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Working Together for a Better ICSW

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Dear ICSW members, friends, and interested readers,

Welcome to the July 2024 issue of our newsletter.

In this July issue of our Newsletter, we publish relevant contributions from different members of the North East Asia region: Hong Kong, South Korea, Mongolia and Taiwan.

Dr. Fen-ling Chen, president ICSW NEA, highlights in the introduction to these articles a key priority in social work in the 21st century: the "cross-domain collaboration". I encourage all ICSW members and interested persons to read carefully the contributions of our colleagues from the North East Asia region. These contributions help us to address key challenges for social inclusion in our current context.

After almost four years, since Dr. Suh's appointment in 2020 as ICSW Global President, in July 2024 our effective Information Officer, Ms. Yunji Kwon, will face new challenges beyond ICSW, and will no longer collaborate with us. In these four years, Ms. Yunji Kwon has been an example of commitment, efficient work, seriousness, and sensitivity.

For me it has been an honor to work with her and to face all the challenges derived from COVID, revitalizing ICSW in a complex environment. And I want to thank Ms. Yunji: Thank you!
I would also like to thank Ms. Yunji for all her work in this transition process with the new administrative officer. I am sure that in her new responsibilities she will also achieve great accomplishments. And ICSW will always be her home.

As of August 1, a new administrative officer, Mr. Gonzalo Cavero Cano, will be joining us and will contact all of you as soon as possible, and will be at your disposal as of August 1.

In different parts of the world, August is a month of vacation, travel and rest. For all those who are going to be able to enjoy their vacations, I wish you a happy time and may you recover your strength for the autumn.

Take care and stay healthy
Antonio

ICSW North East Asia President's Summary

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This issue of the global newsletter includes four articles from Hong Kong, South Korea, Mongolia, and Taiwan. From these four articles, it is evident that "cross-domain collaboration" is a developmental trend in modern social work when dealing with complex social situations, with the goal of achieving sustainable development through shared social care responsibilities. Policy support is crucial for the professional development of social work, as social workers face different opportunities and challenges in various cultural contexts (as seen in the example of Mongolia, Article 1). Social work needs to actively connect with cross-domain collaborations, such as the platform provided by the S+ Summit cum Expo, linking different sectors to create new possibilities in the social sector (as seen in the example of Hong Kong, Article 2). Taiwan's Love-Passing Project demonstrates the commitment of social welfare and business partners to the care of at-risk youth (as seen in the example of Taiwan, Article 3). Lastly, mutual support between social work and its partners is essential for long-term collaboration, such as recognizing the significant contributions of foster families to child protection work and providing necessary support (as seen in the example of South Korea, Article 4).

Article 1: This article introduces the S+ Summit cum Expo, organized by The Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS). The introduction explains the background of the summit, highlighting global issues such as the widening wealth gap, environmental degradation, and wars, emphasizing the need for cross-sector collaboration to achieve sustainable development goals.

The S+ Summit cum Expo stands out for attracting stakeholders from various sectors, including social welfare organizations, social enterprises, and impact businesses. It featured over 140 exhibitors and attracted 9,500 participants. The S+ Summit cum Expo is not just a forum but a platform for discussion, collaboration, and action among stakeholders from different sectors, aiming to drive both service solutions and policy changes.

The success of the S+ Summit cum Expo is built on HKCSS's past efforts in actively engaging the private sector through the Caring Company Scheme, which paved the way for this innovative, cross-sector "social sector." Finally, HKCSS believes that sustainable development can only be achieved through global cooperation. Therefore, the vision of the S+ Summit cum Expo extends beyond Hong Kong, inviting global partners to join next year.

Article 2: This article discusses the foster family system in Korea, highlighting that despite the 21st anniversary of Korea Family Foster Care Day on May 22, 2024, there remains a significant gap between the need for and the availability of foster families.

Research indicates two key findings:

1. Foster families experience high levels of stress and uncertainty while managing the various challenges associated with caring for foster children.

2. The mental health and capabilities of foster parents are critical for the well-being of foster children.

Based on these findings, the author proposes four strategies to support foster parents in their caregiving roles:

1. Strengthening psychological support for foster parents.
2. Providing differentiated support considering the characteristics of individual foster families.
3. Enhancing parenting education and building a systematic content structure.
4. Strengthening social responsibility through childcare support.

The article concludes by emphasizing that caring for children is a collective societal responsibility. It is important to express gratitude to foster families and to provide robust societal and institutional support to ensure the well-being of both foster parents and children.

Article 3: The article begins by explaining the context of Mongolia, describing it as a landlocked country. During the pandemic, the closure of borders by neighboring countries led to inflation and a decline in national income. It then introduces the characteristics of Mongolia's social welfare, including its background rooted in the Central Asian Soviet-style welfare system, and its diversified development after transitioning to a democratic and free-market economy.

It further discusses the crucial role of Mongolia's social work profession in addressing the challenges posed by the pandemic, including increased service demand while balancing between providing in-person services and ensuring pandemic safety, as well as the worsening issue of child abuse. Despite social work being widely recognized in Mongolian society, the profession still faces challenges such as underdevelopment, low salaries, and heavy workloads.

Lastly, the article mentions that in 2021, Mongolia held three national forums initiated by social workers themselves. The forums proposed several recommendations for the development of social work, including enacting a social worker law, encouraging social workers to participate in national reforms, reducing workloads, and improving the professional development of social workers.

Article 4: This article introduces Taiwan's "Love-Passing" program, a collaborative project between CTBC Bank and ICSW Taiwan that combines exercise interventions with cognitive courses to support at-risk youth from dysfunctional families who are at risk of dropping out of school. The program integrates professional basketball training and educational support to foster resilience, problem-solving skills, and a sense of belonging among participants, ultimately promoting their positive development.

The article details the program's content, which is divided into three stages: establishing basketball clubs with professional coaches, introducing cognitive courses, and facilitating participation in school and external basketball events. It highlights the program's strengths, including improved physical fitness, enhanced cooperation, increased willingness to follow discipline, boosted confidence, and the establishment of life goals.

However, the program also faces challenges, such as learning barriers for special education students and gender imbalances among participants. Future prospects include continuous improvement based on feedback, addressing gender disparities, and incorporating a broader range of experts into the research team.

Largest Multiple-stakeholder Platform for Social Impact and Sustainability in Hong Kong: Inaugural 'S+ Summit cum Expo'

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

In search of new platform for social/ sustainable development

For decades, people in most parts of the world have been living in a stable social environment where the path of social development is highly predictable. Benefiting from this, the human kind has made remarkable achievements. However, increase of total wealth does not reduce but increase the gap between the rich and the poor. Hunger and poverty remain prevalent in different parts of the world. Increase of income improves material life of people but the growth of consumption desire exhausts the planet's resources and produces wastes that jeopardize the well-being of human kind and other species. Improvement of transportation, communication and technology enables people's mobility, exchange and access to resources of various types. As much as it fosters understanding among people in different parts of the world, it also brings about risks of clash of ideas, beliefs and values. Disputes and conflicts among people and nations often end up in wars in some regions. Latest technological development such as AI is going to make our life easier in some ways but much more difficult in other ways. We are living in an era characterized by complexity and uncertainty when benefits and opportunities for human beings are plenty while threats and challenges are also unprecedented.

In this era of unprecedented change, we need both courage to bring up new ideas to establish a new promise of social and sustainable development for people and capacity to identify new approaches and methodologies to guide us towards that new promise.

S+: A new conception of collaborative platform for sustainability

As a peak umbrella organization of NGOs in Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Council of Social Service has consolidated its decade-long social engagement efforts to establish a new collaborative platform for not just the social service NGOs but also, perhaps more importantly, the business sector, the government and other professional sectors - the 'S+ Summit cum Expo'. With a brand new perspective emphasizing engagement and participation of stakeholders across different sectors, "S+" is built on the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to promote stakeholder collaboration (Synergy) for social changes and impact (Social Impact) for Hong Kong's sustainable development (Sustainability). "S+" renders at least two different meanings relevant to our time and environment. First, while "S" stands for the affirmation of the pivotal role of the social service sector, the "+" is our genuine and humble recognition of the indispensable roles of other sectors in the society for its sustainable development. Along the holistic underpinning of goal of sustainability, on the other hand, we need the "+" of other aspects such as "environmental", "cultural" and so on to complement the social aspect, i.e. "S", of sustainability.

Beyond forum: S+ as discussion and collaborative action platform

As the largest multiple-stakeholder platform for social impact and sustainability in Hong Kong, S+ staged a Summit to foster discussion and exchange of ideas for addressing social problems and promoting sustainable development in the territory. The keynote speakers from Hong Kong

and mainland of China as well as from UK highlighted challenges and proposed new visions for sustainable development of both Hong Kong and the world. They appealed to the multiple stakeholders in the audience to collaborate, to innovate and to co-create a sustainable future. Specific topics concerning all stakeholders such as elderly care in the Greater Bay Area, talent development, mental health, primary healthcare, and digital transformation of social services were covered in other parallel discussion sessions. Environmental concerns were also addressed through discussions on the impact of extreme climate on disadvantaged groups, mitigation strategies, and sessions on environmental protection and waste reduction. Different from a typical NGO conference, both the panel speakers as well as the audience were coming from different sectors.

What distinguishes S+ from a traditional forum of social service NGO is that approximately 140 exhibitors, consisting of social welfare organizations, social enterprises, and impact businesses, were engaged to curate their innovative solutions in addressing social issues in such a way that they could further engage partners from different sectors to create value for the people and society. Through the exchange of ideas and resources, they acted and sought to tackle social problems with collaborative efforts, particularly with the business sector and the social welfare sector. The diverse array of exhibitors highlighted the growing synergies and partnerships emerging across different domains to drive social progress and impact.

In addition to programme or service, S+ also attempted to enable policy-level action on topic concerning different stakeholders. In cooperation with the Financial Services Development Council (FSDC) of the HKSAR government, a policy symposium titled 'Emerging Trends in Asian Philanthropy and Impact Investment: Opportunities and Challenges". Riding on the policy interest of the government in leveraging the financial and economic landscape of the local community to establish Hong Kong as a regional center for philanthropy, S+ helped to engage interests and efforts of NGO sector, the government, business sector, the general public, academics and professionals from different fields.

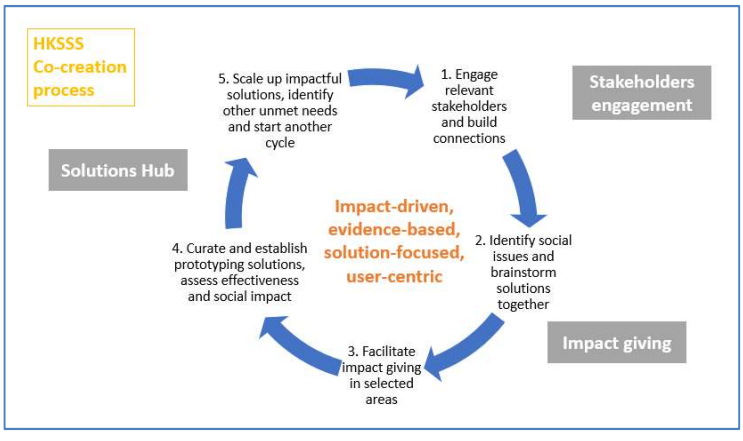
Witnessing an emerging new social sector through S+

S+ has successfully concluded with an impressive attendance of 9,500 individuals. It represents a significant milestone for both the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) and the city as a whole. As it is designed for, it marks a significant elevation of multiple stakeholder collaboration in promoting social impact and driving sustainable development in Hong Kong. It realizes itself as a collective social impact making platform where stakeholders share difficulties and challenges, good ideas, best practices, and innovative solutions to address pressing social challenges in the city.

Number of participants aside, the qualitative impact is something remarkable. It has changed the landscape of the NGO sector significantly. For the first time, a new "social sector" is realized. Different from the traditional conception of NGO or social service sector, the social sector as we see and experience in S+ is one which is constituted

by not just one type of organizational entity, but multiple types of entity. It is witnessed among many business entities, there are sections or teams who are also keen on social issues and sustainable development. Sharing the mission and vision of the NGOs, they have got very unique assets to offer and contribute for the sustainable development of the society.

With a hindsight, HKCSS embarking on active engagement of the private sector in addressing social needs since the early 2000s, with its vehicle of Caring Company Scheme, where over 4,000 enterprises and organizations are currently engaged, already paved the way for the latest development of S+. Since 2022, when we commemorated the 75th anniversary of the HKCSS, "Co-creation" has been adopted as one of the strategic directions for future development. Collective collaboration approach begins to be mapped onto our work. By involving stakeholders with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, we are trying to create new approaches to address various social issues in a flexible, open, exploratory, and experimental manner.



As Hong Kong continues its journey towards sustainable development, 'S+ Summit cum Expo' will play a vital role in driving social progress and bringing positive change to the community. Yet, we don't look at it as purely a platform for the local community of Hong Kong precisely because no sustainability can be envisioned without the joint effort of the world. By sharing our experience of S+, we extend an invitation to our global partners to join us next year, where we can collectively work towards addressing social issues, fostering collaboration, and creating a sustainable future for Hong Kong and the world. Together, we can make a significant and lasting impact on the well-being in our communities.

Social welfare services and covid-19 challenges in Mongolia

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Mongolia is a landlocked country, bordered by Russia and China a population of 3.4 mil. Due to the COVID crisis, China's borders closed for nearly 3 years, leading to a decrease in cross-border transportation activities. Therefore, impacted the price of commodities, leading to higher inflation and lower incomes for citizens. The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has also had an impact on Mongolia's economy.

In the pre-transition, basic welfare systems were developing in Mongolia following the example of the Soviet-type welfare systems of states in Central Asia. (Ai-guo, 2010) Like the Soviet Union system, there were three different areas developed in socialist Mongolia: a) social insurance for employees and civil servants, b) the social care of the agricultural cooperative's members, and c) the social care for certain groups (the elderly, people with disabilities, single parents, orphans, families with more than three children). In terms of institutional features, three measures were developed: a) the state pension, c) the state benefit, and c) the state care services. (Ванданмагсар, 2002) Democratic Mongolia approved its new constitution in 1992, and declared a promise to build "a humane and civil democratic society."

In the new constitution, 18 types of human rights and freedom, were declared, and article 16.5 concerning civil rights and freedom, stated that citizen has the "right to material and financial assistance in old age, disability, childbirth and child care and in other circumstances as provided by law. This remains the main regulation related to social welfare. The legal environment on social welfare was newly developed based on the laws that were approved from 1993 through 1995, then the cornerstone of the contemporary Mongolian social welfare system was made in 1995 (Ч.Дагвадорж., 2004). Currently, the Mongolian social protection system consists of social insurance, social welfare, labor promotion policy, and family policy as the four main components. During the previous system, social welfare was developed under the social protection system of state socialism, it was necessary to develop independently as a country with a free market economy after the transition.

There have been frequent changes in the policy and legal environment for social welfare in Mongolia. The Law on Social Welfare was passed in 1995 major amendments were made in 2000 and 2008, and revisions were made in 1998, 2005, and 2012. Several other laws were passed in the last two decades such as the law introducing pensions, allowances, and concessions oriented to vulnerable groups in 1995, the introduced specialized care services in 1998, and a law introducing conditional cash benefits, and community-based social welfare service in 2005, and the law introduced nutrition support services in 2012. (Tumennast Gelenkhuu, 2019)

Scholars often distinguish the main branches of

social policy such as social welfare, social insurance, family policy, and labor promotion policy. Social welfare relates to noncontributory financing and support designed to provide regular and a predictable standard of living to poor and vulnerable people. (Margaret Grosh, 2008) There are two characteristics of social assistance, that policy is financed by the state budget on the one side and is directed at socially vulnerable groups and poor on the other. After the transition to the democratic regime and the market economy, the Mongolian social welfare sector has evolved in two fundamental directions.

On the one hand, Mongolia's social welfare system inherits some of the welfare services and programs created during the socialism. For example, allowances and assistance for the elderly and disabled, benefits for the elderly with state merits, allowances for pregnant and lactating mothers, allowances for the recipients of "Mother's Glory", and those who have many children, programs were created during the socialist period. On the other hand, new programs such as community-based social welfare services, food stamp programs, allowances for poor households, and child money programs have been introduced. (Gelenkhuu & Sukh-Ochir Batchuluun, 2019)

Social workers are facing major challenges due to the curfew measures imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which have brought unprecedented changes to the daily lives of vulnerable populations. These challenges include increased demand for services, limited resources, balancing personal safety with providing in-person support, and navigating issues related to confidentiality and informed consent.

It is crucial to identify and address these challenges to ensure the continuous development of social work professionals in Mongolia and around the world, as they play a vital role in supporting vulnerable populations during these challenging times. Also based on the research that examined the issues related to medical care and social services during the COVID-19 disease in the context of diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation activities, there are many examples that have shown that Mongolian health and care institutions were not prepared for the outbreak of infectious diseases.

The government implemented a lockdown on March 10, 2020, the same day the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in the country. National holidays such as Lunar New Year were canceled and all travel within the country was restricted. A nationwide COVID-19 testing campaign- one door one test. The campaign utilized PCR assays to test one family member from each of the 420.000 households in the capital city. Mongolia was the first among the countries in Northeast Asia to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. ADB WHO and UNICEF played a key role in procuring the vaccines. As of July 15, 2022, 85.2% of the population got at least one dose, and 70% completed both, according to the Word bank. (Chultemsuren, 2023)

Globally, deaths caused by the COVID-19 pandemic per one million population was 790,6, and 646 in Mongolia. The ratio between confirmed cases and deaths was 0.24, which ranked Mongolia 175th out of 196 countries. About 78.4 percent (1,680 persons) of persons who died of COVID-19 had pre-existing health conditions or chronic illness, of whom 75.4 percent (1,267 persons) had cardiovascular disease. Logistics and infrastructure accessibility of the health sector and hospitals were unlike, institutions were unprepared for overcoming the pandemic, and coordination was poor. Especially

it is the case for the NCCD and other tertiary-level healthcare institutions. As compared to other institutions, the CCD has 6 public health departments, owns an area of 9 hectares, operates 500 beds, and employs 300 staff. During the intense COVID-19 outbreak, many problems arose, such as treatment facilities and machines breaking down, the demand for oxygen increasing, and there was a failure in the information technology operations, and the attention had to be attached not to the patients but to the basic conditions

Let's not forget that up to 50 percent of people who die in accidents and natural disasters every year are children. It is noteworthy that children are not prepared during disasters. In 2022, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP) in Mongolia reported that 17,972 children were identified as being at risk. Among them, there were 485 cases of child abuse, 1,692 cases of neglect, 302 cases of exploitation, and 702 cases of psychological abuse (AFCYD, 2023). Considering that Mongolia is not ready for this, the MNS 6948:2021 standard was approved at the initiative of the General Directorate of Emergency Situations (Monkhooroi & Sukh-Ochir Batchuluun, 2023)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Mongolia, like many other countries, faced significant challenges in its child protection systems, particularly in providing response services to One-Stop Crisis Centers (OSCC) and shelters. Due to the measures against the COVID-19 pandemic taken by the Government of Mongolia such as the stringent lockdown led to a notable rise in domestic violence offenses, including child abuse, with a nationwide increase of 61.6 percent. This surge in cases placed a tremendous strain on the child protection system in crisis. In the first quarter of 2020, the number of clients served by One-Stop Crisis Centers (OSCCs) surged by 88.7 percent compared to the same period in 2019, with a double increase in the number of child victims

Most women are mainly in service organizations works. During the curfew, the service organizations are not working, so the family has financial problems. During the coronavirus quarantine, pregnant women and mothers with children aged 0-12 have been provided with the opportunity to work from home. Thus, women's workload increased as they took care of young children and did housework as well working from home has created stress in the family and contributed to domestic violence. (Batbaatar & Sukh-Ochir Batchuluun, 2023)

Three Virtual Nationwide Forums for social workers in 2021. The three forums were held in the topics such as “Social protection and professional code for social workers”. “Social work education and career”, and “Social work services and professional management”. The forums aimed to encourage social worker participation in every sector and improve service quality. The social work has been recognized in Mongolia for 25 years with an achievement of employing the social workers in every sectors. However, clarity and coordination in working relationship as well as cooperation remain poor. The virtual forums embrace 3 main features. First, self-initiated activity by the social workers; secondly, continuous discussion; thirdly, an online site where social workers from all sectors can gather.

Suggestions given by the participants from different sectors in the city and local provinces. Out of total 1126 social workers, 458 expressed their opinions. Improve the legal environment and policies which can make development of social work in Mongolia reach next stage of, for

example, making a law which will be applied to social workers. Encourage social worker's participation in connection with the reforms introduced by the state. Reduce workload of social workers. Improve social worker's professional development. Ensure effective working relationships.

Social workers in diverse sectors are experiencing similar problems including poor working condition, lack of a tete-a-tete meeting room, low salary and too much workload. Social work services vary in each sector and in that regard the sectors are governed by their own regulations and policies. Accordingly, social worker's job description is different. There is a great shortage of professional development opportunities and participation. Continuous development is a serious concern. Social workers lack of working experience which is required during the COVID-19 pandemic and are limited to receive support form others. It has been common practice among the social workers to participate in any activities organized by organizations or management, rather than on their own initiative.

Conclusion & discussion

- Mongolian experience has shown mixed responses.
- It has been proven that Mongolia is not ready for the pandemic and other disasters.
- Survey findings suggest that social welfare and protection measures prevented the population from getting exposed to poverty and actually supported the livelihood of the people.
- It is essential to carefully consider whether social welfare and protection measures could be the sustainable policy solution to ensure the right of Mongolian citizens to an adequate standard of living, however, efficiency and accessibility of assistance and support are insufficient.
- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank argue that social welfare and protection measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic prevented poverty from expanding, but these measures have been extremely expensive and undermined future fiscal sustainability.

Further measures:

- To develop a policy to encourage social work development,
- To make and approve a law on social workers and regarding the new law, a varied group of social workers are able to work in the same legislation and get social security benefits,
- To improve cooperation and working relationships of social workers in different sectors,
- To increase the position of a social worker according to the standard normative,
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Using Sports to Guide At-Risk Youth: An Introduction to Taiwan's "Love-Passing" Project

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Introduction

"Love-Passing" is a collaborative project between CTBC Bank and ICSW TAIWAN that combines exercise intervention and cognitive courses. Professor Fen-Ling Chen and Assistant Professor An-Ti Shih from the Department of Social Work at National Taipei University have been involved in discussions since September 2022. Leveraging their professional backgrounds, they assisted in establishing assessment methods and explored students' daily behaviors outside of club activities through focus group interviews, shaping feasible directions for future initiatives.

This project is specially designed to help at-risk youth from dysfunctional families who are in danger of dropping out of school. By integrating professional basketball training and educational support, the aim is to cultivate resilience, problem-solving skills, and a sense of belonging among the participants, ultimately leading to their positive development.

Participants in this program come from the "Tzi-Huei class", a form of dropout prevention alternative education in Taiwan. Many students in these classes have continuous behavioral problem often linked to trauma or adverse childhood experiences. The Tzi-Huei class is specially designed to meet their unique needs through tailored educational and psychological support, which cannot be addressed in traditional education settings.

Adverse childhood experiences can cause significant negative impacts on individuals. These impacts include failure of the stress response regulatory system, learning difficulties, behavioral problems, mental disorders, suicide risk[1], higher dropout rates[2], and substance abuse[3]. Given these challenges, it is crucial to develop innovative and effective intervention programs that address both the psychological and educational needs of these youth.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that exercise benefits adolescents' mental health[4-6]. Exercise produces several neurotransmitters, such as dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine, which are crucial for youth development. Dopamine is associated with positive emotions, serotonin improves mood and memory, and norepinephrine is directly linked to attention[7]. These neurotransmitters play a vital role in enhancing the mental well-being and cognitive functions of adolescents.

Basketball, being one of the most popular sports among Taiwanese youth[8], serves as an ideal medium for this intervention. The group cohesion fostered through playing basketball can facilitate positive development and generate motivation[9]. Moreover, Taiwan has numerous basketball courts[10], making it easier for participants to continue the sport even after the project ends. This availability of facilities ensures that the benefits gained during the program can be sustained long-term.

Program Content

The" Love-Passing" project is divided into three stages, each designed to progressively build the skills and confidence of the participants:

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
1. Establishing basketball club with professional coaches. 2. New Taipei CTBC DEA players serve as guest coaches, providing mentorship.	1. Introducing "cognitive courses" to help participants take control of their lives. 2. Conduct off-site training. 3. Inviting participants to watch the New Taipei CTBC DEA home game to strengthen their belief in basketball.	1. Facilitating Participation in school and external basketball events to learn to face success or failure. 2. (Evaluation) Establish a scholarship mechanism to encourage further studies.

Feedback from participants

The objectives of "Love-Passing" project are multifaceted. We aim for significant improvements in participants' confidence, self-regulation, achievement motivation and family interactions compared to before the program. Due to the small number of participants and ethical considerations preventing random assignment control, a mix-method approach is used to evaluate the project's outcomes. This includes self-answered surveys and observational data from teachers.

According to feedback from participants and teachers, the project has several strengths:

1. **Improved physical fitness**: More than 40% of participants showed healthier BMI scores and 90% felt more energetic, indicating enhanced overall physical health.

2. **Learning cooperation**: Initially, participants exhibited behaviors such as bullying peers and taking advantage of the weaker members. However, under the guidance of basketball coaches, they gradually realized that only through mutual cooperation and assistance could they lead their team to victory. Consequently, bullying behaviors decreased, replaced by cooperation, successfully fostering a spirit of teamwork among the adolescents.

3. **Greater willingness to follow discipline**: 90% agreed that the basketball club helped them follow social rules more closely; Teachers generally believe that wearing the uniform (jersey) of the basketball club instills a sense of honor in the participants, making them aspire to be role models for other students and more willing to adhere to group discipline.

4. **Increased confidence**: Teachers noted that the participants gain confidence by understanding and following the coaches' instructions, which positively impacted their self-esteem.

5. **Establishing life goals and becoming more active in school life**: The program helped participants set and pursue personal goals, increasing their engagement and motivation in academic and extracurricular activities.

Challenges

However, the project also faces challenges. For example, many participants are special education students who encounter more learning barriers and may feel frustrated during the process.

Additionally, the gender imbalance, with a majority of male participants, leading to exclusion for the sole female participant in some activities. This gender disparity impacts group dynamics and decreases the motivation of female participants. We are considering several strategies to address these challenges: Firstly, dividing the basketball club into small groups if necessary. Secondly, increasing the number of female students. Lastly, including assistant coaches to provide additional instruction.

Future Prospects

The "Love-Passing" project is ongoing, and the feedback we collect will guide future modifications and dissemination. We aim to continuously improve the program based on participant and teacher feedback, ensuring it meets the evolving needs of at-risk youth. Additionally, we will include experts in different areas into our research team, which may provide a broader view for our future work. We look forward to sharing more comprehensive result in the future!

[Photos 1 and 2]: Group photo of the "Love Passing" basketball friendly game between two schools' basketball clubs.

[Photo 3]: Participants of the "Love Passing" project attending the New Taipei CTBC DEA home game.

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The Dedication and Reality of Foster Parents in Korea

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Korea marks Family Foster Care Day annually on May 22. This day was established by the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 2003 to raise public awareness about foster care. Despite it marks its 21st anniversary this year, promoting foster care remains a challenge in our society. Foster care, as a form of home protection, can provide children with a better nurturing environment than institutional care. Therefore, when there are children in need of protection, measures are taken to prioritize their placement in foster homes over facilities. However, the number of foster families is insufficient compared to the number of children in need of protection. In response, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the National Center for the Rights of the Child, and foster care support centers across the country are making significant efforts to recruit foster families and nurture foster parents.

Along with promoting foster care, it is crucial not to overlook the children growing up in foster families and the foster parents nurturing them. How do foster parents raise these children in need of protection? Additionally, how do we perceive foster parents caring for these children? To get straight to the point, our society needs to more naturally accept the idea that someone other than the biological parents can take on the role of parent or guardian. Foster parents, while not the biological parents, fulfill a parental role. Therefore, in our daily lives, we should regard them as parents or guardians. They are like parents for the children in need of protection.

However, foster parents are also part of the protective system responsible for safeguarding and nurturing children in need of protection. They are performing a task that should be a collective responsibility of our society. Therefore, supporting foster children and foster parents, in other words, supporting foster families, is a societal obligation towards children in need of protection.

According to Article 3 of the Child Welfare Act in Korea, foster care involves temporarily placing children in need of protection with families that meet the criteria specified by law, such as having no history of sexual crimes, domestic violence, child abuse, or mental illness. Children in need of protection are those without guardians, separated from their guardians, or those whose guardians are deemed unsuitable or incapable of raising them.

Foster care is categorized into specialized foster care, general foster care, and temporary foster care. Specialized foster care is for children who need special protection, such as abused children, infants, children with disabilities, and children with borderline intelligence. General foster care is for children in need of protection who do not fall under specialized foster care. Temporary foster care involves the temporary protection and nurturing of children in need of protection for a basic period of 3 months, and up to a maximum of 6 months.

Research on State of Parenting of Foster Parents and Need for Providing Support

Findings from studies related to foster parents' care of foster children can be summarized with several key points. First, the parenting behaviors and capabilities of foster parents significantly influence the positive development of children. The nurturing environment in foster families acts

as an internal protective factor for foster children, positively impacting the improvement of behavioral issues and overall development. This suggests that it is essential to provide support that can enhance the parenting attitudes and capabilities of foster parents to support the healthy and sound growth and development of foster children.

Second, while the role of foster parents(families) is crucial for the healthy development of children, foster parents face numerous challenges in raising foster children. These children have experienced separation from their biological parents and changes in their nurturing environment, requiring more meticulous understanding and care from their caregivers. Therefore, foster parents must help children adapt well to their new environment and handle the difficulties of disciplining them according to their developmental stages and behavioral issues. Additionally, foster parents often feel the pressure of having to provide better care because they are foster parents. They may also feel uncertain about how to discuss biological parents or foster care with the children and worry about preparing the children for independence as they become teenagers. Particularly, non-kinship foster parents, compared to kinship foster parents, tend to have a more positive perception of foster children. However, they experience stress due to institutional limitations, as they are not legal guardians, and from the prejudices of those around them.

These research findings highlight the necessity for institutional and social support for foster parents. Supporting foster families in nurturing children, ensuring that they are protected in a stable environment similar to a biological family, and enabling them to grow healthily both physically and psychologically is essential and must be sustained.

How to Support Foster Families

Support for foster families can be viewed from various perspectives, including direct support to assist foster parents in care-giving, improvements in support and operational systems, and legal and institutional perspectives. However, this article proposes several methods of support from the perspective of aiding foster parents in their care-giving roles.

△ Strengthening Psychological Support for Foster Parents

Foster parents, whether they volunteered or were compelled by the child's circumstances, undergo changes in their lives, adapt, face conflicts, and sometimes experience separation from the foster child. This entire process is linked to the psychological health of the foster parent, and the physical and psychological well-being of the foster parent is closely tied to the healthy growth of the foster child.

Given this, it is essential to pay attention to the psychological health of foster parents along with that of the foster children. Research indicates how crucial a protective factor foster parents are for the healthy development of children and the utility of psychological therapy or family counseling for foster parents, akin to that provided for foster children. Therefore, it is necessary to regularly assess whether foster families are functioning healthily and whether foster parents are living physically and psychologically healthy lives through case management. Support should be provided to families in need in various forms such as group counseling, psychological therapy, self-help meetings, and family trips (vacations).

For example, self-help groups can serve as a platform for sharing information, learning disciplinary methods, exchanging childcare items,

and alleviating parenting stress through conversation and socialization. Additionally, diverse experiences within the foster family, such as family trips, positively influence both the foster parents and the child's adaptation to family relationships.

△ Providing Differentiated Support Considering the Characteristics of Individual Foster Families

Foster parents of infants and toddlers may experience a greater physical burden, while those with older foster children may face more economic burdens related to independence support. Kinship foster parents tend to be older, lacking recent parenting experience or opportunities to access information through the internet. This indicates the need for differentiated support based on characteristics such as the age of the foster child and the relationship between the foster parent and child. For instance, foster parents should be educated about youth culture and encouraged to experience it together with the children to understand adolescent foster children better. Support in providing information on career paths or college life is also necessary. Providing tailored information and various support methods according to the characteristics of foster families will be more effective in enhancing foster parents' care-giving abilities.

△ Enhancing Parenting Education and Building a Systematic Content Structure

According to a 2022 study by the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education, foster parents identified the most needed topics in foster parent training as "characteristics of foster children and foster families," "developmental characteristics by age," "parenting methods," and "initial adaptation of foster children." In refresher courses, the most needed topics were "parenting methods," "coping with children's behavioral problems," and "developmental characteristics by age." This indicates the need for timely education appropriate for each period. Additionally, the educational content required may differ based on the age of the foster child and whether the foster parent and child are biologically related or not.

According to research, foster children who are very young often perceive their foster parents as their biological parents in many cases. Many foster parents also report not knowing how to explain their relationship to the foster children. This is a crucial factor that significantly impacts not only the foster parents but also the healthy development of the child's identity. It reveals that there has been a lack of opportunities to properly understand this aspect.

Therefore, it is proposed to differentiate foster parent training into mandatory and elective components. Mandatory training should be required for all foster parents, covering essential topics, while elective training should offer advanced content that can be selected based on the characteristics of the foster child or the relationship with the foster child. Additionally, considering that enhanced parent education will increase the training hours and expand related responsibilities, it is suggested to designate a separate educational institution to manage these tasks rather than burdening foster care support centers with all the responsibilities.

△ Strengthening Social Responsibility through Childcare Support

Despite the fact that foster parents bear the responsibility of caring for foster children, they do not receive full benefits from various childcare support policies, as they are not legally recognized as parents but rather as caregivers.

Systems designed to assist general parents in childcare are naturally useful to foster parents as well, thereby supporting the care and upbringing of foster children.

Therefore, society should take responsibility by providing various childcare support policies to ensure that foster parents can smoothly protect and raise foster children. It is crucial to improve support systems so that foster parents can effectively utilize existing policies such as parental leave, family care leave, shortened working hours for childcare, childcare support programs, and comprehensive childcare support center services. Particularly for foster children who are infants, foster parents face similar challenges as parents of biological infants, such as long-term childcare needs. Thus, they should be ensured equal access to various childcare support policies just like general families.

Foster parents not only play a crucial role in nurturing and protecting children but also form the foundation of a system where our society collectively raises these children. It is important to express gratitude for their dedication. However, more importantly, it is essential to acknowledge the realities faced by foster parents and establish more substantial support systems to help them overcome practical difficulties they encounter in their role. Support for foster families is ultimately our society's obligation toward children under its protection. We hope that foster families can naturally integrate into our society.

This article is based on the research project of the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education "Study on the Ways to Support Vulnerable Family's Parenting Capabilities (1) : Supporting Plans for Foster Families" (Yun-Jin Bae, Jeongrim Lee, Ahreum Kim, Hyemin Lee, Sungeun Yang, Hae-lim Chang, Yurim Cha, 2022).

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Contributions to the newsletter are welcome!