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Letters | Hong Kong's 'lost generation'? Not if we can help it

• It's important to recognise young people's agency and creativity in meeting life's challenges, even as society also provides the support needed for them to thrive

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Covid-19 pandemic clouds future for Hong Kong's university Class of 2020

A quick skim of recent news headlines would leave anyone with the impression of an incredibly bleak future for Hong Kong's young people. There's no doubt that it has been a tumultuous few years and the future is exceedingly uncertain, but to paint our youth as a "lost generation" is to ignore the creativity and agency that young people have to drive their own futures.

In 1991, the Post ran a nine-month news series titled Drug Watch, a series of articles covering the many facets of drug use in Hong Kong at that time. The series included the story of a young woman, who spoke to the Post under the pseudonym "Kelly". She had witnessed those around her battling drug addiction and responded by organising a peer support group in her home living room, going to schools to share her story, and helping those in the midst of an overdose. Thirty years later, the legacy of Kelly lives on in a local non-profit organisation, KELY Support Group.

Young people have tremendous potential to create solutions for the unique challenges of this generation. As adults, our role is to help them build capacity to face an ever-changing world. We can support them to



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- Tourist attractions
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- Unique accommodation/experiences

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build a better future for themselves and for all of us, just as Kelly did.

We should start by engaging young people as partners in developing solutions to issues that affect them. Young people have been especially vulnerable to the pandemic's disruptions – [school closures](#), diminished [employment prospects](#), and [isolation](#) have led to a rise in mental health issues – but their experiences also make them uniquely qualified to contribute to recovery efforts. Any youth policies must include young people, as beneficiaries and as partners.

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While youth perspectives must be central, they don't work alone. Kelly was supported by a reporter who believed and helped to share her story, her family who provided a physical space and phone line, and school administrators who trusted her to reach students in a way they weren't able to.

By equipping them with skills, knowledge and opportunities, we can help young people to harness their energy for positive change.

On International Youth Day today, rather than repeat the unhelpful narratives of a "lost generation", we can recommit ourselves to working alongside young people to create a meaningful impact on our society. Young people today aren't lost; their potential and initiative have always been here, we just have to see it.

Sky Siu, executive director, KELY Support Group

CONVERSATIONS



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