Bottom-up Resilience Webinar Series

Fixing HK – Carrying on our fight for democracy while combating Covid-19

7 July 2020
A Brief History of Fixing HK

Founded in 2014 after the Umbrella Movement

Based in Tokwawan, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Hong Kong

An all-volunteer group that promotes democracy, community self-help and civil engagements through

• Repair works
• Street fairs, street screenings and other community activities
• Organizing community self-help projects
• Community recycling
• Rallies and marches
• Elections Campaigning
Handing out masks to cleaning workers in Tokwawan
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Start of the protests
Large scale protests over the Fugitive Offenders Amendment Bill began
Mistrusts against the govt grew due to police brutality and continued interference from China

Anti-mask Law
Enacted using a century old colonial era law
The govt continued to appeal a lower court’s ruling against the anti-mask law even during the Covid-19 outbreak

Beginning of outbreak
First confirmed cases
More imported cases from China during and after Lunar New Year
Shortage of facemasks and disinfectant products

Community self-help
Medical workers went on strike as they urge the govt to close border with China. The govt refused
Shortages continue, but the govt would ship part of their mask stock to China
Community self-help began with groups starting to distribute masks and disinfectant to those in need
Covid-19 in Hong Kong

A Timeline

Mar 2020

Ban on public gatherings
Second wave of outbreak as Hongkongers returned from overseas
Public gatherings of more than 4 people banned. The ban, with a fine of HKD2000, has been used repeatedly by the police against protesters

Apr 2020

Closure of bars and pubs
as well as other public venues but massive confusions over implementations

May 2020

Getting under control?
Streak of 23 days with no new local cases broken
Cap on public gathering raised to 8 people
Govt began distribution of reusable facemasks after 3 months

Jun 2020

Social distancing continues
Social distancing measures extended until June 18
Annual Tiananman Square Massacre commemoration banned for the first time
Repacking masks and adding pro-democracy and Covid-19 prevention messages
Repacking masks and adding pro-democracy and Covid-19 prevention messages
What have we done so far?

- **50K+**
  - Masks given out to cleaning workers across Hong Kong, as well as elderly, poorer families and ethnic minorities in Tokwawan.

- **50+**
  - Visits to cleaners and other groups in need to hand out masks, hand sanitizer and PPE, share news on Covid-19 and the government’s response and relief measures and promote democracy and civic engagement.

- **20+**
  - Street booth sessions to reach out to residents of Tokwawan to promote community self-help, give out hand sanitizer and other supplies, share news on Covid-19 and promote democracy and civic engagement.
Why focus on cleaning workers?

**They stood on the frontline against Covid-19 but their efforts were often overlooked**

- Old and vulnerable – average age over 60 and often do not have access to timely news
- Neglected and underequipped – They were never properly equipped with PPE during the best of time and at the height of the Covid-19 outbreak, some of them had to use one disposable mask for days
- Poor – with an average hourly of US$5-6 (HK$40-50) and long working hours, they couldn’t afford purchasing PPE themselves nor have the time to queue up for them
Surgical masks were often washed and reused at the peak of the Covid-19 outbreak.
Most cleaning workers could not afford to purchase their own PPE.
How did we do it?

There were rumors of the outbreak of a SARS-like virus in Wuhan in January. We purchased a few thousands masks during a trip to Taiwan to observe its presidential election. This allowed us to become one of the first groups to hand out masks during the Lunar New Year.

Donations
After we started handing out masks, through social media promotions, we have received over 50,000 masks and several hundred liters of hand sanitizers from donors.

Messaging
We would then repack the masks into packs of 5 masks and with pro-democracy, police brutality, government and triad collusion, and Covid-19 prevention messages.

Reaching out
We visited various parts of Hong Kong at least once a week to give masks to cleaning workers, tell them the latest news on the outbreak and listen to their concerns.
How did we do it?

But what we did was more than just handing out, we also organized street booths and learning sessions so those in the community without internet access can know the latest Covid-19 related news.

Education

We organized street booths in Tokwawan to educate our neighbors on community self-help, democracy and anti Covid-19 tips while handing out hand sanitizer and other supplies.

Learning

As cleaning workers are one of the key groups we serve, we invited The Hong Kong Cleaning Workers Union to conduct a learning session so we could understand more about the difficulties they face.

Discounted masks

We were able to source several thousand facemasks which we sold at a discount to people in Tokwawan who could afford to buy their masks, thus letting us reach a group who would normally not need our service.
Street recyclers were another group that we focused on.
Street booths were an effective way to dissimulate information and distribute supply
Why has Hong Kong been able to contain Covid-19?

Successful community efforts despite the government

Experience from SARS
People have been wearing masks and taking other preventative measures from Day 1

Civil society involvements
People are better equipped to self-help following the 2019 protests

The protests
Which reduced the number of visitors from China to a trickle thus limiting the spread of the virus

Our medical workers
Unsuccessful strike action to force the govt to close the border with China but stood firm on their duties during the outbreak

Distrust in the govt
Incoherent govt responses have led many to take actions in organizing community self-help

Self-help
From setting up masks production lines to sourcing and sharing supplies, Hongkongers have done it all

Fixing HK
Thank you!