

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Mental Well-Being of Children and Youth in Hong Kong

Purpose

Save the Children Hong Kong is seeking proposals on innovative programmes to improve the mental well-being of children and youth in vulnerable communities in Hong Kong.

About Save the Children Hong Kong

Save the Children is the leading global independent organisation for children. Over the last 100 years, we have helped to ensure that the world's most vulnerable children survive, learn and are protected. Each year, we reach tens of millions of children in over 120 countries through our work.

As a member of the global movement, [Save the Children Hong Kong](#) was established in April 2009. Since 2018, we have been expanding our programmes in Hong Kong to better meet children's needs, and provide support to local organisations.

In 2018, Save the Children Hong Kong supported 28 projects in 10 countries around the world, as well as humanitarian responses globally. We directly helped 4,521 people locally in Hong Kong through our programmes and our work with partners.

Background on Mental Well-Being of Children and Youth

In 2018 Save the Children Hong Kong undertook an in-depth analysis on the needs of local children related to Save the Children's three breakthroughs of Learn, Survive and Be Protected. Following the social movements last year, we conducted additional research to identify any changing needs of children.

Mental health challenges for children and youth in Hong Kong is consistently highlighted as an area that requires attention. A recent study from Caritas Community Centre (Caine Road) found that nearly 30% of surveyed children in Hong Kong aged 8-14 displayed a severe level of anxiety and depression. Another study conducted by HKFYG¹ across 14 secondary schools showed 51% of students experiencing some symptoms of depression, and 34% reporting being unable to stay focused. Some students are looking for

¹ HKFYG (2019). Secondary School Students' emotional stress situation findings. <https://hkfyg.org.hk/zh/2019/11/07/青協公布「中學生情緒壓力狀況」調查結果/>

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support from their schools to help them cope with these new mental health challenges, including extra-curricular activities to help with stress-relief or a safe space to talk about their feelings and emotions.

Our research has identified a number of challenges that impact the mental well-being of children and youth:

- **Low acceptance and awareness of mental health issues**

Psychological well-being of children and adolescents is an increasing concern in Hong Kong; however, attitudes of acceptance and awareness of mental challenges and illness among the public are generally low. The early stage of life presents a vital opportunity to promote mental health and prevent mental disorders, as up to 50% of mental disorders in adults begin before the age of 14 years. Yet, the attitudes towards mental health are a barrier to care in Hong Kong. This lack of community acceptance of mental illness contributes to a reluctance to seek help early.

Teachers, parents and caregivers: Lack of awareness for mental health disorders lead to slow identification. Teachers, parents and caregivers can benefit from having more knowledge of different kinds of mental challenges, which have unique signs and symptoms and may require specialized treatment or intervention.

Children: Surveys of attitudes towards mental illness found that general acceptance is low. Younger groups (age 15-19) had the least knowledge of mental health problems compared to other age groups. Help-seeking behaviour among youth is low.

- **Low capacity of mental health services and ability to reach children in need**

In Hong Kong, the psychiatric services scatter across different government departments and are not well-coordinated. There is also a severe shortage of resources at the secondary care level, and a lack of capacity building efforts put towards primary care for children with mental health issues. Research found that children with mental health problems wait for a much longer time than adults before they get treatment, thus delaying the treatment and recovery for such children.

The decrease in trust among some youths towards public services and institutions (including schools) as a result of the recent social events also compounds the problem, as such distrust is impacting children's attitudes towards seeking help from these services. It is leading to under-reporting of psychological health needs. The power of peer support among children, built on peer support training and wellbeing self-help programmes, is crucial to support children at this time.

- **High academic pressure and parental expectations, and digital exposure add to mental stress**

The intense academic competition and a general lack of leisure and play in Hong Kong, coupled with high parental expectations and controlling parenting styles contribute to mental stress in children and youth.

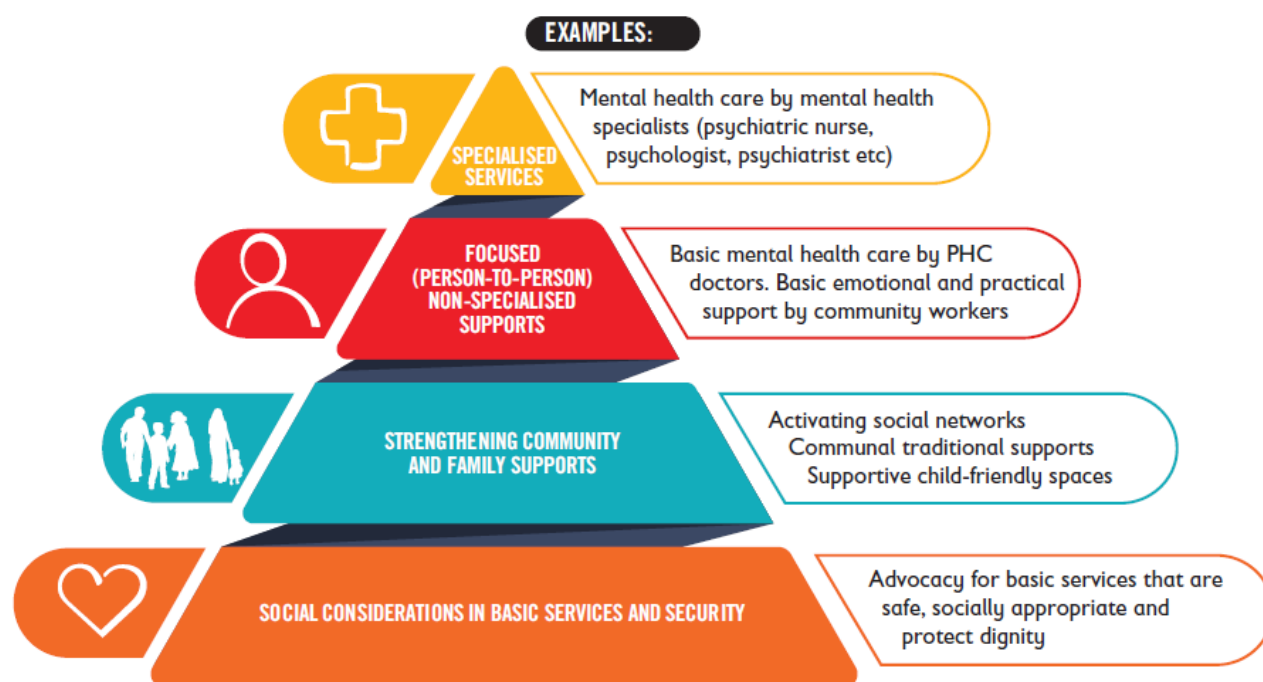
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In addition, increases in time spent on the internet and mobile devices have been linked with declines in psychosocial wellbeing and higher prevalence for depression symptoms for teens and pre-teens. A recent Hong Kong study published in the world renowned medical journal *The Lancet*² stated that spending 2 hours or more every day on socio-political news via social media was strongly associated with probable depression and suspected Post-Trauma Stress Disorder. The issue of digital exposure is now exacerbated given current school closures because of the coronavirus epidemic.

Project Scope and Target Audience

Focus areas

Save the Children uses a pyramid framework that identifies complementary, multiple layers of mental health support services to guide the selection of approaches based on the needs of a country.



PHC – Primary Health Care

Given the needs identified in Hong Kong and support already provided by other partners, Save the Children is looking for innovative programmatic interventions with the potential to deliver high impact for vulnerable children (defined by the UNCRC as under the age of 18) in **levels 2 or 3 of the pyramid**:

Level 2: Strengthening community and family supports

A key component of level 2 interventions is creating spaces and/or opportunities for children and youth to engage in play and recreational activities in a stimulating environment, so they feel safe, secure, and

² [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)33160-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)33160-5/fulltext)

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supported. This level also includes educational opportunities for online and offline interactions for peer connections. An equally important component is ensuring that parents or caregivers, and communities are also engaged wherever possible to address their own wellbeing, as well as in strategies to support their children. Some examples of programme activities at this level include:

- Peer empowerment and support programmes to enhance mental well-being
- Early childhood development or youth programmes with integrated focus on building resilience
- Digital well-being programmes to enhance social emotional well-being
- School talks and school-based programmes to promote children's resilience as well as social and emotional learning
- Capacity building for parents and teachers to promote awareness of child and youth mental health
- Youth mental health awareness campaigns that engage children and youth or are led by them

Level 3: Focused (person-to-person) non-specialised supports

At level three, Save the Children programmes aim to ensure that the wellbeing of children and communities is supported through targeted support from trained personnel using evidence-based approaches. Activities at this level are for those children and youth, as well as caregivers and community members, who continue to show signs of distress despite access to support interventions at the lower levels. Typically programming at this level would involve developing a method of identification for children who may need further support, and then working with other child protection programmes, such as case management and monitoring of children engaged in interventions, to provide support on an on-going basis. Some examples of programme activities at this level include:

- Educational sessions for caregivers, community centres personnel and teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills in identifying children who may need further specialized support
- Capacity building for social workers to deliver psychosocial interventions
- Capacity building for teachers and social workers to practice psychological first aid

Target audience

The target audience for the project should be the **most vulnerable children and families in Hong Kong**. Considerations on vulnerability include income levels, sub-populations of children and youth at higher risk of mental health issues, etc. should be included in the design of the project.

Eligibility of Applicants

- Applicants must be tax-exempt charitable institutions under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance of Hong Kong, and have at least three years of experience in providing local social services.
- Applications must be submitted in the name of the organisation. Applications submitted by corresponding service units or departments under the organisation shall not be accepted.

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- Each applicant can submit a maximum of two applications. If submitting two applications, the applications must focus on different interventions.
- Joint applications are encouraged but one organization must be identified as the project lead.

Project Size and Duration

- The amount of grant each project can apply for shall not exceed HK \$1,000,000.
- The duration of the project must not exceed 18 months.
- The funded project must commence between June and September 2020 and be completed on or before end December 2021.

Financial Proposal - What We Do Not Fund

Save the Children Hong Kong generally will not provide funding for:

- Fund-raising activities
- Organisations promoting particular political views
- Long term premises
- Individuals
- One-off events

For the purpose of this RFP, overseas programmes will not be considered.

Selection Criteria

All project proposals are evaluated based on the following selection criteria:

- Match with the focus area(s) and strength of programme design;
- Ability to address social need(s) with innovative concept(s) and effective solution(s);
- Interventions focused on supporting the most vulnerable children and youth;
- Track record of the applicant in providing the proposed or similar services;
- Sustainability and potential for further growth of the project;
- Use of funds in an appropriate and cost-effective manner;
- Comprehensive mechanism to monitor effectiveness and evaluate the success of the project, capturing learning and evidence

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RFP Instructions and Process

Responses to this RFP will involve a two-stage process.

RFP Timeline

Key Event	Date
Launch Request for Proposal – concept notes (stage 1)	23 March
Deadline of submission of concept notes	14 April 2020 at 18:00
Review concept notes	Rolling basis through 21 April 2020
Inform shortlisted organisations for stage 2 (full proposal development)	22 April 2020
For selected applicants: Deadline for submission of application form, detailed budget and log frame	13 May 2020
Review full proposal application	Rolling basis through end May 2020

Stage 1 – Concept note

In Stage 1, applicants must submit the following documents.

- The concept note in English drafted by applicant organization (Annex 1)
- The latest annual report of the organisation
- The latest audited accounts of the organisation
- The copies of the registration documents and the certificate of charity status registered under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance
- Proven records of successful implementation of similar projects

Applicants selected to proceed to Stage 2 will be notified.

Stage 2 – Full application

Stage 2 will involve a full application with budget details and log frame. Project design refinement will involve a collaborative process with Save the Children Hong Kong staff, to leverage the respective expertise of the applicant and Save the Children if applicable.

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Application Procedure

- All documents mentioned must be submitted by email to hk.program@savethechildren.org. Please include "Child Mental Health RFP" in the subject line.
- The application period is from 23 March 2020 to 14 April 2020. Closing date and time for application shall be on 14 April 2020 (Monday) at 6:00pm.
- The shortlisted applicants will be invited to fill in the application form and logical framework provided by Save the Children Hong Kong for further assessment.

Briefing Session

It is suggested that interested applicants join an [online](#) briefing session on 30th March 2020 at 2:00-3:00pm. Please register for the briefing session by completing this [form](#). Save the Children Hong Kong will videotape the briefing session and share online in case interested parties cannot join at that time.

For further enquiries, please email hk.program@savethechildren.org.

Annexes

Annex: [Concept note template](#)