs in Hong Kong. In the second part of this paper, I will talk about the positive development of entrepreneurship in Hong Kong, highlighting how the civil society help nourish our future generation of social entrepreneurs.

Part I – Social entrepreneurship is the soul of social enterprise

Social enterprises are social mission driven organizations which apply market-based strategies to achieve a social purpose. ² A social enterprise has to be a mission-driven but financially sustainable business, though achieving this double bottom line is not easy. All for-profit and non-profit entities can individually or collaborately contribute to social improvement regardless of its legal forms ³. Indeed, social enterprises can be interpreted as a hybrid form of social engagement combining for-profit and non-profit models by a new generation of leaders in the society (Alter, 2004; Johnson 2000; Canadian Center for Social Enterprise 2001).

What lies in the heart of social enterprise is not its organizational form but social entrepreneurship (Bornstein, 2004; Dees, 1998; Nicholls, 2008). Starting a social enterprise is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship is the mind-set and behaviors manifested by a social entrepreneur (Dees, 1998). Social entrepreneurship, thus, can be defined as “a professional, innovative, and sustainable approach to systematic change that resolves social market failures and grasps opportunities.”⁴ The experiences of successful

¹ Such as capacity building, finding alternative sources of funding, and creating a supportive legal and social environment for local social enterprise practitioner

² Definition of social enterprise on Wikipedia. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_enterprise

³ Definition of social enterprise adopted by the Harvard Business School Social Enterprise Initiative www.hbs.edu/socialenterprise/whatis.html

⁴ Definition of social entrepreneurship adopted by the Oxford Said Business School www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/skoll/introduction/introduction.html

social entrepreneurs in United States, United Kingdom, and other part of the world are well documented (Bornstein, 2004; Baderman and Law, 2006). Renowned examples in the worldwide are published in books and reported in the media. Based on these successful experiences, the essential attributes of social entrepreneurship are identified and generalized in five aspects – visionary and commitment to change (V), Innovation (I), Turning problems into solutions (T), moving away from welfare (A) and learning continuously (L). All these attributes are VITAL to the incubation of social entrepreneurship.

Visionary and commitment to change - Gwyer Schuyler (1998) defines social entrepreneur as individuals who have a vision for social change and who have the financial resources to support their ideas. In other words, social entrepreneurs are change makers who can demonstrate leadership, vision, ethical make-up and drive towards a social mission. Social mission, often sustained by a social value, should be central and explicit for social entrepreneurs. Some prominent examples are the founders of Grameen Bank in Bangladesh⁵, Teach for America⁶ and Ashoka⁷ of U.S.A. Each of these social enterprises embraces a clear social mission and commits to realize the mission.

Innovation - Innovation is a distinctive feature of social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurs are people who are capable of coming up with new ideas to address a social issue. Innovative social entrepreneurs are pioneers who are the first few ones capable of finding solutions to engage with the social problems. 1kg More⁸ in the Mainland China encourages everyone who travel rural give a little by bringing one kilogram more of gifts (books, stationary or toys) in their backpack and visit the rural schools. World Toilet Organization (WTO)⁹ is pioneer in challenging the sanitary problems of toilets in underdeveloped countries. They help the underdeveloped countries to develop affordable and sustainable toilet system. When social entrepreneurs take the courage to challenge the orthodox practices deep-seated in a context calling for a change for better life (Mawson 2008), this involves the courage to accept calculated risk.

⁵ For details, refer to the website of Grameen Bank: www.grameen-info.org

⁶ For details, refer to the website of Teach for America: www.teachforamerica.org

⁷ For details, refer to the website of Ashoka: www.ashoka.org

⁸ 1 Kg more website: www.1kg.org

⁹ World Toilet Organization website: www.worldtoilet.org

Translating problems into opportunities - Successful social entrepreneurs are optimistic about the possibilities at the world. Therefore, when other people see problems, they see opportunities (Bornstein 2004). According to John Catford (1998), “Social entrepreneurs combine street activism with professional skills, visionary insights with pragmatism, and an ethical fibre with tactical thrust”.(p 96). They see opportunities where others only see empty buildings, unemployable people and unvalued resources.” Social entrepreneurs know how to allocate and utilize resources in order to realize opportunities. Dialogue in the Dark (DID)¹⁰ in Germany and Big Issue ¹¹of U.K. are good demonstration of the success in challenging the orthodox definition of problems by their founders.

Away from grant-dependent and philanthropic culture - A social entrepreneur must possess the vision and ability to mobilize adequate resources to sustain the enterprise in a competitive market environment. Successful social entrepreneurs distinguish themselves from running grant-dependent philanthropic NGOs. Big Issue proclaims that they do not identify with charity as a long-term solution to the problem of homelessness. They provide the homeless with employment and legal income instead. According to Brinckerhoff (2004), social entrepreneurs perceive all resources allocations to be investment for stewardship. On the one hand, they are mission-driven and keep their missions as the first priority at work. On the other hand, they are pragmatic with the fact that there would be no mission output when there is no money. Therefore they learn to be market-sensitive but still being mission-based.

Learning continuously - Learning is important to the success of social entrepreneurship. Successful social entrepreneurs keep themselves opened to new ways of thinking and methodology contributable to solving the social problems they strive to deal with. They are committed to engage in continuous trials and errors to test out possible solutions to the problems. Social entrepreneurs engage themselves constantly in correcting their own mistakes and focusing on fulfilling the goals ultimately (Bornstein, 2004; Brinckerhoff, 2000). To serve people better, social entrepreneurs must be lifelong learners trying new things. This also requires commitments to keep themselves carry on.

¹⁰ Dialogue in the Dark (DID), established by Andreas Heinecke in 1988, working for raising awareness for the “perspectives” of the blind through offering exhibitions and business training in total darkness.

¹¹ Big Issue has been launched since 1991 as a magazine production firm in UK by Gordon Roddick and John Bird

To what extent the above-mentioned attributes of social entrepreneurship was shown by social enterprise practitioners in Hong Kong? The social enterprises in Hong Kong can be conceptualized into different models, reflecting various degree of social entrepreneurship (Tang et al, 2008). As a major model of social enterprise in Hong Kong, WISE was developed under the context of poverty alleviation and adoption of a “welfare-to-work” approach to address the unemployment issue (Commission on Poverty, 2005). Thus, many NGO-run WISEs have rather specific social missions to fulfil - creating employment and training opportunities, poverty alleviation, and empowerment, reduced social exclusion of marginalized and stigmatized groups. In this sense, the missions and visions of WISEs in Hong Kong is somewhat restrictive when compared with other forms of social enterprises. Nevertheless, the practitioners of WISEs in Hong Kong perceived these disadvantaged groups as potential productive forces of the society, hence converting an unemployment problem into an opportunity of self-reliance. Except for a few, most WISEs in Hong Kong are rather conventional in terms of the nature of business and operational model. WISEs are mainly engaged in traditional businesses such as food and catering services, production and sales, general cleansing, personal care and domestic services (Chan et al, 2006; Chan and Sit, 2010). Many of them have demonstrated strong adaptability and willingness to learn, though there are plenty of rooms for improvement in term of innovativeness and resources mobility. Start-up fund from the government remains a significant source of financial support for many WISEs in Hong Kong and there is a tendency for them to rely on the hosted NGOs in terms of manpower and operation venue.

Distinguished social entrepreneurs in Hong Kong

Though not explicitly identified themselves as change-makers, some founders of social entrepreneurs in Hong Kong did demonstrate their vision, leadership, ethical make-up and drive towards realizing their social mission. Mr. Timothy Ma and Ms. Deborah Wan are typical examples.

Hong Kong Senior Citizen Home Safety Association (SCHSA) was established to advocate home safety for the elderly and Timothy Ma has assumed the role of the General Manager since 1996. Hong Kong is a rapidly aging society and over 11% percentage of people aged 65 lived alone in 2001¹². The prolonged cold spell in 1996

¹² Census and Statistics Department (2002), *2001 Population By-Census: Thematic Report—Older Persons*. Hong Kong: Government Logistics Department

resulted in a death toll of 150 unattended senior citizens not only raised public concern but also the birth of the association. For 13 years, Timothy has been persistently passionate in promoting the social mission of home safety for elderly people in Hong Kong. The Personal Emergency Link (PE Link) was first developed in the territory which integrates a telecommunication system with caring services to connect the lone elderly citizens to a 24-hour emergency assistant service. By a simple press of a portable button, an elderly living alone will be able to get in touch with an operator of the agency and obtain emergency services such as ambulance and notification to family members. More than 60,000 elderly benefitted from the service and about 20% are charitable cases.

Timothy is mindful to strike a balance between social and economic goals, and take pride in his unique business model. He started the PE Link with little resources. It took five years for PE Link to reach balance of account after enduring a period of huge debt. Timothy has extraordinary ability to mobilize resources and attracts donations for a good cause. The profits generated from the business were reinvested in other innovative and non-profit services. For example, thousands of volunteers are trained to offer emotional support, short-term counselling and referral to other social services for free via the Elder Ring Hotline. Driven by his vision, a new Mobile Link Service was developed to extend the area of protection outside the home. Following from the success, in 2009, they begin to diversify their business services and set up a WISE which provides household care service to the community. The Chief Executive of the HKSAR government once complimented Timothy Ma for building one of the most successful social enterprises in Hong Kong. More importantly, Timothy has demonstrated all the key attributes that a social entrepreneur should have. He is able to use apply practical solutions to social problems by combining innovation, resourcefulness and his unfailing passion and vision for the care of elderly. His effort won him a number of international awards in recent years. He acted boldly without limited by the resources currently in hand. Most importantly, he engaged himself in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation and learning.

Another example of successful social entrepreneur in Hong Kong is Ms. Deborah Wan. Deborah was the ex-CEO of the new Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association for 28 years (NLPRRA). She was committed to create employment and training opportunities for people with psychiatric disability through the establishment of various social enterprises. At the time when social enterprise was practically

unknown to Hong Kong people, Deborah was bold enough to operate a farm and sold the products through a vegetable stall in 1994. She demonstrated her vision by broadening the business opportunities by expanding vertically and horizontally in related businesses. A wide variety of businesses were developed so as to create employment opportunities of different natures which fit the work capacity of different unemployed segments in the society. By 2008, 19 social enterprises were established, including organic food stores, coffee and gift shops, domestic services teams, and eco-tourism. These social enterprises had created over 600 employment and training opportunities.

Deborah is a pioneer in introducing social enterprise to Hong Kong and a self-taught social entrepreneur. Being trained as a social worker, Deborah learnt how to conduct market research, assessing business risks, and tested out various product promotion strategies. The viability and business prospects of each new service were carefully assessed, taking into consideration of staff and customers' feedback. Deborah's commitment to the dual objectives of social entrepreneurship was paid off by building sustainable social enterprises. Same as Timothy Ma, Deborah is a practical dreamer who has the visions, talents, and skills to about changes in the Hong Kong society.

PART II – The incubation of social entrepreneurship in Hong Kong

In recent years, there are positive signs to show the incubation of entrepreneurship in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong SAR government has assumed a more active role in promoting social enterprise development in Hong Kong. While the government continues its support to local social enterprise by various start-up funds, a Social Enterprise Consultation Committee has been established in after the 2009-2010 Policy Address of the Chief Executive to advice the government on the development of social enterprises in Hong Kong. While the HKSAR government assumes a supportive role in promoting social entrepreneurship, the civil society appears to be the greatest driving force in promoting social entrepreneurship in Hong Kong. There were growing interests and degree of participation from civil society organizations, business sector, and educational institutions in the promotion of social entrepreneurship.

Capacity building through knowledge dissemination and consolidation of critical mass

To fulfill the double bottom line of social enterprise and to ensure long-term sustainability, capacity building for NGOs in Hong Kong is vital. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate the strategies of capacity building, the tripartite collaboration among government, business sector, and the third sector seems to be the way to go. In mapping out the strategies for social enterprise and social innovation in the next ten years, Leadbeater (2007) believed that sustainability of a social enterprise is enhanced through organizational growth, greater sense of responsibility from business and an active role from the government to promote social innovation. For the practicing social entrepreneurs, acquisition of attitude, knowledge and skills are equally important. Capacity building of social entrepreneurs is not only about entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. Indeed, some local scholars also suggested that it is necessary for NGOs in Hong Kong to identify those who are inspired to become entrepreneurs versus those who merely wish to become skilled workers, and provide special attention to nurture social entrepreneurs (Tang et al, 2008).

The civil society is a growing driving force behind social entrepreneurship in Hong Kong. A number of platform organizations have emerged in recent years to promote social entrepreneurship since 2006. The Hong Kong Council of Social Services (HKCSS) – HSBC Social Enterprise Centre, established in 2006, offering diverse services to social enterprises in Hong Kong. Training and consultancy programmes were launched by business volunteers as mentors, bringing in entrepreneurial knowledge and skills which NGOs dearly needed. Other examples are Social Venture Hong Kong and Hong Kong Social Enterprise Incubation Ltd. Formed by a group of passionate local social enterprise practitioners and supporters, the Hong Kong, Social Entrepreneurship Forum (SEF)¹³ and Hong Kong General Chamber of Social Enterprises¹⁴(GCSE) signifies the synergies from the community to form a critical mass of social entrepreneurs. It is the explicit mission of SEF to create and sustain a civil movement of social entrepreneurship and to build a dynamic citizen sector capable of affecting positive social change. One noticeable development was the annual Social Enterprise Summit held in Hong Kong, collaborated by businesses, NGOs, academic institutions and think tanks. This is an excellent platform to inspire and promote the best practices of social innovation and entrepreneurship.

¹³ HKSEF website www.hksef.org

¹⁴ SE Chamber website www.socialenterprises.org.hk

Opportunities were provided to facilitate partnership among venture capitalists, social entrepreneurs and business. This event further promotes the cause of social entrepreneurship as a feature of civil society and corporate citizenship.

Information is power. Many international alliances on social entrepreneurship have been formed around the world to act as a hub of information, education and building a vibrant and growing community of social enterprise. Some prominent examples are Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise Alliance. Easy access to information is made possible through the cyber space. In a more traditional way, successful stories of social entrepreneurs were published as case books.¹⁵ In recent years, experiences of social entrepreneurs in the Greater China Regions are being consolidated.¹⁶ For practicing social entrepreneurs, these are useful sharing of practice wisdoms. For those who wish to pursue a career along this path, these show cases definitely serve as food for thoughts.

The international recognition of social entrepreneurs in Hong Kong is empowering to social enterprise practitioners. Ms. Deborah Wan, the ex-CEO of the new Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association for 28 years (NLPRA), received Outstanding Pioneering Service Project Award from the Hong Kong Women Professionals and Entrepreneurs Association in 2008. Timothy Ma, the General Manager of Hong Kong Senior Citizen Home Safety Association (SCHSA) was being awarded the Skoll Awards for Social Entrepreneurship in 2009. These competitive awards reflected not only the recognition of contributions of Deborah and Timothy to the development of social enterprise in Hong Kong, but also the entrepreneurial spirits that they possessed. Such international recognition forcefully demonstrated the successful transformation of a social worker to a social entrepreneur for someone who has the passion and determination to do so.

Nurturing a young generation of social entrepreneurs through inspiration and opportunity

Persons who brought positive social change to the world often served as role models

¹⁵ Examples are *Everyday Legends – the stories of 20 great UK Social Entrepreneurs* by Baderman J & Justine Law (2006) and *The Social Entrepreneur* by Andrew Mawson (2008)

¹⁶ Examples are K.K. Tse edited (2010). *A New Horizon: 10 stories of social entrepreneurs in China*; 社企創業者論壇《新愚公移山 – 十個社會企業創業者的故事》

for many successful social entrepreneurs around the world, such as Muhammad Yunus of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and Bill Drayton who founded Dialogue in the Dark (DiD) in Germany. Passion and social visions may not be taught, but can be inspired and ignited. We may, therefore, nurture a new generation of social entrepreneurs who have the courage to address a social issue through innovative solutions. Young people are energetic; more prompt to new and innovative ideas, and have less opportunity costs in taking up a new career path. Social work and business schools students, in particular, are potentially good candidates. The former has a better grasp of social issues and a passion to address them while the latter possesses the necessary knowledge and skills in running a business. In fact, some of best graduates of the world's renowned universities are pursuing their career as social entrepreneurs. Marie So and Carol Chyau enhanced the quality of life of the Tibetan people in China by establishing Venture in Development after graduation from Harvard University in 2006.¹⁷ Ned Tozun and Sam Goldman, graduates of Stanford University Business School, founded D.Light Design to provide lighting to millions of people by producing cost-efficient solar-powered LED lamps which are safe, affordable, and environmental friendly.¹⁸

College students in Hong Kong are being encouraged by universities and social enterprise platform organizations to address existing social problems through social innovation. The Chinese University Social Enterprise Challenge is a prominent example of such attempt. Organized by the Center for Entrepreneurship of Chinese University of Hong Kong, this competition aims at encouraging students to realize their entrepreneurial spirit through the achievement of both economic and social objectives, as well as enhancing public understanding on social enterprise.¹⁹ Harvard Business School Association of Hong Kong offers full scholarship²⁰ to young people on practical knowledge and skills of nonprofit management since 2001. The feedback has been very positive. The Hong Kong Social Entrepreneurship Forum²¹, is mindful in nourishing a new generation of social entrepreneurs through exposure and inspiration. Successful social entrepreneurs²² born after the 80s were invited to share their stories with young people in Hong Kong, including Marie So, Ned Tozun and Andrew Yu.

¹⁷ The social enterprise Ventures in Development website www.venturesindev.org

¹⁸ D.Light Design website www.dlightdesign.com

¹⁹ CUHK SE Challenge website www.cuhk.edu.hk/cpr/pressrelease/070614e.htm

²⁰ Harvard Business School Program www.exed.hbs.edu/program/spnm

²¹ Hong Kong Entrepreneurship Forum website www.hksef.org

²² Examples are Marie So of “Shokay”, Andrew Yu of “1 kg more”, Ned Tozun of D.Light Design

Actualizing innovative ideas through Venture philanthropy

How can social entrepreneurs actualize their dream without relying on public funding? Venture philanthropy is a way out. Venture philanthropy, in various forms²³, is the application of the concepts and techniques from venture capital finance and business management to achieve philanthropic goals.²⁴ Venture philanthropy is characterized by the willingness to allow the grantee to try out new approaches with financial and human capital support. Venture philanthropy provides great incentive for social entrepreneurs to actualize their dreams and hence avoiding the dependence on government funding or donations. Though small in number, opportunities of venture philanthropy are now available in Hong Kong. Ventures Hong Kong (SVHK) was set up in 2007, which provides financial, intellectual, and human capital support to the development of social entrepreneurship in Hong Kong. Likewise, SOW (Asia) Foundation²⁵, a Hong Kong-based organization, brings together financial and non-financial resources to seed and scale-up promising organizations in Asia that take an entrepreneurial approach in resolving social problems such as poverty alleviation, environmental protection, and health care. In view of the growing number of social enterprises founded by individual social entrepreneurs²⁶ in Hong Kong, an initiative is also launched by the Social Entrepreneurship Forum to create a social investor platform to provide funding support to social entrepreneurs not eligible for government support.²⁷ With these venture capitals in place, it is possible for “to-be-entrepreneurs” to try out their innovative ideas without relying on the government for seed money.

Supporting social enterprises through ethical consumption

In terms of number and scale, social enterprises occupy only a small proportion of business enterprises in Hong Kong. Not everybody would become a social entrepreneur, but everyone can be a supporter through ethical consumption. Ethical consumerism is the intentional purchase of products and services that the customer considers to be made ethically²⁸. Very often, people become customers of a social enterprise because they identify with the social goals or values embedded in the

²³ It may take the forms of traditional foundations, organizations which are funded by individuals, and partnership between the investors and the grantees.

²⁴ Definition from Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/venture_phianthropy

²⁵ Sow Asia website www.sowasia.org

²⁶ Examples are Fair Taste, Venture in Development and Living Knowledge Committee

²⁷ K.K. Tse Chairman’s Report 2009, HKSEF Ltd.

²⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethical_consumerism

product or services. For instance, some middle class citizens are willing to buy a cup of Fair Trade coffee and green product at a higher price for the support of income equality and environmental protection. In Taiwan, government officials would take the lead to patronize a bakery shop “Children Are Us Foundation” which employs mentally-challenged children in support of their self-reliance spirit. This created a positive effect on ethical consumption. The sustainability of social enterprises, thus, may be enhanced if there is ethical consumption can be cultivated among the citizens. In Hong Kong, a small number of social enterprises, such as Fair Taste, Kekok House and handicrafts produced by racial minorities are testing out the market of ethical consumption. Some social enterprise platform organizations are making good attempts to cultivate ethical consumption among the public in Hong Kong. It is, however, more effective for the HKSAR government to take the lead to encourage ethical consumption through publicity and public education. This will be a long educational process.

Conclusion

Hong Kong is now entering a new era of social entrepreneurship. Compare with a decade ago, a relatively supportive environment for social entrepreneurs is made available through the partnerships of the HKSAR government, social conscious businesses, academic institutes, and civil service organizations. It is time for us to take stock of what we have and continue to build a critical mass of social entrepreneurs in Hong Kong and the greater China region. The civil movement of social entrepreneurship has just begun.

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