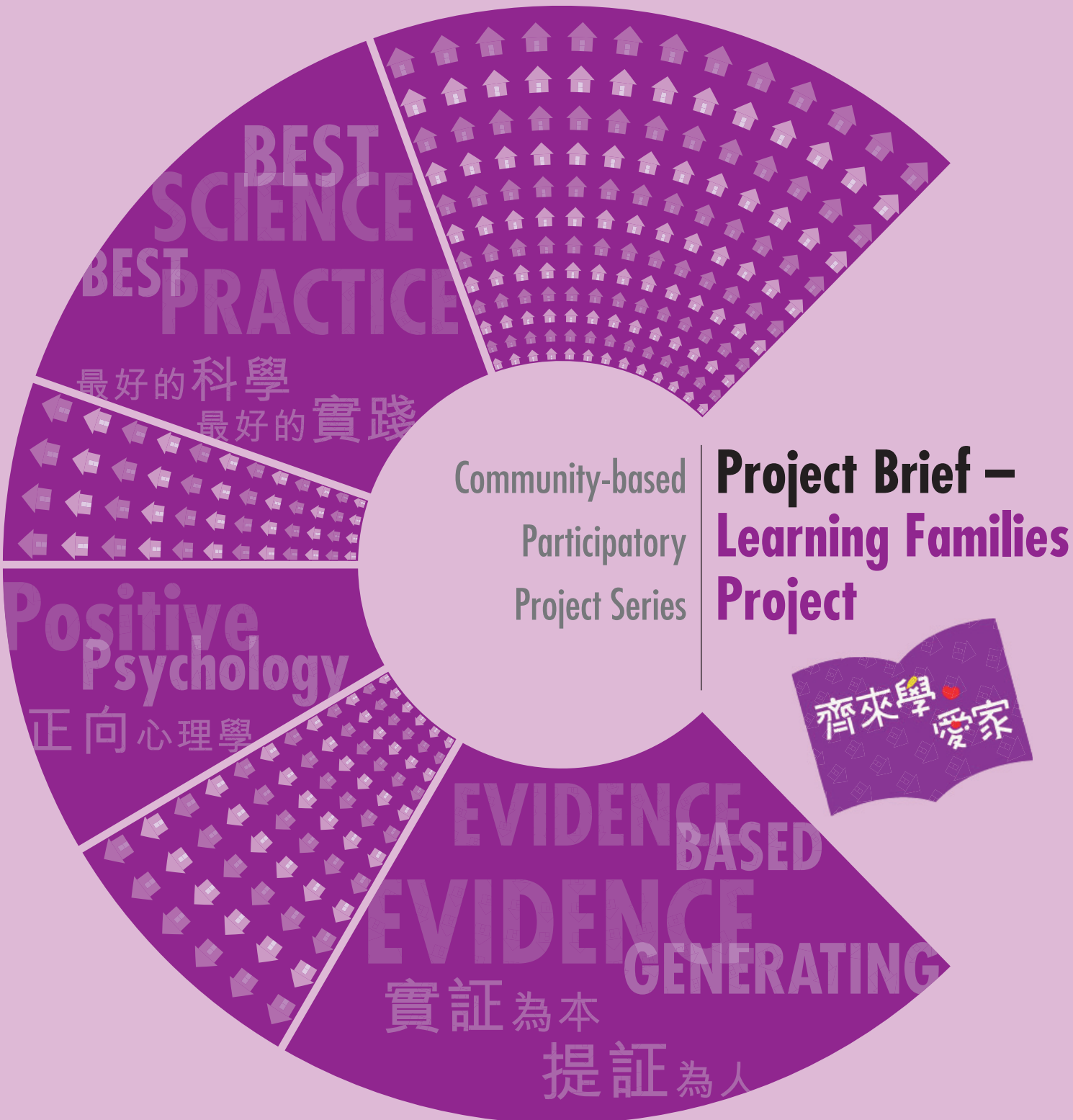


FAMILY: A Jockey Club Initiative for a Harmonious Society

愛+人：賽馬會和諧社會計劃



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LEARNING FAMILIES PROJECT

INTRODUCTION



BACKGROUND

Kwun Tong district had relatively more family problems compared with other districts, according to the statistics from the Social Welfare Department. To strengthen family well-being in the Kwun Tong community, the Christian Family Service Centre (CFSC) in collaboration with the School of Public Health of The University of Hong Kong (HKU), adopted a Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach and implemented a community-based Learning Families Project in Kwun Tong district. The project aimed to promote FAMILY Health, Happiness and Harmony (3Hs) through cultivating cooperative and self-regulated family learning culture in one public housing estate, Tsui Ping (South) Estate (intervention estate), with another nearby estate Shun Tin Estate as a control estate, in Kwun Tong district.

Based on the Social Learning Theory, it is believed that people can learn new information and behaviours via observation, imitation and modelling. The theory is related to Vygotsky's Social Development Theory, which emphasizes the importance of social learning. It is used as a guiding framework to promote the messages of 3Hs through observational learning and participation in learning activities. Incorporating the advantages of community-based participatory approach and Social Ecology Model and Health Belief Model, the Learning Families Project was organized in Kwun Tong district from July 2010 to March 2012. Kwun Tong district was chosen also because CFSC is one of the leading non-government organizations with its headquarter in the district. The project was expected to effectively deliver the 3Hs messages in the community via engaging major stakeholders including the Estate Management Advisory Committee (EMAC) and the Mutual Aid Committees (MACs). These stakeholders were seldom involved in most community service projects in Hong Kong previously. Housing estate based projects were also scarce.

PROJECT AIMS

1. To promote 3Hs in public housing estates in Kwun Tong district through cultivating a cooperative and self-regulated family learning culture;
2. To utilize community resources by building capacity among public housing estate resident leaders (EMAC and MACs) through hosting estate leaders' train-the-trainer programme on the concepts of family learning and 3Hs;
3. To establish a platform for enhancing social networking and neighbourhood support by multiple family-based activities for public housing estate residents organized by resident leaders and social workers;
4. To evaluate various components of the project in terms of its structure, process, and outcomes;
5. To evaluate the impact of resident training programmes on knowledge and attitudes about the key messages of self-regulated learning behaviours and family learning concepts.



OVERALL PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODS

This Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) project used both quantitative (cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys) and qualitative (focus groups and in-depth interviews) methods and a two group comparison experimental design for evaluation. Tsui Ping (South) Estate was the intervention site, and Shun Tin Estate was the control site. Process and outcome evaluations were conducted at different time points throughout the different phases of the project.

The project was conducted in five phases:

Phase I: A needs assessment with EMAC and MACs to collect their views on the needs of families with regard to health, happiness and harmony, and suggestions as to leaders' train-the-trainer programme sessions for the EMAC and MACs designed to engage and equip them with the concept of 3Hs and organizing skills to help them plan and organize activities.

Phase II: A baseline household survey of the residents in the intervention and control estates, and a kick-off ceremony for the project at Tsui Ping (South) Estate (intervention estate).

Phase III: A series of community-based programmes (promotion programmes, resident training programmes and learning programmes) for families in the intervention estate to enhance their knowledge about and positive attitudes towards the key messages of self-regulated learning behaviours and family learning concepts, and to promote 3Hs.

Phase IV: A follow-up household survey on the intervention and control estates.

Phase V: A recognition ceremony, a number of focus groups and in-depth interviews to explore the EMAC, MACs, volunteers', CFSC staff's and family members' experiences, thoughts and feelings about the project.

Over the course of the project, a series of promotion and publicity strategies were used including:

1. Publication of "Learning Family Booklet"
2. Leaflet promotion
3. Banner promotion
4. Poster promotion
5. Health check promotion
6. Video advertisement
7. Newspaper, magazine and radio programme introduction
8. Souvenirs

LEARNING FAMILIES PROJECT

PROJECT SUMMARY



The Social Welfare Department statistics have shown that Kwun Tong was one of the districts with high prevalence of elderly abuse (8.2%), domestic violence (9.4%) and child abuse (9.8%). To strengthen family well-being in the Kwun Tong community, the Social Learning Theory was proposed and used by the Christian Family Service Centre (CFSC) as a guiding framework to develop a community-based participatory intervention project to promote FAMILY Health, Happiness and Harmony (3Hs) – Learning Families Project. Key community stakeholders such as the Estate Management Advisory Committees (EMACs) and the Mutual Aid Committees (MACs) in two Kwun Tong public housing estates were actively engaged as key partners in this project.

The aim of the project was to promote family communication and 3Hs among families living in public housing estates in Kwun Tong district through cultivating a cooperative and self-motivated family learning culture. Another objective was to engage and build capacity among resident leaders (EMAC and MACs) and families through train-the-trainer programme for the leaders, and residents' training programmes and participation in activities to promote the concepts of family learning and 3Hs.

The Learning Families Project adopted a Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach, led by the Christian Family Service Centre, a large non-government organization (NGO) in Hong Kong, in collaboration with School of Public Health of The University of Hong Kong. CFSC engaged the EMAC and MACs to deliver a series of learning family interventions focus on self-learning and 3Hs to residents living at Tsui Ping (South) Estate (intervention group) in Kwun Tong district. The train-the-trainer programme for housing estate leaders was well-received and showed significant beneficial effects on strengthening knowledge and perception of 3Hs, and motivation in promoting 3Hs at immediate post-training and one year follow-up.

The interventions to residents were delivered as resident training programmes aiming to promote 3Hs through learning activities among family members. A series of promotion and publicity events were conducted to publicise and develop the environment of learning habits among families in Kwun Tong district. Baseline and post-project household questionnaire surveys were conducted to evaluate the whole impact of the interventions comparing with the control estate (Shun Tin Estate) one year after the interventions. The impacts of the interventions on the intervention estate were measured using repeated cross-sectional surveys, which showed significant improvements in social support and neighbourhood cohesion in the intervention estate, while these indicators either remained stable or decreased in the control estate where no intervention was delivered. Subgroup analyses showed even greater improvements for people who used the intervention materials (booklet), used suggested activities, and practiced skills to learn with families. The high attrition rate (57%) hindered analysis for matched cohort data. The quantitative findings were supported by the qualitative data through many individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Both residents and community partners welcomed the project. Improvement in 3Hs and neighbourhood relationships were observed after the programme implementation. Future development and extension of the programme was recommended.

For the effect of the resident training programmes, a series of questionnaires were conducted to measure the changes of families' self-regulated learning behaviours, family learning concepts, communication and 3Hs. Immediate post-programme and 6-week follow-up results showed beneficial effects on knowledge, attitude and behaviours in improving 3Hs.

To conclude, the specially designed resident training interventions showed good evidence of effectiveness in developing a learning culture in the families, enhancing family communication time and quality, increasing neighbourhood cohesion and resilience and promoting family happiness and harmony. The project should be extended to other disadvantaged people using improved interventions and evaluation methods. Future projects should also consider strengthening engagement of different community partners and integrating the project into routine practice.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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