



Saving Shorelines for the Community **Effectiveness of Civil Society - Strategies and Methods**

What is SOS?

Hong Kong and Civic Involvement

Starting from Scratch

Building a Team

Getting Recognised

Expectations

Dangers and Pitfalls

What's Next



The United Nations: Partners in Civil Society



"The United Nations once dealt only with Governments. By now we know that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved without partnerships involving Governments, international organizations, the business community and civil society. In today's world, we depend on each other."

--Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General

WHAT IS SOS?

The lowest level of organised body within the civil society of Hong Kong.

Our Work – information, lobbying, specific projects.

Assisting other NGO's

To broaden public / government awareness of shoreline values, potential and risk and to propose solutions.

SOS reflects recent developments in Hong Kong's civil society.

HONG KONG AND CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

Historically – philanthropists and colonial government

Separation between government and community

Tung Wah, Po Leung Kuk, etc. for community services

Government was rarely challenged

Post war civic involvement common elsewhere but not HK

HK 50's – 70's community in stress

80's safer and more prosperous but worries about transition

Community acted as individuals

Legacy of Cultural Revolution and colonial government may have slowed progress.

Some extreme cases showed potential – Tien An Men 1989

Ironically only AFTER 1997 did HK people discover a civic identity

STARTING FROM SCRATCH

When a community wants to become involved, it often lacks the basic resources to do so

Made up for with passion – ‘People Power’

Militancy isn’t necessary

Positive proposals, not a negative approach

Develop convincing arguments and respected presence

SOS started with 40 members – R7 single issue

No idea what or how to do – how to change government plans.

Had to learn to interact with government, media and community

NIMBY group initially, only developed to wider community issues later

Had to work fast to beat funding deadlines

BUILDING A TEAM

The HK public has shown that it wants community groups to act for them as their voice to encourage alternative government planning.

Groups like SOS are informal enough to let ordinary people express themselves and take part and feel that they are achieving something.

Shorelines are an emotive subject, and people have shown a sense of community ownership.

Anyone can form an NGO in HK round a core issue.

Must be interesting to the community to be sustainable – critical mass

Initial momentum needs to be maintained.

HK puts few restrictions on setting up such associations.

SOS numbers dropped at first, then settled and grew.

Early projects harder to set up, but experience grew.

Enthusiasm gives way to persistence, then to commitment



BUILDING A TEAM

Most groups are run by volunteers – provides a skill-pool

Progress is often reactive rather than proactive at first

May get out of depth but need to keep up with events.

SOS had to learn HK's complex government structure and how to dig out information

Student involvement





GETTING RECOGNISED

Learn the value of media support early - best way to reach the community.

Easy if the subject strikes a chord, but needs persistence – SOS used R7

Media attention can be short

Approach government directly. If elected body they are easy to reach. HK is easier for this than some countries, harder than others.

Legislators are victims of the Executive Summary

Civic groups must help to educate them

Repeated contact gets name known. Government and others may then USE the group themselves.

Public awareness grows with media coverage. Public support is not always through participation – many are still reluctant.

SOS signature campaign helped measure SOS position.

EXPECTATIONS

HK people traditionally expect little from government

Little interference in either direction – non elected.

Expectations changed after 1997 – more questioning of government now

Public blame over economic downturns, SARS and Article 23. 500,000 marchers.

More issues are raising challenges now.

Street action is one method, HK has more than most, community groups are another

Demand that Government listen to community voice – participation / consultation

Government has offered HEAC but no progress yet

Expression of community views is now expected as a right

DANGERS AND PITFALLS

Trailing off of interest and member contributions

Loss of core issue focus

Lack of persistence

Inability to engage community – language, procedure, etc.

Failing to get media support / government attention

Ignorance of civic and government processes – not taught in HK schools

Written off through lack of subject knowledge, out-talked by opposition

Disingenuity and the weight of 'authority', bullying, intimidation

Keeping to schedules

Provide a positive alternative

DANGERS AND PITFALLS

Argue all sides of the subject matter

Keep facts clear and complete, remain credible

Network

Engage with other NGO's and levels of the community – business?

Act as catalyst to get ball rolling if not strong enough to complete the process

Assess strengths and weaknesses candidly and strategise accordingly.

HK Government is also new to the game

WHAT'S NEXT

SOS has come to know what it is able to achieve

SOS has joined and been joined by like minded groups such as SPH and LIM, and learned from them.

This networking strengthens our ability to tackle future shoreline campaigns

SOS will continue to assist other groups to form NGO's

SOS wants to help create a level of community involvement that is self-sustaining

SOS is happy to share its experience in the creation of a community group with students

SOS's efforts are just beginning. Our targets are to change legislation and government policy for the benefit of the community through expanded consultation and participation in the formulation and implementation of those future shoreline management policies.



THANK YOU