



For immediate release  
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Press Release

**“Seeking New Partnerships Will Help Social Service Organizations Fulfill Their Social Mission”  
HKU’s Department of Politics and Public Administration  
and Centre for Civil Society and Governance Released  
The First Annual Report on the Civil Society in Hong Kong**

A report released today (November 8) by the University of Hong Kong shows that social service organizations (SSOs) need to strengthen their collaboration with their peers and other sectors if they want to enhance the capacity to fulfill their social mission.

The *Annual Report on the Civil Society in Hong Kong 2009* was released by the **Department of Politics and Public Administration and the Centre for Civil Society and Governance, the University of Hong Kong**. Focusing on the social service sector, this is the very first published report of an unprecedented multiyear project to map the state of development of the civil society in Hong Kong through the collection and analysis of basic data.

A questionnaire survey was conducted on 381 SSOs in July-August 2009 (with 64% response rate). It found that a typical SSO in Hong Kong is a home-grown organization of about 20 years old under the registration of Companies Ordinance. It operates 6 branches in several districts and has about 2,700 members. The sector as a whole is highly dependent on public funding. Most SSOs regard the provision of social service as their primary mission and do not take advocacy as an important organizational mission. The majority of SSOs surveyed consider their relationship with the government cordial.

At the same time, the budget size of SSOs varies greatly from an annual income of less than \$50,000 to over \$900 million (2008-9 figures).

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that nearly 40% of SSOs were only established in the last 20 years. They face quite a different operating environment from the larger and more established organizations. The younger SSOs receive less government funding, and therefore tend to be smaller in size and face bigger challenges in securing resources. On the other hand, they enjoy more autonomy than the older and larger SSOs, which tend to obtain more funding from the government and maintain closer links with the latter.

“It is important that these newer organizations are given the opportunities to grow and develop, because their proliferation represents the continuously changing need of our community, and contributes to the pluralism of our civil society,” Dr. Eliza W.Y. Lee, Director of the Centre for Civil Society and Governance, pointed out.

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**CENTRE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND GOVERNANCE THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG**  
公民社會與治理研究中心 香港大學

As a follow up to this study, a roundtable discussion was held on 9th October, 2010. The knowledge exchange activity was joined by representatives from SSOs, the government and the business sector. The highpoint of the discussion was how to foster better collaborations both within the social service sector and across sectors.

“The discussion shows that there is a lot of room for improvement in collaborations,” Dr. Lee said. “Many businesses that are interested in fulfilling their corporate social responsibility may not have enough information to identify what and where the needs of the civil society organizations are. The government needs to diversify its policy tools and foster more collaborations within and across sectors. This will strengthen the capacity of SSOs (in terms of fundraising, volunteer recruitment, social enterprises, etc.) to better pursue their missions.”

The report also identifies other challenges facing the social service sector. This includes the new government funding system (especially the Lump Sum Grant System) that has generated controversies between the government and the social service sector and given rise to personnel and financial problems in some SSOs. According to the survey, most SSOs find donation to be insufficient. Fund raising in social service sector is still traditional with limited use of new technology.

Other sectors including environment and heritage protection, arts and culture, education, health care, civic and advocacy organizations, and foundations will be studied in the coming years. Such a comprehensive study of the civil society is unprecedented in Hong Kong. The multiyear project aims to provide useful knowledge to policymakers, researchers, and activists on our civil society – an actor that is growing in its importance and influence in recent years.

**About the Centre for Civil Society and Governance:** The Centre for Civil Society and Governance was established in December 2002 with a mission to advance knowledge of the nature, constituents, and roles of civil society and to foster its healthy development. The Centre has published numerous research reports on the various aspects of Hong Kong’s civil society, including *the Opinion Survey on Civic Education and National Identity (2004)*, *the Hong Kong Civil Society Index Research (2005-6)* and *A Study on Civic Engagement in Public Policy Making (2006-7)*.

**About Annual Report on Civil Society in Hong Kong – Social Service Sector 2009 :** This is the first Annual Report published by the Centre for Civil Society and Governance together with the Department of Politics and Public Administration, The University of Hong Kong. In 2009, the Centre launched a multi-year research project to map the state of development of civil society in Hong Kong. Each year, the Centre will study one or two civil society sector(s) through baseline research including a major questionnaire survey. The objectives are to contribute to our community’s understanding of the state of civil society development in Hong Kong and to build up a database for future research. In July-August 2009, we conducted a survey on 381 social service organizations using a written questionnaire and the response rate was 64%.

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Please view the full report at: <http://web.hku.hk/~ccsg/whatsnew.html>

Enclosure:

English and Chinese Executive Summary of *Annual Report on the Civil Society in Hong Kong 2009*

For further enquiries, please contact:

Dr. Rikkie Yeung  
Project Coordinator  
Department of Politics and Public Administration &  
Centre for Civil Society and Governance  
The University of Hong Kong  
(Tel: 2859 2393)

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