



希望枝子

**BRANCHES**

OF HOPE

2019 ANNUAL REPORT





In light of the turmoil our city has faced this year, we are connected now more than ever to our community members. The people we serve have faced so much; they overcame hardship in their countries of origin to seek safety, protection, and opportunity in Hong Kong where they now await uncertain futures. As an organisation, we commit to continue providing the necessary care and support to the marginalised communities among us.

Both STOP and ROAD aim to provide comprehensive solutions to issues faced by their respective community members, providing emergency relief, development, education, networking, research, and resources to build flourishing communities. This year, Branches of Hope focused on consolidating our work by deepening our integrated approach to our programmes.

This Annual Report is the story of our programmes' underpinning principles: 'Equip, Educate, and Empower'. Our programmes represent both a humanitarian response to our community members as well as a commitment to their ongoing development and sustainability through a holistic approach that addresses immediate needs while equipping knowledge and skills. Beyond our work with these marginalised communities, we are also passionate advocates in our society on their behalf, providing public education in an effort to combat enduring stigmas.

I could not be more honoured to take on the role of Executive Director for Branches of Hope. I firmly believe that our unique and holistic approach provides the necessary foundation to tackle the complex and structural social justice issues our city faces today. I want to thank each of you for your ongoing support and solidarity for us and the people we serve, and I look forward to journeying with you in the years ahead.

*Aman Yee*  
Executive Director





*With the little that we have — and a little perseverance — I believe we can make a lasting difference for those who most need it.*



**D**espite the challenges our city has faced, 2019 has been yet another fruitful year for Branches of Hope in terms of fundraising. We are pleased to report that we reached our financial goals for the year, and beyond this, gained a generous surplus to invest in our transformative programmes and wonderful community members.

This has also been a year of change. We have said goodbye to our former Executive Director, Tom Franz, and welcomed Aman Yee as our new Executive Director. We will miss the leadership and guidance of Tom and look forward to seeing how Aman uses his unique gifts to lead us in our pursuit of justice in Hong Kong.

As you read this year's Annual Report, we hope that you would feel inspired and ready to journey with us wherever the next year leads.

#### **The Vine's Ongoing Commitment**

Since Branches of Hope's humble beginnings as Vine Community Services Limited (VCSL), The Vine has been fully committed to a justice-centred approach of care and advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers in our city. Since 2012, the organisation continued to grow as it introduced programmes to support trafficking victims with accommodation, medical, and legal assistance.

As a church, The Vine has continually served Branches of Hope by supporting office and personnel expenses, giving us the ability to put funds raised directly into the programmes we run and into the wellbeing of those we humbly serve.

Thanks to The Vine's generosity towards us, we can assure you that funds given have a direct impact on our community members and programmes.

#### **Your Ongoing Commitment**

There is no denying that 2019 has been a tumultuous year in Hong Kong. Many among us have seen our finances greatly reduced, and we understand how this can be cause for hesitation when it comes to giving. However, we ask that you remember the lives of the people we serve. Remember the impact of our programmes and how they have changed the lives of so many. Remember the faces of these people who have newfound dignity and strength due in part to your faithful generosity. With the little that we have—and a little perseverance—I believe we can make a lasting difference for those who most need it.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Aman Yee and the amazing team at Branches of Hope for serving so faithfully again this year; your community members value you so much as do we on the board. Our thanks to our Advisory Group for your patience and input and our donors for their ongoing generosity. And finally, we thank and honour the people we serve, who valiantly, year after year, remain hopeful and strong.

*Nigel Raymont*  
Director





It has been an exciting and challenging year for Stop Trafficking of People (STOP). This year, we said goodbye to STOP's first team member, Tina Chan, welcomed new team members, and started our first-ever research project.

In Hong Kong, survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery continue to face various challenges. From getting medical care to filing a legal case, the

hurdles they face are larger than necessary due to gaps in our current system and social support network.

STOP continues to be a champion for survivors on their journey towards dignity, justice, and hope, and an advocate for a comprehensive modern slavery law in Hong Kong. Thank you to our community members, supporters, and volunteers for making all of this possible.

*When I need someone to talk to, the staff from STOP is always there. They also accompanied me to court and to medical appointments. They provide me advice that gives me strength.*

*- Catherine\*, survivor of forced labour*



#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Social Assistance includes housing, food, medical care, counselling, and repatriation. We are further exploring how to empower our community members in the long-term.

#### LEGAL REFERRAL

For survivors who have filed legal claims, STOP follows up on their cases with leading human rights law firms.

#### OUTREACH

STOP reached out to more vulnerable migrants, conducting bi-weekly outreach visits and meeting with 1,685 potential trafficking victims. Next year, we plan to improve our effectiveness and reach even more people.

#### RESEARCH

STOP and a partner NGO began a research project on the trafficking and exploitation of youth in the Hong Kong sex industry. The project is targeted to be completed in 2020.

#### ADVOCACY

STOP's advocacy included meetings with the government, letters to the Chief Secretary, and contact with the high-level Steering Committee to tackle trafficking in persons.

#### PUBLIC EDUCATION

In 2019, we provided training and educational materials to 1,222 people and held over 11 workshops, including those in collaboration with the US Consulate, Thai Migrant Workers Union, and Cathay Pacific.

\*Names have been changed to protect the identities of the individuals involved. Individuals in the images do not depict the individuals involved.

*I think it was the salary amount that first tipped me off that something was wrong.*

*- Sonny\*, a member of our refugee and asylum seeker community.*

## Refugee Thwarts Potential Labour Trafficking of Indian Men into Hong Kong

**S**onny\* knew something was wrong when he first saw the employment contract sent by his friend Arjun in India. Arjun and his friends had received a job offer to work at an upscale restaurant in Hong Kong.

Sonny helped his friends with due diligence by calling the number listed and identifying the address. After he was unable to contact the employer, he reported the case to STOP. After reviewing the documents and making further inquiries, STOP concluded that the job offer was most likely fake and informed Sonny about the potential risk of human trafficking that comes with similar job offers. Sonny relayed STOP's advice to Arjun, who—together with his friends—eventually cancelled their contracts and retrieved their deposits from the dubious agent.

Because he stepped in, Sonny prevented a potential case of human trafficking. Anyone, including you, can learn to spot the signs of human trafficking and protect yourself, your friends, and your family. We are thankful for Sonny's contribution towards preventing further trafficking of people in our city and hope that many will be inspired by this asylum seeker's contribution to society.

## STOP. STATS



**28** OUTREACH VISITS CONDUCTED



**1685** AT-RISK SEX WORKERS REACHED OUT TO



**10** ENGLISH CLASSES PROVIDED TO 6 SEX WORKERS



**57** SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING SERVED SINCE THE BEGINNING



**1222** PEOPLE TRAINED THROUGH OUR WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS



**6634** SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS ACCUMULATED



**12** ISSUES OF STOP ENEWS PUBLISHED TO 1926 SUBSCRIBERS



**2** VIDEOS PRODUCED



**52** NETWORK MEETINGS PARTICIPATED IN



New and ongoing policies leave thousands of refugees in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. In response to the complex needs of this diverse community, Refugee Opportunity And Development (ROAD) emerged as a beacon of hope, determined to make a holistic difference in the lives of refugees in Hong Kong through faith development, skills training, education, wellbeing, resettlement, and social impact.

Over the past year, we have focused our efforts towards integrating our community members into society. This has been accomplished through education, vocational training, and skill-based development to empower them for better lives, whether here in Hong Kong, in their home countries, or elsewhere.

We believe refugees have the potential to make a lasting positive impact on Hong Kong society when we empower them and give them a chance to make a difference.

## Belonging in a New City

James\* came to Hong Kong as an asylum seeker from an African country. When he first arrived, he did not know anyone in the city and ended up stranded on the street. Fortunately, he was directed to our organisation by a stranger he met there who knew about our work with refugees.

Soon after being referred to us, James attended an ARISE fellowship and met other African refugees. 'I was so excited to see a community in Hong Kong that supported, encouraged, and cared for one another,' he shared.

ROAD staff met James after he was recommended by a friend to apply for financial assistance. He was unable to legally work as a refugee, and the government subsidy was not enough to pay for rent. He was nearly evicted by the landlord just as the financial subsidy from Branches of Hope came through.

*I was so excited to see a community that supported, encouraged, and cared for one another.*

*- James\*, a member of our refugee and asylum seeker community.*

With the financial subsidy from Branches of Hope, James was able to leave 'survival mode' and finally think about his future. He dreamed of developing new skills and learning another language, eagerly enrolling in our language lessons and vocational training courses in warehouse management and computer skills.

After a few years, James's dedication paid off; he had learnt valuable new skills and learnt to speak English. And shortly after that, he was recognised as a mandated refugee, giving him the ability to apply for a work permit in Hong Kong. With the newly mastered skills he learnt from our programmes, it was no time at all before James successfully found work and became independent of financial subsidies.

Despite the hardships he had faced coming here, James was able to get back on his feet and strive for a better future. All he needed was the support and care of a local community.

\*Names have been changed to protect the identities of the individuals involved.

# The ROAD We've Taken



Refugees face two journeys: one leading to hope, the other to despair. It is up to us to help them along the right path.

—Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees



FLED HOME



EMERGENCY RELIEF



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



DEVELOPMENT



INTEGRATION

ASSISTED 150 HOUSEHOLDS SETTLE INTO HONG KONG

31 STUDENTS RECEIVED DONATED COMPUTERS

95 HOUSEHOLDS SUPPORTED VIA SECRET ANGEL PROGRAMME

100 MET WEEKLY AND WERE SERVED 5300 MEALS TO DATE

15 LADIES MET WEEKLY IN A WOMEN'S GROUP TO DISCOVER THEIR POTENTIAL

51 SPONSORSHIPS PROVIDED TO CHILDREN

82 STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAMMES

69 STUDENTS RECEIVED VOCATIONAL TRAINING

30 STUDENTS NURTURED IN ROAD BIBLE SCHOOL

10 RETURNED HOME

14 MOVED TO A THIRD COUNTRY

7 REFUGEES GAINED LEGAL EMPLOYMENT

4 STUDENTS ENROLLED IN UNIVERSITY-LEVEL PROGRAMMES





*Working is not just for getting paid, but also to achieve goals for yourself and feel useful. Really, without help from Branches of Hope, we wouldn't be able to survive in Hong Kong.*

*- Adam\*, a member of our refugee and asylum seeker community*

### Family Finds Dignity and Hope

Adam\* was forced to flee his home in Africa with his wife and two young children due to persecution. After arriving in Hong Kong, they stayed temporarily in Chungking Mansions and then at another shelter for two months. The shelter policy kept Adam and his family from staying inside during the day, which was a challenge that proved quite difficult due to Adam's physical disability and the threat of typhoon season.

Later, Adam and his family settled into a walk-up studio in Kowloon with a limited rental subsidy from the government. It was difficult for him to walk up and down six floors every day.

Thanks to the referral of other members of the refugee community, Adam learnt about Branches of Hope, started attending the weekly fellowship, and signed up for financial subsidies. Branches of Hope supported the families' lunch and transportation costs to and from the programmes, and later on, the families' rental allowance was subsidised through the Secret Angel Programme.

With newly granted hope and financial stability, Adam and his family were able to move into a home that was better suited for them. Meanwhile, Branches of Hope supported his children's school fees through the Keeping Kids in Kindergarten Programme.

Before fleeing to Hong Kong, Adam had worked as an accountant and a teacher in his home country. Unfortunately, he is currently unable to work in Hong Kong because of his status. He shared with us, 'Working is not just for getting paid, but also to achieve goals for yourself and feel useful. Really, without help from Branches of Hope, we wouldn't be able to survive in Hong Kong.'

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## Sponsorships

**B**ehind our meaningful work at Branches of Hope is a network of generous, innovative supporters. Our long-term sustainability depends on the commitment and dedication of this network, and much of our funds are raised through unique fundraising and sponsorship programmes.

*K<sup>3</sup> makes it possible for refugee children to have access to quality education. We have been blessed to be able to support this cause.*

*- The Choi Family, a K<sup>3</sup> Supporter*

### Secret Angel Programme

Secret Angel is a matching programme between angels (donors) and a member of the refugee and asylum seeker community that enables them to adequately care for the needs of them and their families, empowering them for vibrant futures. Launched in 2018, the Programme seeks to address the gap between government-provided financial assistance and the actual costs of living faced by the community.

**Government payments to refugees and asylum seekers per adult are as follows:**

- Housing allowance HK\$1,500
- Food in supermarket coupons HK\$1,200
- Transportation HK\$230
- Utilities HK\$300

As most members of the community are unable to legally seek employment, this aid is simply not enough to survive in Hong Kong.

Our life-changing Secret Angel Programme currently supports 95 households of community members in amounts that range from HK\$800 for an individual to HK\$2,800 for a family of six.

### Keeping Kids in Kindergarten (K<sup>3</sup>) Programme

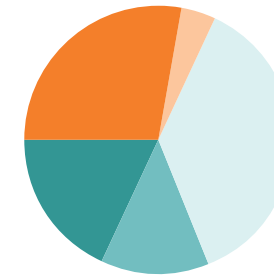
Started in 2014, K<sup>3</sup> is a sponsorship programme that enables children of refugees and asylum seekers to attend kindergarten and to enjoy early childhood education. These educational opportunities impact their cognitive and social development, setting the foundation for a bright and hopeful future.

Even though the Hong Kong government provides subsidies for school tuition, essential costs such as uniforms, books, shoes, and snacks are not covered. Because of this, many refugee and asylum seeker families struggle to send their kids to school.

Thanks to our generous supporters who sponsor HK\$800 per month for one child, around 51 children have been attending kindergarten without disruptions.

We are also thankful for the generous support of notable organisations in our city who have raised money for the K<sup>3</sup> Programme. The Foreign Correspondents' Club raised over HK\$200,000 from their charity event this year. In addition, The American Women's Association raised HK\$200,000 from their 'East Meets West' fashion show in April 2019 by auctioning dresses designed by members of the refugee and asylum seeker community. Centaline Charity Foundation continues to support Branches of Hope by sponsoring 10 kids in this year's K<sup>3</sup> Programme and many other education programme activities.

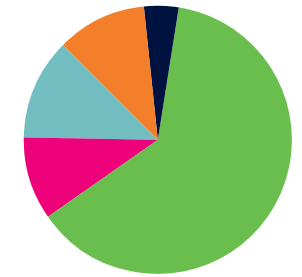
## Financial Update



### Income

The Vine	28%
Campaigns & Events	4%
General Donations	37%
Grants & Foundations	13%
Monthly Sponsorship	18%

**Total - HK\$12,786,899.30**



### Expenses

Salary/Admin/Rental	11%
ROAD	63%
STOP	10%
Advocacy	4%
Fundraising	12%

**Total - HK\$ 12,223,646.80**

## Fundraising Events

### Run for STOP 2018

16 October 2018, Ma On Shan  
Attendance: 30  
Amount Raised: HK\$43,000

### ICAP Charity Day

5 December 2018  
Amount Raised: HK\$413,000  
STOP was a Selected NGO

### Ma Wan Easter Egg Hunt 2019

19 - 20 & 22 April 2019, Ma Wan  
Attendance: 4,200  
Volunteers: 700  
Amount Raised HK\$500,000

### World Refugee Day 'Stranger Lands'

23 June 2019  
Amount Raised: HK\$200,000

### Wine & Tapas Evening

26 June 2019  
Amount Raised: HK\$28,000  
Guest speaker Philip Thorpe from The United Nation Refugee Agency

## Awareness and Advocacy Events

### ESF Renaissance College CAS Fair

4 September 2018

### Subcommittee of the Unified Screening Mechanism for Non-refoulement Claims

18 October 2018

### HSBC Embrace Day

23 October 2018  
Panellist at 'Embracing Refugees and Asylum Seekers in HK' forum

### U.S. Consulate General in HK

24 January 2019  
Anti-human trafficking training

### Education Forum 'Navigating Hong Kong's Education System'

28 January 2019  
Panellist

### Body Shop CSR Annual Kick-off

20 February 2019  
Panellist

### YMCA of Hong Kong Christian College

6 March 2019  
Human trafficking awareness

### Hong Kong International School

6 March 2019  
Panellist at CNN's #MyFreedomDay

### Creative Secondary School

11 April 2019  
Human trafficking awareness

### Chinese International School

14 May 2019  
Human trafficking awareness

### Screening of The Staging Post

19 June 2019  
Partnering with other NGOs

### Cathay Pacific

21 June 2019  
Anti-human trafficking training

### Embrace HK Cultural Exhibition Event

28 June 2019  
Public awareness event

### ESF Island School CAS Fair

29 August 2019



All vulnerable and marginalised individuals and communities in Hong Kong will have equal access to resources and opportunities that allow them to realise their dreams and give them a voice in our society.



**The Branches of Hope Team**

## Partnerships

Our Volunteers spent over 2,000 hours equipping, teaching, and training Refugees and Asylum Seekers for a better future.

'It has been very meaningful for me to teach beginner and intermediate English classes with Branches of Hope. The students are friendly and supportive of each other and greatly appreciate the opportunity to develop their skills. One student from the intermediate class offered to volunteer as an assistant for the beginner classes, helping classes run smoothly by providing the translation. Students make the effort to come to class weekly and complete their homework despite extremely challenging personal circumstances. Many have made measurable progress and surprised me with their drive to learn.' *CA Robertson*

'Branches of Hope is a valued partner that has an enthusiasm to enhance the overall environment for people on the move.' *Porticus Asia Limited*

'I loved having the chance to visit Branches of Hope in June to see the community members receive their monthly support. I was impressed with their set-up and how well-run, clean, and bright the facility was. It was especially touching to see the warmth and personal attention of the Branches of Hope staff as they talked with each person and distributed their financial support. The AWA is honoured to be supporting the Keeping Kids in Kindergarten Programme for over two years with funds raised at our Fashion Show.' *Priyanka Agarwal, President of the American Women's Association of Hong Kong*

'Children are seeds that will sow the leaders of our future. Keeping Kids In Kindergarten is one of the many programmes within our local NGO, Branches of Hope. K<sup>3</sup> makes it possible for refugee children to have access to quality education. We have been blessed to be able to support this cause. Seeing their smiles and receiving their "thank you" cards makes it extra special.' *Choi Family, River Trading Company Ltd.*

## Thank you!





希望枝子

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OF HOPE

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*To restore dignity, justice,  
and hope to the vulnerable and  
marginalised in Hong Kong.*

