

Experiencing EO – Field Visits

A half-day visit was arranged for over 20 EO Club members and guests on 27 June 2008 to two local social enterprises (SEs) for enhancing their understanding of SEs as well as experiencing equal opportunities.

This is one of the EO Club's initiatives to promote corporate social responsibility (CSR), which has flourished as a major corporate trend in recent years. Nowadays, more and more private firms and professional organizations are committed to the concept of CSR. Showing support to SEs, which are established to achieve social objectives and equal employment opportunities, is an effective way to demonstrate commitment to CSR. The field visits therefore served as the starting point for our members to get in touch with SEs and explore how they can support SEs.

YMCA of Hong Kong (Cheung Sha Wan Centre) - Community Shop

YMCA of Hong Kong (Cheung Sha Wan Centre) has set up a project namely "Multi-cultural Enrichment and Exchange Network" to provide services for ethnic minorities. Nepalese, Pakistanis and new women arrivals from the Mainland work as "trainees" in the Shop. Apart from producing handicrafts, they also work on shifts as salespersons from Monday to Saturday.



The Community Shop selling handmade products, garments and small ornaments is jointly operated by South Asian women and new arrivals from the mainland – an effective way to promote racial harmony and community economic development.

According to Ms LAW Lap-man, the responsible officer of the project, the Shop faces a number of difficulties in operation. For example, all trainees and instructors involved in the project lack in-depth experience of doing business. Training on sales skills is also urgently required for trainees of the Shop. Collaboration and assistance from the private sector is being sought to boost up sales volume and achieve sustainable development of the shop.



EOC Member Ms Carmen Chan thanks Ms Law Lap-man of the YMCA for her clear explanation of the employment situation and livelihood of South Asian women in Hong Kong.



New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (NLPR)

Our second destination was the headquarters of the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (NLPR) at Shamshuipo. The NGO, which set up its first SE in 1994, has up to now developed 19 diversified and comprehensive SEs, providing work and training opportunities for people with a history of mental illness. Their SEs include retail shops selling organic food, an eco-tourism farm, a souvenir shop, restaurants, a coffee shop, convenience stores, a fruit store, a vegetable store, a light refreshment kiosk, a cleansing service company as well as a property management service company.



Occupational therapist of NLPR explains how to develop the necessary work skills for the trainees with a history of mental illness.

During the tour, we visited NLPR's sheltered workshop and long stay care home for persons with a history of mental illness. All trainees in the workshop concentrated on their work and all visitors were amazed at their beautiful handicrafts, such as mosaic paintings, photo frames, mini fridge magnets, handbags and etc.



Visitors are impressed by the handicrafts and art works created by persons with a history of mental illness during the visit to NLPRA's sheltered workshop.

Afterwards, we visited the New Life Fast Food Restaurant at Shek Kip Mei Park Sports Centre, and were deeply impressed by the catering service provided by persons with a history of mental illness.

On reflection ...

Through the field visits to SEs, all participants agreed that their understanding on the missions and operation of SEs was greatly enhanced. The way in supporting SEs can be various, including consuming SEs' service and products as well as sharing business experience and knowledge. It is worthwhile for all of us to explore possible cooperation with them and share with staff and clients.