



**SUPPORT TRUST FOR
ACCOMMODATION OF REFUGEES
(STAR PROGRAMME)**



SUPPORT TRUST FOR ACCOMMODATION OF REFUGEES (STAR) PROGRAMME

The Support Trust for Accommodation of Refugees (STAR) is Branches of Hope's new monthly financial support programme, providing aid to our refugee and asylum seeker community from January 2025.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STAR PROGRAMME:

1. Reduce the financial burden of recipients by providing financial support for their rent and utilities
2. Empower recipients to make their own decisions on how to spend the remaining financial resources

A LEGACY OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Since its inception, Branches of Hope has always been providing financial assistance to vulnerable communities in Hong Kong. Since 2018, this was achieved through the Secret Angel programme, which allowed donors to directly support members of the refugee and asylum seeker community, with 100% of donated funds going to community members. The STAR Programme will continue this core service of Branches of Hope when it starts in January 2025, bringing with it a number of administrative and structural improvements to our past support programme.

OUR COMMUNITY'S NEED

The STAR Programme exists to bridge the gap between government-provided financial assistance and the actual costs of living faced by the refugee and asylum seeker community in Hong Kong.

Despite year-on-year inflation of 2.44% annually since 2015, the subsidies amount provided by the international social services has not changed since 2014.

- **Housing:** HK\$1,500 per adult or half of that amount for a child, paid directly to the landlord. The average rent of a subdivided flat in Hong Kong is HK\$5,000 for 132 square feet.
- **Utilities:** HK\$300 per person. However, the landlords of subdivided flats often charge more than the official tariff.
- **Food in an e-card for supermarkets:** HK\$1,200 per person.
- **Transportation:** HK\$200 – 300 is the only cash they receive.

Families receiving financial support from Branches of Hope are free to utilise the funds as they deem necessary, with a large proportion of beneficiaries allocating their funds to **supporting rent costs**. Funds are also frequently utilised for **transportation, school supplies, clothes**, and all manner of smaller purchases required by life.

There is a significant benefit to the mental health of beneficiaries that comes from empowering them with the unallocated financial support due to the strict limitations that are in place on existing government subsidies. With no ability to work or volunteer in Hong Kong, refugees and asylum seekers greatly benefit from **the ability to have a say in how they can spend the financial support** from the STAR programme, as they are empowered to care for their own families.

STAR PROGRAMME

Programme Structure & Operations

SUPPORT AMOUNT

The STAR programme will provide financial assistance of \$500 per person in the household, with support capped at \$2,500. The amount of financial support has been calculated based on community rental and utilities expenditure data collected by the Branches of Hope team.

A POOL FUNDING MODEL

- The STAR Programme will utilise a pool funding model, where all donations from programme supporters will be collected into a central pool that is used to provide the financial support for the selected programme recipients. There is no minimum donation amount, and we encourage supporters to sign up as monthly donors!

A NEW QUOTA SYSTEM

- A new quota system for different household sizes is in place to ensure the composition of STAR recipients reflects the composition of our Refugee Opportunity & Development (ROAD) community. For example, around 20% of our ROAD community have a household size of 2, so around 20% of the STAR programme recipients will be households of 2.

A POINT-WEIGHTED SELECTION SYSTEM

- Applicants will be divided into groups according to their respective household size and each group will run through the selection point system to determine the recipients based on their needs, with annual reassessments / new registrations.

THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA WILL BE USED:

	CRITERIA
1	Individuals living alone (without roommates / flatmates)
2	Family (more than one parent) living together with a child
3	Family (more than one parent) living together with more than one child
4	Sole carer for a child who lives with him / her
5	Sole carer for more than one child who lives with him / her
6	Applicant (or members in the family) with severe medical / mental health issues
7	Applicant (or members in the family) being an active member of the BoH / The Vine community
8	Applicant (or members in the family) being an active member providing support / giving back to the BoH / The Vine community

DONOR ENGAGEMENT

- An e-newsletter will be sent out to all programme supporters every two months, sharing messages from beneficiaries and highlighting the amazing transformational impact the programme has.
- Branches of Hope will be hosting an annual STAR Programme celebratory event, recognising the incredible impact and generosity of our supporters and providing an opportunity for beneficiaries and donors to give thanks together.

Become a STAR!

Here's how you can support:

Help raise awareness of this programme and the needs of the community it supports!

Help BoH to build a funding reserve for the STAR programme by making a one-off gift.

Scan the QR code below to become a monthly STAR programme donor!



PROGRAMME IMPACT

Scan the QR code
to watch a short interview
with our Secret Angel recipients!



How does the financial assistance improve your family's life?

“ Secret Angel is really important to us, because rent is \$5,000, but ISS just gives to us \$3,000. So the extra, I have to use for rent. ”

“ What I receive from Secret Angel, I'm very relieved, very thankful, it goes to our rent. If I'm not here, not receiving this, I don't know how I will manage to survive. ”

“ I don't know how to find what we need, especially giving a roof to my children. ”

If you could share a message to your Secret Angel supporter, what would you want them to know?

“ I don't know who is him or her, but thank you so much for your help. ”

“ I just want to give them a hug. It is amazing for someone to give help anonymously, because it means it's from the heart. ”

Support Trust for Accommodation of Refugees (STAR) Programme FAQ

1

What does 'STAR' stand for?

- It stands for 'Support Trust for Accommodation of Refugees.'

2

What is the STAR Programme?

- It is Branches of Hope's signature financial support programme for members of the refugee and asylum seeker (RAS) community that will supersede the Secret Angel programme in January 2025.

3

Why is the Secret Angel programme being changed?

- The Secret Angel programme was a wonderful initiative launched in 2018. At the time, however, it was not anticipated how large the programme would grow, nor were sufficient mechanisms in place to manage donors joining or leaving, or how to handle changes in family sizes. The rigid matching model also limited the number of donors to those who could give the precise transfer amounts, and made the administration of the programme overly complicated. The new STAR programme addresses each of these (and other issues) while sustaining our commitment to provide crucial financial assistance to the refugee and asylum seeker community.

4

What problem needs does the STAR Programme address?

- RAS community members do not enjoy the right to work in HK and government support provided through ISS has not been able to meet the basic needs required to live in HK. The STAR Programme provides financial support for rent and utility fees as this is the largest challenge for RAS community members.

5

How much financial support is provided?

- HK\$500 per person per month, capped at HK\$2,500 per family.

6

How was the amount of financial support decided?

- The average utilities cost per person per month was HK\$506, according to BoH research. Overcharging of utility bills is very common among residents of sub-divided units as the bills are charged from the landlords instead of the utility service providers. The support is capped at \$2,500 given that the cost on utilities should reach the point of diminishing return for households of 5 or more.

7

Does that mean STAR Programme recipients will receive less than under the Secret Angel programme?

- Regrettably, yes; but only for families of 3 and fewer members. However, this makes the programme much more equitable and allows us to serve more individuals, while being able to justify the amounts with robust research and calculations.

8

Who does the STAR Programme support?

- The STAR Programme provides financial assistance to carefully selected families and individuals from the refugee and asylum seeker community supported by the ROAD programme at Branches of Hope.

9

How are beneficiaries of the STAR Programme identified and selected?

- A point weighting system that quantifies the relative need of applicants will be in place as the selection process. Applicants will be divided into groups according to their respective household size and each group will run through the point system to determine the recipients.

10

What does 'being an active community member' mean in regard to the STAR Programme selection criteria?

- Many of BoH's community members take on roles of community leadership and devote large amounts of time assisting with the sharing of information, promotion of events, and the relay of community feedback to BoH. In addition, they lend their time sorting in-kind donations as well as helping with workshop, cooking, and serving meals for the ARISE community. These actions do not go unnoticed by BoH staff and will be taken into account as part of the STAR programme's selection weighing system.

11

Have the community members been informed of all of these changes?

- Yes, and we continue to keep them closely informed. In fact, the design of the STAR programme was heavily influenced by survey data collected from the client community. We will continue to refine the programme based on community feedback in the years to come.

Will all of the current Secret Angel recipients be transferred to the new STAR Programme?

- 12
- No, although a large number of them will be. The selection criteria help to identify those with the greatest needs, who will be prioritized for the assistance. There will be fresh assessments every year to ensure we achieve the greatest positive impact through the programme.

Will STAR Programme recipients have access to other BoH support programmes?

- 13
- STAR Programme recipients are allowed access to casework support for other needs except from rent and utilities.

If I am already a Secret Angel donor, how does this new programme affect me?

- 14
- The Secret Angel programme will no longer operate in January 2025, being superseded by the new STAR Programme. If you are a donor to Secret Angel, your donations will be allocated to the STAR Programme from January onwards, unless you inform Branches of Hope otherwise.

How will donors be able to engage with STAR programme beneficiaries now that that donor/beneficiary matching element has been removed?

- 15
- There will be a STAR Programme newsletter to all programme donors featuring testimonials and insights from recipients as well as an annual community celebration event.

Does BOH keep any of the donations?

- 16
- No! 100% of the donated funds go to the community. The STAR programme will, however, retain a contingency of 25% of the donations to maintain financial stability even when donors decide to no longer support the programme. The money would be distributed during months in which the programme would otherwise run a deficit.

What else can I do to help?

- 17
- We and the community we serve need all the help we can get! The two most important ways to help are to make monthly donations to the programme, or to provide larger one-off donations to help sustain the viability of the financial assistance in the long-run. You can also spread the word about the programme and encourage others to become donors and champions as well – every dollar and every new supporter helps!

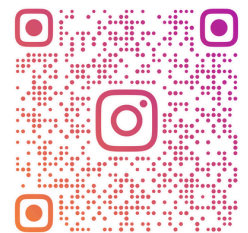


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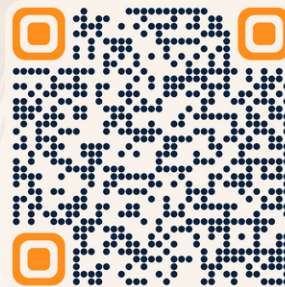


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