



Working with Asylum Seekers and Refugees in HK

Hong Kong

- Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China since 1997 (former British Colony)
- Made of over 200 islands in the South China Sea
- Population of 7.2 million people
- Tension between Mainland China and Hong Kong resulted in the "Yellow Umbrella" protests

- Official languages are English and Cantonese

Asylum Seekers in Hong Kong

- Roughly 10,000 asylum seekers in Hong Kong
- Asylum seekers and refugees cannot work or volunteer
- Receive limited assistance from government in the form of rental/utility assistance, food vouchers, and transportation allowance
- Strong anti-refugee sentiment
- Association of ethnic minorities with crime/economic migration
- Asylum claims processed through Unified Screening Mechanism, which has a 0.5% acceptance rate (compared to 20-40% in most other countries)

Christian Action: Centre for Refugees

- Only drop-in center for asylum seekers and refugees in Hong Kong
- Provides basic humanitarian assistance
- Educational grants to cover schoolfees/uniforms for children
- Classes (English, computer skills, drums, sewing/jewelry making)
- Psychosocial/counseling services

MSW Intern Responsibilities

- Work with clients as a caseworker
- Participate in weekly caseworker meetings
- Group design and facilitation (most HKU students)
- Program design and implementation
- Assist with planning and participate in centre events for clients

Skills Utilized/Developed

- Program development
- Cross-cultural communication
- Crisis management and case management
- Assessment skills (intake assessment and targeted assessments)

Lessons Learned

- Respecting client self-determination can be difficult, but is an important value to uphold
- Developing a professional support system is important for your long term success
- Ideally there should be a balance between consistent policy and flexibility
- Relationship building can open doors for your clients

Advice

- Remember to take care of yourself—being able to recharge is especially important after a difficult day (or week) at work
- Be proactive—take advantage of opportunities and connections as they arise
- Patience and flexibility help get through times of uncertainty and frustration

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Classroom Connections

- SW 521: Assessment/intake skills
- SW 683: Evaluation and focus group design
- SW 697: How to thoughtfully enter communities
- SW 648: Preparation for going abroad
- SW 624: Group facilitation and planning

Career Connections

I hope to continue working with multicultural populations and immigrants/refugees. My time in Hong Kong:

- Complemented my experience working in refugee resettlement by showing the asylum seeker experience
- Better prepared me to work in crisis situations
- Built on my ability to communicate effectively with clients

Outcomes

- Actively worked on four client cases
- Developed and implemented three parenting workshops
- Designed and facilitated a focus group with female clients about how to make the agency more women friendly
- Assisted with implementation of the milk and diaper assessment for mothers



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