



Project Khon Kaen

By Tay Jun Yang and Jacklyn Yek

Lao Tzu once said “Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; yet to teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.” Indeed, healthcare is like the fishing net and we, the fishermen, sieving through the boundless sea for sick patients. Yet, while we cannot disparage the wise words of Lao Tzu, what if the fishing net was torn? Skills can provide but definitely not sustain living without good equipment, and that is exactly the aim of our project.



Houses made of metal sheets in the slums



Living conditions in the slums

I have a dream. Martin Luther King spoke of racial equality with such fervor and passion; its effects still reverberate with resonance up till this very day. Indeed, taking pride of our excellent healthcare system, we have a dream that one day the needy can enjoy the same healthcare benefits as we do in Singapore. And hence our dream – Project Khon Kaen.

Our project targets the slum population in Thailand, often neglected and ostracised even by their very own people. Lao Tzu once said “Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; yet to teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.” Indeed, healthcare is like the fishing net and we, the fishermen, sieving through the boundless sea for sick patients. Yet, while we cannot disparage the wise words of Lao Tzu, what if the fishing net was torn? Skills can provide but definitely not sustain living without good equipment, and that is exactly the aim of our project. In the long run, we aim to provide both skills and equipment required to sustain a good healthcare system in Khon Kaen.

In targeting the chronic conditions prevalent in the slums, we seek to identify these “fish” at risk using a three-pronged approach. Essentially, this entails not only teaching one how to fish, but also mending the net and expanding fishing grounds.

In “mending the net”, we aim to close up the gaps present in the existing healthcare system of the slum population.

This is done primarily by setting up a patient database and plugging patients into the local healthcare system. Slum dwellers are often deprived of healthcare, and being nomadic further prevents them from seeking adequate medical treatment. We are hence attempting to create this database, identifying patients with the aid of fingerprinting technology, and working with the local polyclinic and hospital. This is in the hope that when seeking healthcare treatment, their medical profiles can be easily accessed, hence increasing efficiency. Furthermore, health screenings will identify patients with chronic illnesses and we can refer them to treatment; thereby preventing and/or controlling the onset of the conditions complications.

To ensure continuity and sustainability in this project, education and empowerment is the key. In collaboration with the Gerald Khoo World Harvest Foundation (WHF), we aim to provide WHF personnel with the knowledge of identifying individuals at risk of chronic diseases, and subsequently providing three-monthly follow-ups. In addition, we also seek to increase the awareness of chronic diseases amongst the slum population, so that they will be able to make lifestyle adjustments to minimise the risk of developing chronic conditions.

Finally, we hope to expand our project to other slums subsequently, thereby expanding our coverage of fishing grounds. With this, we hope to ultimately alleviate the burden

of chronic conditions in the slum populations.

Ego somnium. SMA*

If you wish to make a monetary donation – which would go to covering the costs of the health screening equipment, first aid materials, educational materials, as well as oral hygiene kits for the children of Khon Kaen, please contact our marketing director – Jasline Chua at 97466887.

Donations can be made via a cheque addressed to: Medical Society, National University of Singapore, and mailed to the following address:
NUS Medical Society,
c/o the Dean's Office,
10 Medical Drive,
Singapore 117597.

Please do help to indicate “Project Khon Kaen” on the reverse side of the cheque.

For further details, please visit our website: www.projectkhonkaen.co.cc. We thank you for your support.

* I dream