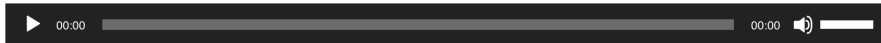




PODCAST

#53: EMPOWERING HONG KONG'S YOUTH - SKY SIU, KELY SUPPORT GROUP

BY #IMPACT PODCAST | JUNE 27, 2018



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KELY Support Group has been supporting young people in Hong Kong since 1991, but Executive Director Sky Siu's personal journey in social impact started even before that.



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#impact Podcast Co-Host Amanda Williams recording with Sky Siu

In this episode, you learn about:

- The difference a conversation with a young person can make
- The value of life lessons learned at an early age
- The importance of keeping your team motivated
- Some unsung heroes in community development

"It was a family affair"

Though born in Hong Kong, Sky grew up in Ghana with her parents working in community development. From the age of three, Sky helped her parents teach literacy lessons by instructing the women on how to hold a pencil. These early lessons in the value of community work and simple, well tested interventions have stayed with Sky and serve her well at KELY.

KELY was actually founded 27 years ago by young people themselves as a self-organised peer support group. At the time, the focus was on preventing fellow teens from getting involved in alcohol and drugs, with presentations and a hot line run from the homes of the young volunteers.



KELY Support Group: Empowering Young People to Reach their Full Potential. Photo Credit: KELY Support Group

"To make a difference you need to be preventative"

KELY has evolved over the years to focus not just on dealing with problems, but preventing them in the first place by inspiring young people to have hope for the future. The focus on positive self development includes classes and activities, as well as just opportunities to have open conversations.

KELY focuses on building and maintaining trust and giving youth the information required for them to choose their best path, and to encourage their peers to do the same.

This shared mission to empower youth is what keeps the team behind KELY motivated. The team brings diverse skills, gained in Hong Kong and beyond, and is supported by a regular group of passionate, dedicated volunteers.

One complication with youth engagement work is that it never ends - each year, there is a new awkward 14-year-old starting to hang out with the wrong crowd or a 16-year-old struggling with homework because of problems at home. As Sky points out, the challenges young people face are similar, but each child's personal story is different. These individual stories keep her and the team motivated. The team is lucky that they often get direct proof of the impact of their work when former participants come back as volunteers.



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KELY Support Group runs Positive Youth Development Programs. Photo Credit: KELY Support Group

“When you figure out how to make a difference, you need to share it”

KELY does not have regular government support, so frequently looks for new sources of funding and how to work collaboratively with other organisations. KELY has started to focus on repeatable programmes, refining them each year with feedback, and sticking to what's been proven to be successful, not just the latest trend.

To keep donors interested in long-term programmes, KELY is serious about its impact measurement. The team does evaluation themselves, partly because no one ever wants to fund measurement and evaluation, and partly because the data they collect is vital to determining how they can improve for next time.

Sky is now focused on proving which models of intervention work and sharing them with other organisations. She thinks collaboration of this kind, sharing data-driven best practice, is the key to amplifying potential social impact.

“Everybody has a young person in their life”

As important as the work that KELY and organisations like it are doing is, it's not enough. Sky stresses that everyone should try to find a way to help the next generation, through mentoring or just opening up and having a conversation. Youth have a lot to cope with and everyone can help them build resilience.

Got some time to give this episode a listen? Scroll all the way up and press play. Then you will also hear more about Sky's amazing impact role models and how you can help make a difference in young people's lives.



Our learnings from this episode. Have something to add? Get in touch with us [here!](#)

Our learnings and ways to get involved

- Do you have kids? If so, get them started helping their community from a young age. Sky's early experiences have had a profound impact on her own path.
- Reach out to a young person, have a conversation with them and listen to them.
- Support [KELY Support Group](#) and other homegrown community organisations like it by volunteering, donating and sharing their stories on social media.

Useful Resources

KELY Support Group:

- <https://kely.org>

Special thanks to our wonderful co-host [Amanda Williams](#).

If you enjoyed this episode you will also love our episode featuring [Cherrv Na from Room to Read](#). a

Nonprofit running girls literacy programs with an impact of reaching 12.4 million children and counting. Find it [here](#).

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