



# contents

## Cover Story ● ● ●

- 03** / Green Advocacy by Air
- 04-07** / - COP15 - What is it  
- Where the Movement Really is  
- Is COP15 a Success or a Failure?  
- An Inspiring Journey to Copenhagen
- 08** / Copenhagen. What Next?
- 09** / Beyond COP15 : the Role of Governments  
in Tackling Climate Change
- 10** / Students Add Green Power to University Library
- 11** / Stop "Sleep Mode", Wake Up and Go Green
- 12** / Little by Little... to a Green and Sustainable World
- 13** / No Waste of Time - reflection from  
a study trip to Taipei

## University Issues ● ● ●

- 14** / Mingling with Money - financial side  
of students' activities
- 15** / Vox Pop
- 16** / - Sponsorship is Not Short Term  
- Everything Starts from Planning

## New & Fresh ● ● ●

- 17** / Preventing Suicide in University Students
- 18** / Halal Food Corner - a cradle of Islamic  
culture on campus
- 19** / - FIFE Fund Colours my First Year  
of Study  
- CEDARS Reward Scheme  
for Students 2010
- 20** / Big Dream About Small  
and Medium Enterprises



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### Dialogue

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# Green Advocacy by Air

Annie Tai  
Journalism, Year 2 ● ● ●

Twelve HKU students flew to Copenhagen in Denmark in December to attend the momentous international conference there aimed at combating climate change.

As part of the delegation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), HKU was the only university from Hong Kong admitted as an observer organisation at the UN Climate Change Conference (UNCCC). A group of students entitled "Green Advocates", organised by CEDARS, were sent to Copenhagen to participate in the Conference of Parties at its 15th session (COP15).

"Our Green Advocates programme could trace back to the 13th session of COP in Bali, Indonesia in 2007," said Mr Chong Chan-yau, the Honorary Consultant of CEDARS. "I led our students there to observe the decision-making process in the United Nations. I anticipated students could learn from big international events."

This group of students enhanced their awareness of climate change at the conference, and are committed to promoting what they have learned at HKU.

"Climate change is an imminent problem with global effects. It is not simply an environmental issue. There are political, ethical and justice issues mingled in," said Mr Chong. "The world belongs to the youth generation and we support students taking initiatives to try and change the world."

At CEDARS, a number of funds are open for students' applications for realising their green projects, including: CEDARS Global Citizenship Educational Programme and HKU'82 Alumni Fund.

"We have had Green Advocates doing research about energy use. And we also had student projects comparing policies on climate change between countries. We are happy to advise and finance students who are passionate about contributing to the wider community," said Mr Chong.

HKU Green Advocates have also built a social network to collaborate on efforts to combat climate change. They held the first Asian Youth Conference on Climate Change in 2008, where they met with youth delegates from Mainland China. They also had meetings with business leaders from big multinational companies like HSBC.

"To carry on the green effort, we hope students continue the action plans after the COP15," said Mr Chong. "We also hope to recruit new Green Advocates every year for those who are ambitious to change the world."

## About COP15

Cecilia Koo Sien-bing  
Comparative Literature, Year 2

### Basic Information:

- Official title: COP15, also called the 15th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- Duration: December 7-18, 2009
- Venue: Bella Centre in Copenhagen, Denmark
- Number of countries that participated: 192

### Aims and Objectives:

To come up with a new legally binding treaty for countries to follow in decreasing the emission of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), the main component of greenhouse gases and the biggest cause of climate change.

### Summary and Result:

It was reported that the failure of industrialised countries and developing nations to reach any meaningful agreement seriously impeded the progress of the conference. The resignation of the president of the Conference, Connie Hedegaard, was also reported just two days before the closure.

Finally, the "Copenhagen Accord" was formed by a small group of countries, including the two biggest greenhouse gas polluters, China and the US, but it is not legally binding. In short, it

- recognises the need to limit global temperatures rising no more than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels;
- promises to deliver US\$30 billion (HK\$232.6bn) of aid for developing nations over the next three years. It outlines a goal of providing US\$100bn a year by 2020 to help poor countries cope with the impacts of climate change.

The implementation of the Copenhagen Accord will be reviewed by 2015. However, the Accord was seriously criticised by non-governmental organisations and countries with futures threatened by climate change, since there is no global target for emissions reductions by 2050 and the accord is vague as to how its goals - such as the allocation of US\$100bn of funds annually for developing countries - will be achieved.



# COP15 – What is it

Sebastian Lindstrom

International Business and Global Management, Year 3 ● ● ●

Funnily, staying at home probably gave you a better overview of what was going on at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. The ability to get an overview of the negotiations as an observer organisation was difficult. Roaming the Bella Centre, the main conference area, in search of answers resulted in more questions. Who were all these people? What's their role? Their purpose? In search of answers you also start questioning your own mission. How much change can you actually bring to Hong Kong?

What is COP all about? COP is about collaboration. It's about sacrifice. It's about meeting half way. Our initial experience with the UN bureaucracy did not impress us. Queuing three hours to get our entry cards for the conference was not exciting. Being Swedish I embrace the cold, but a majority of the delegates from developing countries were freezing while waiting to get access to the conference.

After two weeks of negotiations we have a non-binding, weak agreement about nothing. It was no surprise that the carbon markets took a dive in the first day of trading after the COP was finalised. Just



as predicted, the Copenhagen summit was merely a springboard for further negotiations, and it will take at least one year before something concrete will flourish.

COP is all about meeting amazing people. On my list of awesome people we have the Crown Princess of Sweden, Al Gore, Robert Swan (the first person to ski to the South and North Poles) and Hugo Chavez (the Venezuelan President, who believes that capitalism is the reason why there is no climate deal).

I had the pleasure to meet up with Angela, Miss Tanzania 2002, who is very much involved with the climate change movement in her country. Her bluntness when it comes to corruption was eye opening. "People don't realise that they are a part of the problem," she said. "Tanzanians are against bribery and corrupt politicians, but when they go to the hospital they will bribe the staff to jump the queue."

"When people continuously bribe to receive services, the country has a long way to go before sustainable growth can be implemented," she said.

## Where the Movement Really is

Chen Xilin

Economics & Finance, Year 2 ● ● ●

In Hong Kong, where most livings are earned less in relation to nature than to the services industry, it is hard to fathom climate change without looking at the effects it causes elsewhere, for example on the African continent and many small Pacific islands. The closest tangible thing to climate change here is that the air quality in the city is one of the worst in the world.

Climate change, or at least the part that concerns human beings, includes the endangerment of livelihoods due to the manipulation and disruption of nature's cycles. And much more.

I was in Copenhagen for the 15th United Nations Climate Change Conference as part of a team of 12 students from the University. We had different depths of understanding on the issue and saw climate change in terms of very different types of problems. Nevertheless, we were all excited to start our active participation, knowing that access to the Bella Centre, the main conference area, was a privilege too good to be true.

Sure enough, NGO access to the Bella Centre was made almost impossible on the second Tuesday of the conference. Instead of lining up at the entrance for hours to get into the centre, we decided to: listen to South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu's very human and personal appeal to our leaders for a climate treaty; attend an intimate Q&A session with former US Vice President Al Gore regarding his inspirations, hopes and views of sustainable development as an evolutionary process; and

meet with Robert Swan to listen to his adventures as the first person ever to walk and/or ski to both the North and South Poles. We also set up meetings with Hong Kong's very own Secretary of Environment, the Hong Kong People's Council for Sustainable Development and other professionals working at the very forefront of the issue locally.

It says something that the most valuable lessons we learned were from outside the conference centre. We received good doses of wake-up calls, humility and a sense of awareness of how our actions and the actions of others feed the very system that exploits nature – and that is the cause of climate change.

The world's leaders said something will be done, that COP15 will deliver what the whole world is waiting for. And they failed us. The news has more than enough coverage about whose fault it is this time, yet we all fail to see where the movement really is. The movement against climate change is and has always been in the hands of society, of youth, of businesses at the forefront of development.

Many at COP15 called for "system change, not climate change", continuing to look to the politicians to lead us into an era of sustainability. Having been near the epicentre of political games, I start to feel that civil society and businesses have been more adequate at achieving any action that is in the long-term interests of mother Earth and its six

People take to the street in Copenhagen in the hope of sealing a deal against climate change.

My position as a Hong Kong observer is questionable. Every time someone asked me why I was in Copenhagen, I stated that I was representing the Hong Kong government through the University of Hong Kong. It sounded more important than being "just" a student. But how can a non-Asian ever represent the values and thoughts of Chinese people? I wasn't even born in Hong Kong! For the past four years I have always introduced myself as a half-Beijing *Ren* for my work experience in Beijing.

But as long as Hong Kong enjoys my dedication to serve, I'll be happy to contribute. I'm just trying to promote sustainable service learning. It's a ripple effect that started with a service trip to Ghana three years ago. Now the whole University is mobilising to implement mandatory service trips in the new four-year curriculum. The world is changing. Think local as global is a slogan of the past. "The world is yours" is the way forward.

Never underestimate the power of action. Awareness was the way people acknowledged progress in the past. However, real measurable action is part of the future and the global framework of sustainability. Government heads in Copenhagen talked without any real action. Our future needs leaders who take bold action for the welfare of this earth. The politicians think inside their re-election sphere, and the concept of short term has become the norm. How old will you be in 2050?

## Is COP15 a Success or a Failure?

Pei Qing

MPhil, Year 2

Department of Geography ● ● ●

Based on different sources of comments on the results of COP15, the disappointment to this conference is the mainstream. However, China claims that COP15 is a milestone and a success in climate negotiations. Why?

billion human inhabitants. Really, change and movement does not surround an elitist group of politicians, but is within all of us, and that is where I draw my inspiration and motivation for the future.



At a forum of COP15, some NGOs make fun of political leaders as they are thought to consider national interest over the threat of climate change.

After reviewing the whole process of COP15 and comparing it with the Copenhagen Accord, the focal points of developing countries and developed countries are very different. The developed countries mainly voiced out that the accord has no legal binding and no specific emissions reduction target before 2020. The only tangible target is 2 degrees Celsius temperature increase limit, but otherwise there are no definite plans. Furthermore, the emissions target of 2050 is still in the wind.



In the Bella Centre, the main conference area, many people are dressed in special costumes for their advocacy activities.

By contrast, the developing countries, especially China, valued the agreement on Common but Differentiated Responsibilities, Technology and Finance for Poor Countries, Maintenance of existing Developed Countries' Responsibilities, etc. in the accord. Actually, the standpoints on COP15 from these two groups are not on a collision course.

In my view, the accord is propitious to developing countries because it is consistent with United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Kyoto Protocol and Bali Roadmap. At least the climate negotiations do not abandon the traditional framework and principles. But developed countries do not want to obey the traditional framework and principles, which add different responsibilities for developed countries than for developing countries.

The climate negotiations fundamentally are a fight for development rights in the future. No country is willing to surrender in this fight. In the accord, the developing countries have protected the traditional framework and principles of climate negotiations, although the accord fails to put forward some more ambitious goals. In the meantime, developed countries do not need to assume any further and specific responsibilities than they wish, although they still have to follow the traditional framework and principles.

In sum, Copenhagen Accord could be accepted by two groups of countries at least. COP15 is a small success, but not a failure.

At the conference, the Fossil of the Day awards are presented to countries that are found to block the progress of climate change negotiations.



# An Inspiring Journey to Copenhagen

Belle Ho Pui-yi

MA in China Development Studies, Year 1

Twelve HKU students, including me, were selected by CEDARS to be Green Advocates to participate in the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark from December 13 to 18, 2009. The 12 of us have diverse academic backgrounds, but all share a passion for climate change issues. It was with regret that COP15 failed to seal a strong climate deal for the post-Kyoto period, but as a student group we enjoyed meeting the people there and being engaged in many meaningful activities.



- 1/ Our team leader, Mr Chong Chan-yau (sixth from left), and the Green Advocates arrived at Copenhagen Airport on December 13. On the same day, we listened to an inspiring talk by South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who called upon people to unite to combat climate change.
- 2/ We were pleased to collect our accreditation badges at the Bella Centre.
- 3/ Mr Chong and the Green Advocates met with Ms Teresa Au (second from left, second row), the head of corporate sustainability in the Asia Pacific Region for HSBC. Ms Au shared her views with us on how business, NGOs and the government could work together to face the challenges of climate change.
- 4/ At the Bella Centre, Mr Chong and I attended a press conference in which Mr Li Ganjie, the Deputy Minister at China's Ministry of Environmental Protection, talked about the nation's position on climate change.
- 5/ We were invited by Sebastian Lindstrom, one of the Green Advocates, to have dinner at his Swedish friend's home. The Australian youth delegates were also there and we discussed climate change issues.

# Copenhagen. What Next?

Dr Yongqiang Zong

Associate Professor

Department of Earth Sciences, Faculty of Science

After the disappointing UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, many people are left to ponder the question: what can we do next to achieve a greener environment? As a scientist and an educator, I have been asking the same question in the past few weeks. How can we make our planet environmentally sustainable for the future? This has become a serious issue facing the global community. It is all about making choices on how to live our lives, and these are not easy decisions to make. Consuming more may well help sustain our economy, but we will continue to damage the environment. Consuming less can help the environment recover, but it will be difficult to keep our economy expanding. Thus we need to look for new ways that can keep people's jobs secure, while at the same time protecting the environment from further deterioration.



- **What can HKU do then?** As a leading research and higher education institution, HKU should lead the way in finding solutions to the issue of climate change. I can see many areas where HKU can make great contributions, to inform society and policy makers of what may happen in the future, and what we as members of the global community can do in helping to solve this environmental problem. Here are a couple of possibilities from the perspective of the Faculty of Science:
- **Understanding climate change.** Scientists in the faculty have been conducting research in many areas: unlocking the myth of climate variability in terms of human contribution against the underlying natural trends, quantifying regional impacts of global climate change to aid predictions of future trends in natural hazards and water supply, and investigating the potential repercussions of climate change with regard to emerging diseases and altering ecosystems.
- **Keeping a healthy ecosystem.** Current research into terrestrial and marine ecosystems has yielded knowledge of how these ecosystems have responded to the recent intensification of human activity and climate change, and has also helped to form schemes that can help maintain a certain level of biodiversity in our semi-natural environment and a healthy ecosystem in our built environment.



Dr Zong works on a sea-level change project in Alaska, the US.

- **Renewable energy.** Physics and chemistry are both fundamental in finding suitable materials for making efficient equipment to generate electricity from solar energy. Such research makes the proposed Green Revolution possible and directly contributes to the development of a low-carbon industry and economy.
- **Sewage and solid waste treatment.** Biological and chemical methods for treating these pollutants have been extensively explored. Emissions from sewage and solid waste are often an unpublicised contributor to greenhouse gases. Understanding the chemical changes and biological responses to chemical pollutants is essential in finding the most effective methods of sewage treatment to reduce global warming.

The above research will provide the much needed knowledge and information to help the government and legislators in developing policies for reducing carbon emissions, through appropriate taxation and financial incentives, and keeping our living environment healthy. All this research has been integrated into our teaching to train the next generation of leaders, specifically in the newly launched interdisciplinary course - Environmental Science major.



# Beyond COP15: the Role of Governments in Tackling Climate Change

Ms Jolene Lin  
Assistant Professor  
Faculty of Law

Kyoto Protocol-style targets for China and India, financing adaptation programmes in low-lying island states and developing countries, climate change refugees, intellectual property rights and technology transfer. These are just some examples from the long list of issues that the global community hoped to resolve in Copenhagen. It was no wonder that COP15 was exhilarating and frustrating at the same time. The biggest hurdle to concluding a post-2012 treaty was trying to get everyone involved to look beyond their perceived political and economic interests – yet the effort must continue because the science of climate change and the realities of globalisation make it impossible for any one state or group of states to go it alone. Alongside the arduous treaty-making process, there are things that can and ought to be done by states, cities, local communities and schools to reduce our emission of greenhouse gases (in the jargon, “mitigation”) and to adapt to the impacts of climate change. There are some communities that will be more vulnerable to climate change than others. These communities are also likely to have fewer resources to manage these risks. Something has to be done to prepare these communities for the future. In this regard, “top down” law-making processes have to be accompanied by “bottom-up” strategies.



## ***The role of government***

Businesses and industries are oriented towards the bottom dollar. Unless the business case for mitigating climate change can be made, there is little incentive for businesses to “go green”. Governments play a crucial role in this regard. Through its policies, legislation and regulatory programmes, a government structures incentives for environmental action. A good example is renewable energy. Conventional energy, especially energy produced from coal, will be far cheaper than wind or solar energy for a long time. Energy wholesale suppliers have no incentive to buy the more expensive product. For the consumer, the long-term environmental benefit for future generations is outweighed by the short-term benefit of cheap energy. We rely on governments to create incentives such as feed-in tariffs and mandatory renewable energy purchasing obligations to pursue the long-term benefit of a low-carbon economy.

Pricing signals are important. As long as electricity is cheap, consumers are inclined to use it carelessly. Governments around the world have to make some difficult choices about subsidies to the energy sector and to end-users. It will be a waste of public funds to spend on energy efficiency education programmes on one hand, and provide nearly free electricity on the other. Fuel poverty, or the needy individual's lack of access to electricity, should be addressed through social welfare rather than energy policies.

The coercive effect of laws is a powerful incentive. While command-and-control regulation is no longer fashionable, it still forms the bulwark of environmental law in most countries. We should not be too quick to dismiss the use of legal instruments to push social actors to reduce their carbon footprint. In Hong Kong, the voluntary programme for buildings to reduce their energy use has had limited success. It is time to consider making building energy efficiency standards mandatory by law.

Finally, imbuing our children with a sense of responsibility and care towards our environment is crucial. The law does not operate in a social vacuum, and can only go so far in the face of a pervasive ‘not in my backyard’ attitude. Environmental education in primary schools onwards should be an important part of the curriculum.

# Students Add Green Power to University Library

Benjamin Bogler  
MSc in Engineering(Mechanical Engineering), Year 2

In early 2009, my classmate Phillip Beasley-Murray and I were sponsored by the Hang Seng Cool Grant, which is administered by CEDARS, for a green project. The project involves installing solar panels on the roof of the HKU Main Library New Wing and graphically displaying the live performance data and statistics of the system on a website designed to promote awareness of renewable energy sources and their costs ([www.GTSOLAR.hku.hk](http://www.GTSOLAR.hku.hk)). At the centre of attention for this project is a new type of small-scale grid-tied inverter.

A grid-tied inverter is a device that takes direct current (DC) electrical power generated by renewable energy sources such as solar or wind, and converts it into high quality alternating current (AC) that can be directly put into a building's electrical circuits. In the past, solar power systems either needed large batteries for energy storage or very large and expensive grid-tied inverter equipment. The new type of product is a small and simple to install inverter that makes it possible for people to use a small wind turbine or a few solar panels (just a few hundred watts or more) to directly power their homes.

Our sample system will provide about 750 watts of power at its maximum output and help to power the Library, offsetting the electricity it consumes. The project has been conditionally approved by HK Electric and the HKU Estates Office. It was on display at the Information Day of the University on October 24, 2009 and it will be installed on the roof of HKU Main Library in the Spring of this year.

The system was constructed by myself and Philip was responsible for the website, which will be a resource for people who wish to see and learn more about how easy and beneficial it is to set up their own solar power system.

I hope this project will inspire people to think about renewable energy and the role it can play in a sustainable future. I think small-scale grid-tied inverters represent a breakthrough in renewable energy application and I hope more people, including utility companies and governments, will be made aware of their potential.

## Green funds at CEDARS

CEDARS offers a number of funds for students to help them realise their green projects. They include the CEDARS Global Citizenship Educational Programme and the HKU'82 Alumni Fund. Please stay tuned to the announcements of CEDARS and visit the website regularly to check these educational funding sources: <http://cedars.hku.hk>

Benjamin hopes that his project can raise people's awareness of the application of renewable energy.



# Stop “Sleep Mode”, Wake Up and Go Green

Silva Shum Wai-ye  
International Business and Global Management, Year 2



With the ever-increasing number of computer users, the problem of wasting energy regarding the use of computers has become more severe. The trend of using “sleep mode” has been prevalent. Computer users have formed the habit of not switching off their computers when they go to sleep. Instead, they use “sleep mode”, which burns 7.5 watts of power per hour. It is a waste of electricity. Assuming that a computer user sleeps for eight hours per day, the electricity wasted at night is 60 watts, which could be used to light up a reading lamp for one hour. In 2008, more than 74.6 per cent of households in Hong Kong had at least one computer. PC energy saving should be promoted now, before it is too late to change habits.

Aiming to encourage people to reduce the use of sleep mode and switch off their computers when not in use, four classmates – Natalie Liu Ngai-kan, Shyvee Shi Xinyu, Dixon Kwong Tak-kan and myself – set up a team and developed GreenE, a computer widget that records the amount of electricity saved from not using sleep mode, hence motivating people to switch off their computer so that they can accumulate credits to exchange for coupons from our website. GreenE makes use of technology to save the environment.

By creating this online green community in Hong Kong, GreenE can spread the message of energy conservation from the virtual platform to real lives. In the short term, we can remind PC users of the importance of energy saving and reduce electricity wastage. In the long term, through long-term energy saving education, environmental awareness will be raised, and greener lifestyles be developed.

Our green idea won the championship on Business & Entrepreneurship Enhancement Programme on Information and Communication Technologies (BEEP), which is jointly organised by the General Education Unit and the Convocation of the University of Hong Kong together with the Ecnoschool of the Hong Kong Economic Times in 2009. We may also receive start-up capital to implement GreenE as a business idea. We are currently working on a more detailed proposal in order to persuade the judge panel that our idea is worth funding. Recently, our team also visited Copenhagen to participate in the climate change events. The trip gave us useful environmental information that enabled us to better prepare our project.



Having snatched the award at BEEP, Silva (third from left) and her classmates may have the opportunity to receive funding and realise their green project.

# Little by Little... to a Green and Sustainable World

Jessica Yuan  
Statistics, Year 4  
Chief Network Coordinator of Climate Chance ●●●

Six Climate Chance members and alumni attended the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen from December 7 to 18 to bring the voice of Hong Kong youth to world leaders and seek possible future collaborations with other young people around the world.

Climate Chance is the first and only youth-driven climate network in Hong Kong. It was founded by a group of university students, who wish to collectively build a just and sustainable world, upon their return from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP13. It is also a party of the youth constituency (YOUNGO), which is officially recognised by the UNFCCC.

Climate Chance serves as a network that connects students, academic staff and the business sector to explore the issue of climate change from different angles. It also empowers local youths to organise events and raise awareness on climate change, as well as arouse public debate on its cause.

During the COP15, we held a postcard campaign in which our message was printed: "climate change is a chance to redefine happiness together". We gave away postcards to people at Copenhagen and asked them to send these postcards to their families and friends, so they could share with them their feelings at the Conference, defining happiness from such sharing and showing care to their beloved. The concept of the postcard campaign was well received by the people there as around 2,500 postcards were distributed.

However, without a legally binding target, the Copenhagen Accord was quite disappointing. It showed that there is still a long way to go to a just and sustainable world. Since a top-down approach failed, a stronger bottom-up voice is called for. Beyond the COP15, we will continue to organise a series of events in partnership with international organisations, such as promoting the March 2010 Expedition to Antarctica organised by Robert Swan, from 2041.com. We will also continue the film-screening series to keep exploring why we have caused such destructive damage to our environment. Moreover, we plan to organise a retreat outside Hong Kong that invites passionate youths from local universities to build capacity in advocating for climate change through including critical thinking and long-term vision building.

Although hard to admit, it's a fact that human activities contribute significantly to the changing climate, directly or indirectly. It is better for the doer to undo what he has done, and therefore we can be the solution, starting from simple choices in our daily lives. Wear clothes made of organic materials, buy energy star qualified products, consume food that grows locally, choose a green career and so on. Little by little, such choices will lead us to living in harmony with the environment.



Climate Chance holds a postcard campaign at the COP15 so people can share their feelings about the conference.



In the run-up to the COP15, Climate Chance organises 350 Rally on Global Action Day to call for 350 parts per million to be the bottom line for global carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. With a safe upper limit of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the temperature can be kept below a rise of 2 degrees Celsius.



At the Global Citizenship and Social Service Week organised by CEDARS, Climate Chance promotes their projects to other members of the University.



Some of the Climate Chance members join Antarctica Expedition 2009.

# No Waste of Time

## – reflection from a study trip to Taipei

Kane Wong  
Accounting & Finance, Year 2  
Chairperson of Greenwoods, HKUSU ● ● ●

Greenwoods recently organised a trip to Taipei. It was an environmental protection study trip to look at how the Taipei City government handles solid waste, which is a most difficult problem that Hong Kong has to solve, too.

We were the first student group to visit Taipei for such an environmental research trip. The full support of the Taipei City government and other local green organisations enabled us to visit various facilities that deal with solid waste, such as a landfill site, an incinerator, a recycling site, and a solid waste handling site at a residential building. We also had the opportunity to meet local leaders for a better understanding of their work with solid waste handling in Taipei.

In order to strive for sustainable development, Taipei has set a "Zero Landfill and Total Recycle" goal for 2010. That means that all recyclable waste will be recycled, while non-recyclable waste will be incinerated and the remainder will be used to make cement. The idea sounds incredible, but the Taipei City government has planned well, and they are not far from their goal!

Undoubtedly, Taipei has done a good job in solid waste handling, but the process is not easy. They constructed the incineration site many years ago. Toxins emitted from the incinerator, such as dioxins, can accumulate in the human body and even be passed on to offspring, causing cancer and severe damage to the reproductive system, among other things. The compulsory recycling policy is now practised only after people began to realise how severe the problem of toxins emitted from incinerators was. Within five years, the solid waste produced by two of the three incineration sites in Taipei now have to be stopped periodically, and soon the goal "Zero Landfill, Total Recycle" will be achieved.

So, what about Hong Kong? Our city produces more than 9,000 tonnes of solid waste per day. As the landfill sites will soon be saturated, the Hong Kong government is planning to build an incinerator in Tuen Mun. However, is this the best method for handling solid waste? From the experience of Taipei, no matter how many precautionary steps are taken, there are still some toxic materials that are emitted from the incineration funnels. Even though Taipei has reduced its solid waste to a minimum, toxins have already produced and accumulated. Incineration may not be suitable for Hong Kong. It takes five years to build an incineration site, and during the construction period, Hong Kong could implement a recycling policy similar to Taipei's to reduce solid waste produced. By the time the incinerator is built, however, the incineration site may no longer be useful. There should be some other ways to deal with solid waste problems without incineration.

But then, what is suitable for Hong Kong? We should practise the 4Rs! Reduce, reuse, recycle and replace.

Action from every citizen is important, REDUCE our solid wastes, REUSE the resources, and RECYCLE the recyclable materials. Landfill can be used for biodegradable waste. For waste that cannot be biodegraded, such as PVC, we can REPLACE it by using other biodegradable materials. By doing so, just like Taipei, 60 per cent of our solid waste can be reduced, and the life of our landfills can be extended for 10 more years.

It is never too late to save Hong Kong and the world. Please realise the 4Rs from this very moment!



During the trip, members of Greenwoods have deeper thoughts about incineration.



One of the recycling sites in Taipei – Recycling is one of the important ways to reduce solid waste.

# Mingling with Money

## - financial side of students' activities

Annie Tai

Journalism, Year 2

"We support student societies," said Mr Patrick Tang, Director of Campus Life at CEDARS. "Students get excellent opportunities to learn beyond the classroom, for example on independent thinking and interpersonal skills, and through organising various activities for their society's members."

But learning is never a pain-free task. Young adults committed to student societies need to start from scratch and prepare a whole year of events. From liaison and proposals to logistics and promotion, a university student gains hands-on experience and in particular learns to plan ahead carefully on money matters.

Financial budgeting is of utmost importance for student societies to put their dreams into practice. Currently, student societies affiliated with the Hong Kong University Students' Union (HKUSU) can enjoy aid from the union and CEDARS when organising activities.

"HKUSU, registered as a student-run organisation, is independent from the University. Its sub-organisations can apply for its subsidies, loans and funds, and must follow HKUSU's regulations," said Koey Ko Man-ying, Financial Secretary of HKUSU.

CEDARS, on the other hand, is part of the University, which offers free-to-use equipment and facilities and provides grants to encourage extra-curricular activities.

"We advise students on how to hold events successfully. If they need us on serious issues such as legal problems and safety concerns, we are always there," said Ms Irene Yeung, Senior Student Advisor of Campus Life. "But we do not instruct students on what to do. We respect students' experiential learning, which has proved helpful in nurturing future leadership and problem-solving talents."

Given the University's non-intervention policy on students' activities, it is up to HKUSU to oversee the operations of student societies. HKUSU's internal regulations have detailed descriptions on what the sub-organisations can and cannot do.

For example, advanced written application to HKUSU is required if student societies wish to set up commercial counters with external organisations, and they can only acknowledge external organisations without any advertisement involved. There is also a size limit on the

## Vox Pop

Annie Tai

Journalism, Year 2

Cecilia Koo Sien-bing

Comparative Literature, Year 2

Student societies can use a variety of ways to finance their activities. One common approach is seeking sponsorship. What line would you take to balance collaboration with commercial organisations and maintaining the standards of the University's student body? Students from different societies and disciplines share their views.

### Jason Law, Exco of Economics and Finance Society, BEA, HKUSU (2008 – 2009)

Our University is supportive towards academic events like Budget Talk and Academic Conference. But when our society wants to give extra welfare to members, we have to seek help from outside. I agree that there are strong senses of commercial elements in the sponsorship. We learn to make marketing plans and deal with professional business people through these activities.



### Emily Chan, Exco of Business Association, BEA, HKUSU (2008 – 2009)

Funding from the University is in standardised and limited amounts. A big student society has more members and should have more resources to provide benefits for the members. To do this, we need to seek sponsorship from commercial organisations. I would say it is a win-win situation for advertising and our welfare.



### Winnie Shum, Journalism, Year 2

It is common practice for student societies to approach marketing agencies, which then contact appropriate and interested commercial organisations, for example banks, to support their activities. I have asked more than 10 of my friends and relatives to apply for specified credit cards in order to get sponsorship.



### Elva Xu, exchange student from Mainland, Journalism, Year 3

I have only been on exchange for one semester here at HKU, so I don't really care about sponsorship. I didn't witness this sort of sponsorship negotiation on the mainland. I wonder if it is unique to HKU. Sometimes I think some student societies have too many resources!



company logo for student societies to acknowledge external organisations in their promotional materials. Details of these regulations can be found at <http://www.hkusu.net/content/view/full/189/81/lang/>

It has become an issue of concern that the way student societies seek sponsorship and collaboration with commercial organisations may go beyond these regulations. There are some complaints that student societies do not follow HKUSU restrictions. Commercial logos posted on promotional items such as banners and publications may be too big. And societies have promoted credit cards aimed at acquiring sponsorship funds, a practice that has also been viewed as excessive and disturbing.

"We suggest student societies observe HKUSU regulations," said Mr Tang of Campus Life.

"Failing to do so can result in penalties such as fining and suspension of their use of university facilities," said Koey of HKUSU.

Students are always reminded to be alert to the regulations of HKUSU, and the potential problems associated with collaborating with commercial organisations. There are grievances procedures for students who want to make complaints on student societies. They can approach HKUSU or the Union Council.



**Judy Lee, External Vice Chairperson of Astronomy Club, HKUSU**

It depends on the needs of that activity and something like collecting credit card applications is not a choice, since it harms the reputation of the Astronomy Club.



**So Ka-man, Chairlady of Magic Club, HKUSU**

Sponsorship through commercial companies is considerable because things that we usually need are very tangible, like products or souvenirs. We have less need to seek sponsorship from banks, which is a kind of undesirable sponsorship.



**Tiffany Cheung, President of Rotaract Club, HKUSU**

Organisations that carry the same perspective as ours might not be able to support their activities financially. However, there are agreements made by our committees that commercial organisations are not the first choice.



**Christy Wong, Arts, Year 2**

Talking about credit card things, I think as long as my friends are in need of this, it is ok. However when the "sponsored" stuff is irrelevant to the society or the activity, then it is not appropriate.



**Luyi Lui, Public Relations for the Dancing Club, HKUSU**

For us somehow the nature of the organisation is not a big problem when we seek sponsorship, as long as we can negotiate with them and the agreement is reasonable for us.



**Hoki Lee, Accounting and Finance, Year 2**

I have helped my hall by applying for two credit cards. You know it means money to the hall! I suppose it is sort of troublesome to bug people and beg them to get credit cards. But anyway, it is a non-compulsory disturbance that occurs every year, especially in the orientation period when everyone is competing for resources.



# Sponsorship is Not Short Term

Cecilia Koo Sien-bing  
Comparative Literature, Year 2



Ms Kitty Wong, Director (Development), DAAO

"Sponsors are partners, and it is not best to focus on what they can offer you," said Kitty Wong, Director (Development) of the Development and Alumni Affairs Office (DAAO), when she shared the experience of seeking sponsorship for various occasions.

Ms Wong said the hosting party should not seek sponsorship for the sake of sponsorship, but also consider why the target sponsor should give its helping hand. To start with, comprehensive research about target donors should be performed at the planning stage.

Ms Wong pointed out that fund raising is project-dependent and "you need to know the objectives of your target donors". A full understanding of the target donors is helpful for finding a perfect match in sponsorships, which further creates leverage for the good of both sides and, if things go well, a long-term partnership can be developed. "Mutual respect has to be paid, however."

Ms Wong stressed that the agreement made should be balanced and neither party should set out to achieve something unreasonable. "It is collaboration, not a deal."

In addition, as long as the agreement is balanced and both parties contain similar objectives towards an event, there is no absolute opposition between commercial and academic; they are allowed to work together. Above all, the hosting party has its own part to play and the people involved have to be considerate. "It is not just a matter of one session, but a matter of the development of the whole society," she said.

As highlighted by Ms Wong, an unambiguous orientation is necessary in which seeking sponsorship should not be just for satisfying short-term need. Committees of any organisation have to be responsible for themselves as well as the good of the organisation itself.

# Everything Starts from Planning

Cecilia Koo Sien-bing  
Comparative Literature, Year 2

Nowadays media coverage is extending to the point where even student activities are exposed. Concerning the fact that it is more and more possible for students to be exposed to the media, CEDARS talked with Katherine Ma, Director of the Communications and Public Affairs Office (CPAO), for some tips in handling such situations.

"You can ask for clarification of the 'context' of the question, because you need to know how the answer will be used." Ms Ma begins with this statement, that an interviewee always has the right to ask for such clarification and, for the good of different parties, the context of a question is necessary for figuring out a presentable response. "And it is not a must to respond immediately."

According to the director, journalists may ask questions of people who do not know the full picture of an event, like social critics. Thus, to gain a better picture of a journalist's angle on the story, try to find out the journalist's attitude towards it. Students can ask if there are others interviewed in the story or request to reply later to questions, thus allowing for more time to come up with a presentable response.

Above all, it is important for the student who is responding to have a full understanding of the event that he or she is talking about.

"The more you know, the more elaborative and supportive your answer can be," stressed Ms Ma. "Students have to think about how to deal with the people's questions about the activity at the stage of planning," she added.

Ms Ma recommended that committees organise a debate with each other in the planning stages of an event as a way of discussing what kind of "good" answers can be presented when it is needed, at an interview.



Ms Katherine Ma, Director of Communications, CPAO



# Preventing Suicide in University Students

Counselling and Person Enrichment(CoPE) Section  
CEDARS

University communities and the public are puzzled by the suicidal deaths of university students as we cannot understand why young people give up their lives and the pursuit of their promising future. The most common questions are: Why did it happen? Were there any warning signs? Why did nobody detect anything unusual?

In US, suicide is the second leading cause of death for college students and untreated depression is the number one cause of suicide in the college population. In Hong Kong, mental health issues, financial issues and family issues are the major problems faced by suicide victims under 25 years of age.<sup>1</sup> Research in the general population has indicated that 45-70 per cent of individuals who died of suicide were clinically depressed.<sup>2</sup> Psychoses, substance and alcohol abuse, and aggressive-impulsive behaviours are also related to suicides.

A major effort towards suicide prevention is on early detection and intervention. In order to build a healthy and caring campus, we advise students and staff to:

- Encourage those who are depressed and have other mental health issues to seek help and treatment as early as possible, because when sleeplessness or a sense of helplessness, worthlessness or hopelessness increase, suicidal risk increases. Seek advice from the University Health Service and CEDARS-CoPE ("Counselling and Crisis" at <http://cedars.hku.hk>).
- Family and peer support are good protective factors. Pay attention to and befriend those who are socially withdrawn and isolate themselves. If your friends have conflicts with their parents and diminished family cohesion, listen to them, provide emotional support and encourage them to seek counselling and family therapy.
- It is strongly advisable to seek help for any personal problems or mood symptoms as early as possible. Humans are most willing to seek help when the problems arise, and less motivated and too overwhelmed when the problem escalates and mood deteriorates. You can use self-help strategies suggested by books and websites, but it is better to be done under guidance and monitoring.
- Be equipped - staff and students are encouraged to receive training in Mental Health First Aid<sup>3</sup> and suicide prevention.<sup>4</sup> These help you to acquire some basic knowledge about mood symptoms, and learn some skills to provide initial support before professional intervention is available.
- Mental health and positive psychology build our resilience and competence to face adversities and stress. Take person enrichment courses and read books on personal growth and development. Visit the CoPE website and the reading corner at Rm 410, Meng Wah Complex.



Reading corner of CEDARS-CoPE at Rm 410, Meng Wah Complex

1 Yip, PSY & Law, SCK (2008). Report on Hong Kong Suicide Deaths in 2006. Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, The University of Hong Kong.

2 Kaplan, HJ, Sadock, BJ, & Grebb, JA ( ), Kaplan and Sadock's Synopsis of Psychiatry – 7th Ed. Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

3 CEDARS offers Mental Health First Aid Courses for students and staff throughout the academic year. Go to <http://cedars.hku.hk> and look up "Counselling and Person Enrichment" for details.

4 Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention

# Halal Food Corner – a cradle of Islamic culture on campus

In a first for all tertiary institutions in Hong Kong, the HKU Halal Food Corner was opened in September 2009 as part of the University's commitment to establishing a culturally diversified campus environment for our students. It also reminds us of a small population of staff and students with Islamic beliefs on the campus.



Islam is an Arabic word which comes from the root word "Salam" and "Silim" which respectively mean peace and submitting your will to almighty God. Therefore, Islam means seeking peace by submitting your will to Allah (SWT<sup>1</sup>), the most gracious, the most merciful. Anyone who submits his will to Allah (SWT) is called a Muslim.

Muslim students at HKU usually gather in the prayer room, which is on 1/F of the Fong Shu Chuen Amenities Centre. The principal purpose of our gathering is to worship and pray to Allah (SWT). We also hold regular Islamic talks and eat food according to the Islamic dietary laws as commanded by Allah (SWT) in the Glorious Quran.

At this stage, we are establishing a Muslim Society at HKU with the aim of conveying the Islamic culture, including food, religious festivals, language, and art, to people who want to know about Islam and to unite the Muslims at the University.

Born in Hong Kong, I find local people's understanding about Muslims and Islamic culture generally normal, as a great deal of effort has been made to raise the awareness of Islam in Hong Kong. There are Chinese Muslims who hold weekly or monthly lectures in the Masjid Ammar & Osman Ramju Sadick Islamic Centre in Wan Chai. With the Muslim Society establishing in HKU, it is hoped that there will be more understanding of Islam in Hong Kong.

**Razi Raza Nasir, Liberal Studies, Year 1**

## About Halal Food Corner



The University currently has a small population with Islamic beliefs and the number is expected to grow with plans to increase the intake of students from other regions in coming years. The creation of Halal Food Corner is a further step in promoting cultural diversities on campus. Halal Food Corner is not merely an outlet to provide information on a variety of Halal-certified foods for University members, especially for those with Islamic beliefs who have strict dietary requirements. It will also serve as a platform for cultural interaction for our University members, including those with or without other religious beliefs.

**Location of Halal Food Corner:**  
1/F, Fong Shu Chuen Amenities Centre

11:00 am – 8:00 pm (Mon – Fri)  
Closed (Sun & Public Holidays)

I was born in Bangladesh and resided in Hong Kong for 10 years. Although I am aware of the differences between the two places, I do not differentiate between myself and the local community. Life at HKU as a Muslim student is mostly ordinary. Since I am not an orthodox follower, I rarely pray at home and never on the campus. I have a few Muslim acquaintances here at HKU, but we do not meet regularly.

Although I find myself not very committed to the religion, I refrain from eating pork. This proves to be a difficult task in Hong Kong and at HKU. Unlike most other Muslim students, I do eat non-Halal food. However, I have to choose my food carefully and sometimes make special requests to remove pork items from specific dishes. Although most HKU canteen staff are very friendly and understanding, some of them may find it inconvenient.

Instead of promoting Islamic culture only, an integrated cultural festival promoting different religions and cultures at the University sounds a good idea. Let's think about it!



**Shormi Ahmed, Arts, Year 1**



*"All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a White has no superiority over a Black nor a Black has any superiority over a White except by piety and good action."* - a near translation of an excerpt from the last sermon by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The Muslim students at HKU come from diverse backgrounds. Our daily prayers unite us in the prayer place at fixed times. The prayer in Islam, called "Salah" in Arabic, consists of two essential aspects: making ablution; and praying facing the direction of Mecca. Our differences vanish when we stand shoulder to shoulder in rows to offer our prayers in congregation. Our co-ordinated thoughts and movements make us feel that we are one single body. The very purpose of our offering the prayers is to live as we pray – united and organised.

Islam is the universal code for practice, applicable to the whole of humankind. Every Muslim is an ambassador of Islam by default and is responsible to practise good conduct and fair dealings not only with Muslims but all creation. Therefore, apart from achieving our academic goals at HKU, we also consider it our responsibility to practise Islam on ourselves, as well as take the message of Islam further to our fellow students by being amicable and amenable.

**Darwesh MK Aladin, PhD, Department of Orthopaedics & Traumatology**

<sup>1</sup> SWT, an acronym of an Arabic "Subhana Wa Tala", means "Allah is pure of having partners and He is exalted from having a son" in English.

# FIFE Fund Colours my First Year of Study

Erica Yeung Yuet-fong  
English Studies and Politics, Year 2

Venturing into the world starts with the exploration of one's own country and culture. With the support of the First-in-the-Family Education (FIFE) Fund, I joined four exchange tours and internship programmes to Mainland China. They include the National Education Study Tour to Tsinghua University; the 2009 Dragon Wish - Cultural Exchange Tour cum Southeast Asia Youth Symposium organised by the Hok Yau Club; the Exchange Tour to Guangxi for Hong Kong Youths and Students organised by the New Youth Forum; and Student Exchange Network's "New Youth, New World" 2009, a summer internship programme in Shanghai.



I learned so much more about the development of modern China by meeting some senior Chinese officials and outstanding young entrepreneurs, and visiting foreign-invested enterprises and non-governmental charitable organisations. In contrast with the advancement of economy, I realised that the development of social support networks and policies in China is still in the embryo stages and I learned to look beyond the surface.

My social network has greatly extended. Now I have a more thorough understanding and acceptance of mainland students after experiencing and realising my cultural differences with them. Their number is increasing in the universities of Hong Kong. It is important to live, work and study with them, but the acceptance of them by local students is still low.

After two cultural exchange activities, I was engaged in a six-week internship programme in Shanghai. Being a keen competitor of Hong Kong, Shanghai is a place where old meets new. By working as an intern, I also got the opportunity to explore my career prospects on the mainland.

Similarly, the participation in the 2009 Dragon Wish programme inspired me to reflect on my identity as a Chinese. I had a better understanding about the role of China in Asia, and was stimulated to reflect on my own national identity and how I could contribute to China in future.

All these learning activities have coloured my first university year. Now I am more confident and well-prepared intellectually, socially and emotionally for the challenges ahead.

## About FIFE Fund

The FIFE Fund was launched in April 2008 and aims to support students who are the first generation in their families to enter university to actively take part in the kinds of experiential learning activities that are increasingly emphasised by higher education today. The Presentation and Sharing Ceremony will be held on February 24, 2010, during which there will be more sharing of recipients of the Fund. For details of the Fund, visit: <http://www.fife.hku.hk>



In her first year, Erica (middle) explored different aspects of Mainland China with the support of the FIFE Fund.

## CEDARS Reward Scheme for Students 2010

CEDARS is launching a Reward Scheme to encourage and recognise the contribution of student volunteers who provide support for events organised and co-ordinated by CEDARS. Participants of this Scheme will acquire work experience and enhance their personal development through planning and supporting different activities.

Participation in this Scheme leads to Gold, Silver, Bronze and Merit CEDARS Service Awards.

We provide a wide range of work experience to suit the needs and interests of different students. The work ranges from receiving employers at recruitment presentations to serving as masters of ceremonies (MCs) to hosting U-Radio programmes to providing mental health first aid, etc. Prior and relevant experience is not required as training will be arranged.

Student Advisors will identify the potential of students and provide suitable learning opportunities to enhance and advance their learning. Students are expected to progress steadily through the encouragement and feedback of Student Advisors.

Detailed information about this Scheme can be found at:

<http://www.hku.hk/local/cepc/news/0910/attachment/123003a.pdf>

# Big Dream About Small and Medium Enterprises

Gao Hao

Surveying, Year 3



Gao Hao (first from left) visits the office of his client.

My summer vacation in 2009 was made extraordinary since I joined Encouraging Dynamic Global Entrepreneurs (EDGE).

Sponsored by Scottish Enterprise, which is Scotland's main economic, enterprise, innovation and investment agency for stimulating sustainable growth of Scotland's economy, EDGE is an international entrepreneurial programme taking place in Scotland.

EDGE brought together students from leading Scottish universities, senior school pupils and students from international universities, giving them the opportunity to form consultancy teams working on projects with Scottish businesses. HKU was among the participating international universities.

The initial reason for me making an application for this programme was that I would like to develop skills in supporting the long-term growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through carrying out business projects for companies. I was also keen to experience a different culture and meet friends from all over the world.

As a participant, I received a week of training on management consultancy and joined a team to provide consulting services to clients of Scottish Enterprise. My duty was to generate innovative solutions to problems faced by companies, using my own background and experience.

To my surprise, I gained far more than I expected. From the first day I joined the consulting team, I was amazed by the world of SMEs. With every new project, I realised that the work environment of SMEs is incredibly open and entrepreneurial, with creativity and flexibility being the core values of a company. Unlike large corporations, where hierarchy and bureaucracy are common, people in SMEs can freely express their ideas and raise suggestions to management. As an independent consultant team, we won full respect from the companies because they were eager to listen to us for fresh ideas. We could also meet business leaders regularly to talk about the progress of our project and make recommendations.

One more observation is that when I got in touch with people from SMEs, I was impressed by their optimism about future opportunities stemming from the huge potential of their companies. They don't easily get frustrated by an adverse economic climate. Instead, they are flexible enough to face challenges by looking for alternatives and exploring new strategies.

Before I joined this programme, my career goal was to join big firms and industry giants. Now I would consider launching my career in SMEs as well, due to their vitality and the fact that it would certainly be very challenging and rewarding to work in a SME and witness its growth.



Besides gaining work experience, Gao Hao is able to meet different people at various networking events.

## Overseas internship programmes offered by CEDARS- Careers and Placement

Every year, the Careers and Placement Section of CEDARS organises paid or unpaid overseas internship programmes in the winter and summer. Covering a wide range of industries and job types, the programmes aim to help students build global perspectives and develop themselves as all-round individuals. For more information about the overseas internship programmes, visit: <http://apps.cedars.hku.hk/overseas>