

Wanchai Community Outreach Programme Report

The interactive forum was themed “ Sustainable Development – Community Participation”. The participants were divided into seven groups and each sent a group representative to report on their discussion at the end of the event. From their reports, we noted that the areas which the participants were most concerned included urban renewal, community planning and sustainable development in practice.

In terms of urban renewal, the participants agreed that urban renewal would break up inter-personal networks and more or less destroy community heritage and collective memories, resulting in irreparable losses. As such, urban renewal should not be short-sightedly skewed by economic development, but should stress on the preservation of community identity, heritage and neighbourhood network. At the same time, local rehousing should be arranged as far as possible. This should include assisting small local shops to continue their business operation in the neighbourhood after redevelopment. The impact of urban renewal on the local community should also be examined. Extensive consultation involving significant local participation would be essential prior to the project implementation.

Community participation in community planning was considered most important by the participants. They considered that city planning had great impact on the livelihood of the locals. Their views on their own community should be actively sought by the Government through appropriate channels, such as seminars or discussion fora with a view to planning and improving the living environment of the local residents through concerted efforts. Community resources (including human cultural and historical resources) of each district should be well utilized by the Government. Inter-personal networks should also be preserved as far as possible. The authorities should appreciate the uniqueness of each district, thus development should not be identical everywhere but to preserve the community’s identity and specialties to meet the local needs.

On sustainable development issues, the participants urged the Government to enhance SD awareness of youth and the general public through liberal studies and civic education. The Government should take the lead in helping to preserve local heritage, for example, by providing a permanent performance venue for Cantonese Opera for its continued development in the society. In another vein, it was suggested that in addition to paying attention to the GDP growth, emphasis should also be placed on enhancing the quality of life by reviewing long working hours, introducing flexibility in working hours and environment etc.