

What can the Younger Generation do for an Aged Society?

Youth I.D.E.A.S. Report No. 2

Responsibilities and ageing

15% of our population is aged 65 or more and that will rise to 30% by 2041. Median life expectancy, already the same as Germany's, is also projected to rise. In many traditional cultures members of the younger generations are expected to provide for the older members of the family and adult children are the primary source of support and care for older relatives. However, in places with very low birth rates like Hong Kong, trends of having fewer children mean that there will be less potential care and support for older people from their families. As the burdens increase, will attitudes change? How will the younger people in Hong Kong cope and how are they preparing for their own future as elderly members of society?

Attitudes and Values

- They respect the elderly.
- They do not consider the elderly to be a burden on society.
- They accept responsibility for providing care for parents.

Concerns

- They are worried about their own future as elderly people.
- They believe the family should bear the main responsibility for taking care of the elderly but believe future generations may not think likewise.
- They believe in savings, investments, good financial management and good health to help them when they are old.

Practical responses

- About 60% are willing to contribute to a universal retirement pension scheme.
- Over 20% are willing to pay 10% of their monthly income into a fund.
- 18% were unwilling to pay anything.
- 20% believed the greatest responsibility should rest with the elderly or government.

Suggestions and recommendations

- Greater government support for looking after the elderly.
- More resources to help youth become competitive, higher earners.
- Improved community services and residential care services for the elderly, including canteens, household care facilities and care homes.
- Ageing at home to be the norm with institutional care as back-up.

- Harmonious contact between the young and older generations to be encouraged to promote respect for the elderly.

Comments from Youth I.D.E.A.S. think tank conveners

Society & Livelihood group

Carew Chan *“The government should raise tax allowances for anyone who provides for needy parents or grandparents thus alleviating economic pressure on the young people. Besides, seeing there is an acute shortage of subsidized elderly hostel quotas, the government should seek suitable sites for more.*

Peann Tam *“We should have an annual Grandparent’s Day when older people’s contributions to society are recognized and respect for the elderly is promoted with special emphasis on those still living at home.”*

Youth Research Centre

Article from *Youth Hong Kong*, December 2015 (Volume 7 Number 4) p. 48