

ST. JAMES' SETTLEMENT

INTEGRATED SERVICES FOR STREET SLEEPERS

ENHANCING THE SOCIAL PARTICIPATION OF OLDER PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS: A COMMUNITY BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Research Objectives	Research Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Look into how older homeless people in Hong Kong join in community life. ▪ Create a Theory of Change to help them get more involved. ▪ Create a Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) team made up of older homeless, service providers and researchers ▪ Start a project to help older homeless to take part more in social activities 	<p>Crystal Kwan Tam Ho Chung Fung Siu Pan</p>
	<h3 style="text-align: center;">Methodology and Result</h3> <p>This study uses qualitative methods that involve the community (Community-based Participatory Research) and build theories based on people's experiences (Constructivist Grounded Theory).</p> <p>Volunteerism emerges as a key driver for community re-engagement, with religion/faith and untapped talents playing significant roles. Staff embodying dignity, self-determination, and patience also facilitate reintegration. Adopting a growth mindset, celebrating "Small Wins," and offering incentives encourage participation, alongside affordable housing and low-cost/free activities. Top activities include sports and volunteering, while mental health issues present substantial barriers.</p> <p>In short, we used what we learned to make a theory of change (ToC) to get older homeless people more involved in community life. Together, we started a choir group that showed off their hidden talents. Over 11 weeks, they practiced and sang in public performances. Our interviews and this choir project helped us create a ToC to boost social activities for older homeless, which could help professionals interested in supporting this group.</p>
<h3>The most unforgettable experience in this research</h3>	
<p>Tam Ho Chung : In this project, I served as both a researcher and a mentor, actively engaging with the research subjects and realizing the impact of my actions on them. It prompted me to reflect on the role of a researcher beyond traditional responsibilities and academic output, and consider ways to directly contribute to the well-being of the subjects and the community. The project also blurred the line between researchers and subjects, fostering a collaborative approach to research.</p>	<p>Kwok Wai Chuen, Eric : The project challenged my assumptions about service users. Years of working with the homeless had shaped my biases, particularly in activity planning. Designing based on past experiences led to predictable outcomes, lacking excitement. However, the project centered users and empowered them as leaders. Their increased engagement and satisfaction made me reconsider my stereotypes and provide innovative services. Instead of allowing experience to hinder innovation, I learned to leverage experience to create innovative solutions. The project reshaped my approach to serving users.</p>