

Po Leung Kuk – Evolving into a Green Organization

Po Leung Kuk

Founded in 1878, Po Leung Kuk (“PLK”) celebrates its 131st anniversary this year. In keeping with the mission of “protecting the young and the innocent”, PLK has been providing diverse educational, social, recreational and cultural services to meet the changing needs of the community. Currently, PLK operates 235 service units, including 106 educational units, 126 social services units, 2 holiday camps and a museum, serving over 400,000 members of the public a year.

Our Green Vision

PLK, as a leading charity organization, is committed to evolving into a green organization. Environmental friendliness is a core element of PLK’s management philosophy and corporate culture. PLK has drawn up its green vision and mission, promulgated the Environmental Policy within the organization and is at different stages of integrating a spectrum of environmental-friendly initiatives into every facet of PLK’s service.

PLK strives to be the pioneer among Non-Governmental Organizations (“NGOs”) in environmental awareness and conservation; to pursue a green approach in delivering its educational, social, recreational and cultural services, to play an active part in raising environmental awareness among the public and to engage the community in environmental improvement.

PLK cares for the Hong Kong community and the ultimate building of a Green Hong Kong. The involvement of senior management, staff, students, service recipients, business partners and the general public in a wide range of environmental protection and conservation initiatives is a pivotal point of PLK’s mission: to foster the green culture in PLK and eventually across different strata of the Hong Kong community.

Our Green Strategies

To achieve the objective of becoming a green organization, PLK has devised four strategies, namely green governance, green education to PLK’s stakeholders, environmental management system and green construction and building management.

Strategy 1 – Green Governance

PLK takes the environmental responsibility seriously. PLK has set up an Environmental Protection Steering Committee (“The Committee”) which has the overall responsibility of integrating environmental considerations into our decision making process and long-term planning. The Committee is chaired by the PLK’s Chairman and comprises Directors of the Board and senior management.

The terms of reference of the Committee are as follows:

- to bring the Environmental Policy and Guidelines into regular review and refinement;
- to monitor and ensure systematic implementation of the Environmental Policy by means of setting up articulated targets;
- to develop a synchronized approach to introducing environmental-friendly practices among service units;

- to discuss, approve and review environmental initiatives;
- to ensure Kuk's compliance with its promulgated green philosophy and concept; and
- to raise awareness of environmental responsibilities and commitment among staff and the general public.

Strategy 2 – Green Education to PLK's stakeholders

PLK places a lot of emphasis on raising awareness of environmental protection and conservation and a sustainable living style among all stakeholders including Directors, staff, students, service recipients and business partners.

Strategy 2.1 - Staff Participation

Staff engagement is crucial to PLK's success. PLK circulates the policy among staff and a copy of the policy is posted up at every office and service unit. At the corporate level, staff are encouraged to follow tips for green office management including conservation of resources and waste reduction; at the individual level, tips for green shopping and green living style are disseminated to staff.

Strategy 2.2 - Green School

Nurturing the young is always the key mission of PLK. Operating a total of 106 educational units including kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, special schools and community college, PLK is committed to educating the next generation on environmental responsibility and fostering a positive attitude towards a green life. To enhance environmental awareness of over 40,000 PLK students, green elements are highlighted in four major aspects, namely environmental education plan, environmental policy, environmental management measures and greening the campus.

Environmental education plans are devised to achieve full integration of environmental education activities into the school curriculum and extra-curricular activities. In terms of the school curriculum, environmental education such as the concept of green organization, sustainable development, waste reduction and global warming are included in various learning modules, for example, Liberal Studies, Integrated Science, Geography and Moral & Civic Studies.

Environmental education is also incorporated into other learning experience. Environmental Ambassadors Scheme will be implemented in schools which involves the appointment of students as ambassadors. They will be trained to organize green activities and promote green messages. Coupled with Environmental Ambassadors Scheme, green groups, student associations, interest groups such as gardening club, environmental protection club provide other platforms for students' participation.

Sharing is an essential part of the learning process; PLK's educational units arrange visits, forum and joint environmental activities in collaboration with other schools, NGOs, government departments and the local community to encourage interaction among schools.

Environmental policy for PLK's schools is the key driver behind the environmental education plans. To attain the goal of environmental protection and education, PLK's educational units formulate their respective environmental policies which serve as a guideline to the systematic execution of their environmental protection and

conservation plan.

Environmental management measures which require the involvement of the whole unit are introduced to the daily operations of PLK schools. Scope of these measures covers waste avoidance, reduction and recycling, water saving and energy conservation, for example, the introduction of waste separation and recycle facilities and the use of energy-efficient appliances.

Greening the campus is the most conspicuous element of the green programme. By mobilizing student interest groups and teaching staff, campuses are made green by growing plants which may take various forms such as vertical greening and green roof.

Strategy 2.3 - Green Camps

PLK recognizes that it is capable of helping and benefitting the wider Hong Kong community by promoting green messages and green life style in the two camps operated by PLK, namely the PLK Pak Tam Chung Holiday Camp and the PLK Tai Tong Holiday Camp.

Receiving over 370,000 campers annually, these two camps offer an effective platform for the green message to reach out to people from all walks of life in Hong Kong. They enable the community to acquire environmental knowledge in a natural and relaxing environment. These two camps provide a wide array of green activities which have been well received by the public, for example, ecological tour, organic gardening programme, mangroves study tour and fun activities to make recycled paper. To reinforce the green elements, these two camps have developed plans to upgrade their facilities with a view to providing a total green experience to campers. Proposed new facilities include installation of wind turbine, photovoltaic system, solar water heater, energy generating bicycle, food waste decomposer and an exhibition area well-appointed with various interactive elements promoting green messages.

To ensure the continued popularity performance of the camps, PLK undertakes regular improvements to the camps' facilities and introduces new elements to the camps to meet changing needs of campers. In the immediate future, PLK will improve the sewage treatment system of PLK Pak Tam Chung Holiday Camp, develop Phase III of PLK Tai Tong Holiday Camp to increase hostel places and encompass a large scale leadership training centre, install the largest "Challenge Rope Course" in Hong Kong and keep on renovating the existing buildings in the two camps.

Strategy 3 – Environmental Management System

Environmental management system follows the principles to reduce, reuse and recycle. It comprises four major elements: resources conservation, energy saving, pollution reduction and green procurement. Articulated targets of the four elements will be set up to achieve carbon reduction. By integrating green practices into the daily operation of over 200 PLK units, PLK is able to foster a green culture and cultivate green practices at work among PLK's stakeholders.

Resources conservation involves active participation of everyone in the service unit to observe green practices. Paper saving is essential to a green operation; everyone in the service unit is advised to minimize consumption of paper by reducing printing, to

use email and Intranet for communication and to use paper on both sides and recycled paper for office photocopying. Besides, service units are advised to provide facilities to collect recyclables and install water saving devices.

Energy saving and the sustainable use of natural resources is a key issue for all service units. PLK develops a comprehensive plan to introduce a series of energy-efficient features in service units, for example, installation of energy-efficient lighting devices and air-conditioning system with an energy label, introduction of green roof and vertical greening to reduce energy consumption. Besides, PLK will implement pilot use of renewable energy in service units, for example, installation of heat shield coating, solar water heating system, solar panel and small wind turbine. At the individual level, unit users are advised to observe energy saving practices such as switching off or turning to an energy-saving mode when electrical appliances are not in use.

Pollution reduction focuses on waste management and maintaining good indoor air quality. Food waste decomposers will be installed in PLK schools and the camps operated by PLK; sorting and separation of general waste are encouraged by installing specially designed collection facilities at service units. To ensure good indoor air quality, the service units are advised to conduct regular check of the ventilation system and regular cleansing of filter of room cooler. Last but not least, compliance to the No Smoking Policy by unit users is of utmost importance in keeping the indoor air clean.

Green procurement improves PLK's environmental performance throughout the supply chain. In the procurement and supplier selection process, environmental considerations are taken into account to ensure environmental-friendly products and services are purchased. Green assessment on service and products are conducted to minimize PLK's environmental impact and promote the concept of environmental protection and conservation among PLK's business partners.

Strategy 4 – Green Construction and Building Management

PLK addresses the environmental concerns by adopting green and sustainable building practices. The concept of green construction has been integrated into the whole process from planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance stages of PLK's properties and service units. In the planning and design stage, due consideration has been given to the incorporation of renewable energy features while reduction of construction waste and the use of environmentally-friendly materials and technologies are carefully studied throughout the construction or renovation process, for example, installation of solar panels and heat shield coating where applicable. The green concept does not end with the completion of construction. In terms of facility management, PLK strives to ensure compliance with the relevant standards and codes and to devote continuous efforts to improve the overall environmental performance of its facilities, for example, tree planting or greening projects.

PLK Three-Year Green Action Plan

The funding sought from the ECF is estimated to be at HKD28,390,000 covering a total of 71 applications (Appendix A). Of the 71 applications, 2 are complex "Green" proposals (Appendix B) amounting to HKD13,500,000 which are tailored made to suit the unique nature of the two camps. These 71 projects are intended to be

implemented by phases within a span of three years.

Year 1

All projects proposed by secondary schools and camps and all energy saving related projects proposed by social services centres, primary schools, kindergartens and nurseries.

Year 2

All other projects (except those related to energy saving) proposed by primary schools, kindergartens and nurseries.

Year 3

All other projects (except those related to energy saving) proposed by social services centres.

Funding from ECF provides the indispensable impetus to PLK's evolvement into a green organization in the next three year. PLK's mission does not end with the accomplishment of the Plan. PLK will undertake continuous review of its Environmental Policy and look into possibility of future development with a view to building a green PLK and more importantly, a greener Hong Kong.

Professional Support

The Plan is a large-scale and complex one which poses a challenge to PLK, and expertise advice is pivotal to the success of The Plan. PLK wishes to seek another funding support of HKD1,300,000 from ECF for commissioning an environmental consultant to provide overall consultancy services for the 3-year period.

Works of the consultant will include:

- overviewing PLK's environmental strategies to ensure systematic and cost-effective implementation;
- assisting PLK to refine the scope and types of green initiatives;
- assisting PLK to identify cost-effective environmental enhancement measures;
- providing updated advice in the environmental aspect and monitoring progress of The Plan; and
- identifying sustainable green initiatives in the future.

In addition, in view of the complication and innovation of the environmental features proposed for the two camps, there is a need for an environmental consultant to conduct feasibility study, detail design, tendering and works supervision. PLK would also like to seek funding support of HKD1,400,000 from ECF for engaging such a consultant for a 2-year period.

The Way Forward

In keeping with our vision of evolving into a green organization and becoming the pioneer among NGOs in environmental awareness and conservation, PLK should not be complacent about what we have initiated so far. PLK fully recognizes that funding from the Environment and Conservation Fund ("ECF") is essential in taking forward the PLK Three-Year Green Action Plan ("The Plan") and enabling PLK to provide quality service in a sustainable manner and playing active part in raising environmental awareness among NGOs in Hong Kong in the future.

Benefits to the Community

PLK embraces a wide array of stakeholders and a well-developed network; funding from ECF will not only help PLK accomplish its goal and evolve into a green organization but can also bring benefits to the Hong Kong Community as a whole.

The implementation of The Plan will immediately enhance the environmental performance of PLK and help PLK contribute to the improvement of the environment. As a renowned charity organization in Hong Kong with 131 years of history, PLK's green efforts will no doubt enhance the brand image of PLK and Hong Kong NGOs as a whole.

PLK's wide coverage of stakeholders provides a powerful platform to promote green messages. Serving over 400,000 people a year through its 235 units, PLK's stakeholders cover all walks of life in the Hong Kong community with a total amount of 1.5 million people a year, including 40,000 students, 7,000 staff, 70,000 service recipients a year, 370,000 campers a year, donors, business partners, volunteers and also their family members. Their participation in various green programmes and their willingness to adopt green practices are vital to the long-term development of a green culture across various segments of the community.

PLK's Commitments

PLK takes its green mission seriously. Its endeavours to go green will gain further momentum and public support through a series of promotion campaigns, for example, green-featured fund-raising events and partnership with the media to convey green messages. Throughout the year, PLK organizes a series of charity events, the annual Gala Spectacular, The Annual Charity Ball, Charity Walk, Charity Raffle and Charity Bowling Contest are just a few examples. These well-received charity events will act as effective channels to promote green messages to participants and the public, in particular to the high-rating TV relayed programmes and the promotional messages through various prominent electronic media.

Leveraging on the wide coverage of PLK's stakeholders, PLK publicizes its green efforts through its corporate website, corporate collaterals and service network. PLK issues an Annual Report and two quarterly publications, namely The Po Leung Kuk Today and the Education Newsletter. The Po Leung Kuk Today targets a full spectrum of stakeholders including donors, service recipients, government officials, volunteers, NGOs, the media and business partners, and the Education Newsletter are distributed to over 40,000 students of PLK schools and their families. With an annual readership of about 1 million, they are effective channels to disseminate the latest development of PLK as a green organization. Besides, PLK's service units and facilities which provide service to over 70,000 recipients a year are also effective communication platform. Their notice boards, brochures and posters enable service recipients and unit users to keep abreast of PLK's latest green initiatives.

To evolve into a green organization is a long-term goal, PLK has created a new post of environmental officer to ensure the effective implementation of The Plan. Working closely with the environmental consultant, the environmental officer will coordinate the green project, identify green initiatives, monitor and review progress of green

programmes and more importantly, planning for the sustainable development of The Plan beyond the 3-year period.

Conclusion

Environmental protection and conservation has taken on an important dimension as we are facing challenges of global warming and scarcity of natural resources. PLK, a responsible charity organization and a major provider of social and educational services in Hong Kong, will spare no effort to raise the environmental awareness of the Hong Kong community and more importantly, Hong Kong status as an environmentally-friendly city.
