

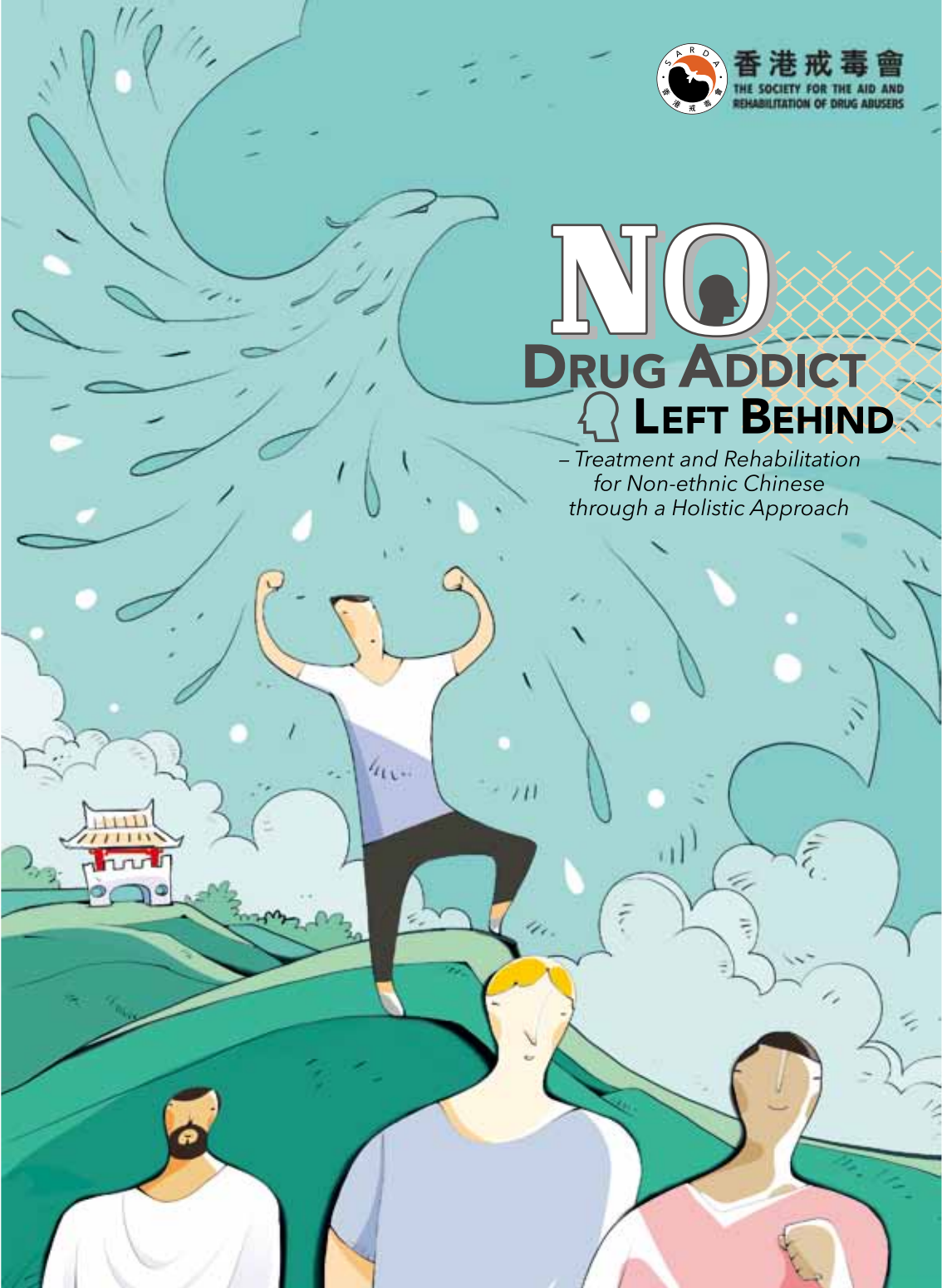


香港戒毒會

THE SOCIETY FOR THE AID AND  
REHABILITATION OF DRUG ABUSERS

# NO DRUG ADDICT LEFT BEHIND

– Treatment and Rehabilitation  
for Non-ethnic Chinese  
through a Holistic Approach



This book recorded real-life stories of eight non-ethnic Chinese rehabilitants from SARDA, who have struggled through their tough journeys from addiction to recovery, and how they had worked their way out to make changes.

SARDA provides drug treatment and rehabilitation services for helping those with drug problems, through professional teams include medical, social workers and staff teams. SARDA not only helping service users to enhance their self-esteem and build on their abilities by providing a range of training and participation activities, but also assist them to integrate into the society, rebuild their healthy and meaningful life and promote harmony and inclusion in the society.

## About the Editor

*Ms. Angelique TAM, Justice of the Peace  
Executive Director, The Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of  
Drug Abusers (SARDA)*

Before joining SARDA, Ms. TAM was a senior executive of the Swire Group and had worked in various places including Hong Kong, London and Bangkok for 20 years.

Ms. TAM was a member of the Advisory Committee on Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged of the Social Welfare Department, member of the vetting panel of The Beat Drugs Fund of the Narcotics Division, member of Post-Release Supervision Board, Observer of the Independent Police Complaints Council and member of Licensing Appeals Board of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department.

Ms. TAM graduated from the Faculty of Social Science of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and subsequently obtained her Master of Business Administration from the University of Michigan and Master of Arts from the University of Hong Kong. She had also studied at Tsinghua University, the International Christian University in Japan and the European Institute of Business Administration (INSEAD) in France. She had been awarded the Harvard University Alumni Association Scholarship to study "Strategic Perspectives in Non-profit Management" at the Harvard Business School in the United States of America in 2015.

She was a columnist in the "有戒無類" ("No drug addict left behind") of the "Sky Post" newspaper for two years. She is passionate in promoting community awareness of drug treatment and rehabilitation, anti-drug prevention education and publicity as well as the societal concern on the needs of rehabilitants and their families.

At present, she is a member of The Three-year Plan on Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Services in Hong Kong (2020-2023), Narcotics Division, Security Bureau, member of International Federation of Non-Government Organisations for the Prevention of Drug and Substance Abuse (IFNGO) Steering Committee and a member of Barristers Disciplinary Tribunal Panel.

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## Foreword 1

Diversity, inclusiveness and tolerance are the core values of our society. Over the years, the Government and various social sectors have joined hands to strive to build a caring and inclusive society and offer different types of support to non-ethnic Chinese (“NEC”) persons. On the anti-drug front, the Government assists service agencies in providing targeted anti-drug preventive education programmes, as well as treatment and rehabilitation services to address the needs of the NEC communities. As a staunch partner of the Government in the fight against drugs, the Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (“SARDA”) has also been making all-out efforts to enhance its treatment services for NEC persons.

There is no easy path to drug abstinence; and NEC drug abusers often find themselves at an even bigger disadvantage given the differences in culture, language and living habits in Hong Kong. To further reach out to NEC persons, SARDA employs NEC rehabilitants as peer counsellors to assist in carrying out anti-drug outreach, publicity and education in the community, encouraging early help seeking. Peer counsellors also aid the NEC drug abusers’ assimilation into drug treatment and rehabilitation centres. By sharing their personal rehabilitation experience, peer counsellors motivate fellow compatriots to stand firm and quit drugs.

This book chronicles the rehabilitation journeys of eight different NEC persons, whose stories give us a glimpse of the detriment of drugs and the arduousness of quitting. Drug abusers, regardless of their races and backgrounds, could suffer irreversible physical and mental damage, traumatise their families and create a host of social problems. I would like to deeply thank SARDA for providing drug abusers with comprehensive drug treatment and rehabilitation services under their “no drug abuser left behind” ideology. With the counselling and companionship of SARDA’s fellow workers, drug abusers are able to quit drugs and live a new life by dint of their own efforts and determination. I would also like to take this opportunity to encourage those who are struggling with drug abuse – please do not hesitate to seek help. Together we will join hands to build a drug-free, inclusive and healthy society.



Ms. LAW Chui Mei, Ivy, JP  
Commissioner for Narcotics

“ Diversity, inclusiveness  
and tolerance  
are the core values of our society. ”

## Foreword 2

The Government makes every effort to combat drug abuse to make Hong Kong a drug-free city. Effective implementation of the work in this area hinges on the active participation and support of voluntary organisations. Since its establishment in 1961, the Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA) has been playing a pivotal role in its fight against drugs by addressing the needs of local drug abusers with flexibility to provide comprehensive drug treatment and rehabilitation services.

Every drug addict has a different story and experience to tell. No Drug Addict Left Behind captures the stories of eight non-ethnic Chinese who were once caught in the abyss of drug abuse but managed to get out of it. Despite their differences in race, nationality, culture, language and religious background, these ex-drug users have one thing in common: a deep conviction and determination to quit drugs. Thanks to the unflagging support of SARDA, they have overcome obstacle after obstacle to reclaim their lives. Readers of this book will also be moved by the unfailing support and encouragement of their friends and families.

Drug abuse wreaks havoc on the lives of individuals, their families and society as a whole. I hope readers will be more determined than ever to stay away from drugs after reading this book. For those who are unfortunately struggling with drug addiction, I encourage them to seek assistance as soon as possible to embark on the road to rehabilitation and social integration.

I am grateful to SARDA for its drug rehabilitation services over the years that go hand in hand with the Government’s effort on the same front. I call upon all sectors of the community to express concern for ex-drug abusers on their path to rehabilitation. Show them your support as they come back from the dark side making big strides towards a bright future.



Dr. CHIU Pui Yin, Amy, JP  
Controller, Regulatory Affairs,  
Department of Health

“ The Government makes  
every effort to combat drug abuse  
to make Hong Kong a drug-free city. ”

## Foreword 3

The path to giving up drugs and reintegrating into society is not an easy one. This book is a collection of the true stories of eight non-ethnic Chinese ex-addicts who overcame all kinds of obstacles and struggled their way to rehabilitation, with the assistance of SARDA's social workers. In addition to fighting against physical discomfort and warding off drug temptations, non-ethnic Chinese under drug treatment also have to break through their psychological barrier in an unfamiliar language and cultural setting. They need immense perseverance and willpower, support and acceptance from their families, as well as understanding and support from those who care about them.

Over the past 60 years, SARDA has been supporting drug addicts along the principle of "No Drug Addict Left Behind". All drug addicts, regardless of age, sex, religious belief or ethnicity, have the chance for treatment and renewal in life. The care and concern of fellow workers in SARDA and their professional counselling service for ex-drug addicts played a pivotal part in the stories of the eight non-ethnic Chinese rehabilitants. The stories shared in this book also remind readers the harms brought by drugs and the importance of accepting rehabilitated ex-drug addicts.

Rehabilitation is not an easy process and that is what makes it priceless. The eight stories are not only an inspiration to all rehabilitants, but also a recognition of SARDA's work in drug abuse rehabilitation. They are also an encouragement to people undergoing hardship. Life is full of challenges. By facing challenges with positivity, I believe we will be able to make the same discovery as the hero of the first story did, "one would find oneself capable of flying higher and farther". I wish the heroes of the eight stories would continue to shine in life and shine on the life of others too, spreading the message across to more non-ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong about the harm of drugs and encouraging drug addicts to take their first steps towards a drug-free life for both themselves and their families.



Mr. Gordon LEUNG, JP  
Director of Social Welfare

“ Encouraging drug addicts  
to take their first steps  
towards a drug-free life ”

## Foreword 4

The desire for companionship is a universal human trait. We long for our loved ones to share our joys and sorrows, lift us up when we flounder, and rekindle our self-confidence when our setbacks and insecurities eat us up. Not everyone, however, has the privilege of having a support network. And when mired in isolation and despair, people are more likely to stumble into drugs and other forms of escape.

Although ethnic minorities (EMs) make up a sizable eight per cent of the population in Hong Kong, most continue to be excluded from equal access to education, employment and public services, owing to entrenched language barriers and cultural differences. In the unfortunate event of developing a drug addiction, they become further alienated and stigmatised, subsisting at the margins of society. But thanks to SARDA who has served the local community for years and sees no colour, race or religion, many have found their way out of drug abuse, regardless of where they come from. This book features some of their empowering stories, and will strike a chord with anyone who has been dispirited by the trials and tribulations of life.

The wonder of nature lies in the very diversity of its inhabitants and the harmony with which they thrive and prosper. There is no reason our society shouldn't be the same and ensure nobody is left behind. When prejudice and mistrust give way to empathy and understanding, EM communities, including people affected by drug addictions, will secure the support they need to build a dignified and fulfilling life. From this moment on, let us all do our part in creating a world that values diversity, inclusion and equality.



Mr. CHU Man Kin, Ricky  
Chairperson of Equal Opportunities Commission

“ Thanks to SARDA  
who has served the local community  
for years and .....  
regardless of where they come from. ”

## Foreword 5

Combating drug addiction across generations with many successes, SARDA celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Looking back over the years, SARDA has steadfastly upheld the spirit of “No Drug Addict Left Behind”. Not only has it provided treatment and rehabilitation services for all kinds of drug abusers, but it has also been adapting to changes in the evolving needs of society, by constantly developing and improving its diversified range of services based on medical and social counselling. These services are delivered through four drug treatment and rehabilitation centers, four social service centers, five halfway houses and many methadone clinics providing counselling services. All these services have helped a countless number of people over the years, enabling many families to end their sufferings resulting from drug-related problems. Among them, many of the cases are non-ethnic Chinese.

Since September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, the Executive Director of SARDA, Ms. Angelique Tam, has written 95 uplifting articles in the ‘Sky Post’ newspaper in her column “No Drug Addict Left Behind”, based on real cases provided by her frontline colleagues. The column has attracted overwhelmingly positive responses. Through her articles, readers have obtained an understanding of the work of SARDA, as well as realize that these addicts, including those with an ethnic minority background, can change and rebuild their lives with some help. They can turn their lives from darkness to light, and contribute meaningfully to the community. Some readers even call SARDA to enquire about our services.

SARDA’s book “No Addict Left Behind”, features cases of non-ethnic Chinese drug users with real-life successful rehabilitation stories. These stories convey how lost they were, and how much pain and hardship they experienced during their addictions. They also tell the stories of how they did not give up and became determined, and with the help from the social worker, they rebuilt their lives under tremendous pressure, or how they rejoined their family after their rehabilitations, or how they volunteered to help others and contributed to their communities. The difficult journeys in their lives have paved the way to wisdom and resolve, for them to live their lives to their fullest.

This book serves as a record of their courageous and inspirational rehabilitation stories. It is a way to recognize and pay respect to these remarkable characters who have worked tremendously hard to move forward to rebuild their lives. I also hope that this book can help to enhance the understanding and acceptance of non-ethnic Chinese drug rehabilitants in our society, as well as promoting anti-drug and addiction prevention education.



Mr. Raymond CHOW, JP  
Chairman of Executive Director, SARDA

“To enhance  
the understanding and  
acceptance of  
non-Chinese drug rehabilitants”

## Foreword 6

Ethnic minorities have been living in Hong Kong for a long time, but they are often neglected and marginalized by the mainstream society. Just like all of us, they have to face various daily life issues including job seeking, family relations and education for their children, yet with fewer resources and much discrimination. It is good that the government has, in the recent decade, allocated more resources for ethnic minority groups and more voluntary organizations are now taking a more active role in helping them. With regard of anti-drug campaign, various treatment and rehabilitation service providers are offering services dedicated to South-Asian ethnic groups. SARDA is one of the first organizations to launch these services. Ms. Angelique TAM, Executive Director of SARDA and editor of the book, is the leader of the project that introduces rehabilitation services for Non-Chinese residents. With her leadership, and the support of the Executive Committee members and her Team, SARDA has made important contributions to the community. Her excellent performance has earned her the honor of being appointed as a Justice of the Peace.

Besides being an expert in the anti-drug and rehabilitation services, Ms. TAM is also a passionate columnist. Over the years, she has shared real-life stories of drug users, including both successful and unsuccessful cases, as well as their struggles and changes. Her writing has radiated tremendous amounts of enthusiasm, sincerity and optimism which touched the hearts of readers. In the book, she did not simply tell the stories of drug rehabilitation. The touching stories also marked the milestone in the development of drug treatment services for ethnic minority groups. In addition, the book is a collection of qualitative data exceptionally valuable for future research. Its second edition is good news, as it will benefit more readers.

“No Drug Addict Left Behind” is virtually a core value of drug rehabilitation service.



Prof. CHEUNG Yuet Wah, PhD, MH, JP  
Distinguished Professor and Head of Department of Sociology,  
Hong Kong Shue Yan University

Member of Executive Committee and Chairman of  
Research Committee of SARDA

Chairman of Sub-committee of Treatment and Rehabilitation  
of Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN)

“The touching stories  
also marked the milestone in the development  
of drug treatment services”

## Foreword 7

First of all, let me say hello to all readers, and express my heartfelt thanks to SARDA for their invitation, as well as gratitude to the publishing team of this book for their creativity and professionalism.

Humans have superior intellects over animals with a spiritual capacity, which comes with a moral responsibility to build a better society and to advance the state of human existence.

Such responsibility or mission to human civilizations may seem like empty dogma or inspirational expressions, which can be very detached from the day-to-day hustle and bustle of life. Such ideals can be very un-related to reality.

However, implementations of such societal ideals can be founded in our daily lives, manifested through mundane little things, which are the characteristic of an advanced and civil society. Without being deliberate nor the need to be told, un-announced, people would naturally follow their moral compass and display humanity when opportunities arise. The moral and civic code governing human behaviour is as natural as the sun shining upon the earth during every day.

To promote such societal ideals and civility, one needs to understand the human nature and constantly reminding oneself of its weaknesses. Discrimination is common in society, which is a kind of human flaws, but why?

We all have a dark side as well as impulses to do evil. In the process of one's psychological growth, one must explore one's darkest inner self in order to understand it, mitigate it, and to control it.

One needs to face one's darkness in order to transcend above it. However, it is a painful process which people would tend to avoid. Although such mindset is part of a self-defense mechanism in our psychology, but ignoring this darkness could nurture the seed of discrimination.

While we attempt to live a moral life and setting aside our darkness, our spitefulness and malevolence would end up being directed to those whom we perceive as different and weak, justified by blaming them to be deserving of our contempt. Then we ignore their pleading, and we do not respond to their outcry.

This book is a precious opportunity for readers to learn the stories of ethnic minorities in their rehabilitation from drug addiction. Through their stories, the reader can break out of their rigid stereotypes of the ethnic minorities and be closer with the truth.

Only those who respects and faces the facts can get closer to the truth.



Ms. HO Nim Chee, Annie  
Clinical Psychologist

“The reader can break out of  
their rigid stereotypes of  
the ethnic minorities”

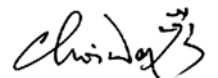
## Words of the Translator

It has been an eye-opening journey for me to study these 8 real-life successes stories and think through what these characters must have gone through in their remarkable journeys. When I read about Ah-Yong's heart-wrenching desperation, I could not help but think that if I am in his situation, I would probably try to end my life as well. When I read about Kazy's courage and how he has found his mission in life, I just have the utmost respect for him. I am sure he would continue to inspire many others, like Thapa in the book. These stories are very human stories of hardship, courage, growth, reconciliation and love. I am heartened and humbled by them.

It is only normal to feel lost at times, and I believe we all need help from others at some points in our lives. All the stories in the book show the amazing work done by the social workers and the people of SARDA. Methadone and science play a role, but I think it is the human touch, the perseverance of the staffs in the various SARDA centers, in how they care for the patients and their family, are the absolute key to the success of their recovery. They are literally saving lives and families. SARDA's story needs to be better heard. The journey of rehabilitation is already very hard, and it is even more difficult for addicts with an ethnic minorities background due to discrimination.

In the corporate world, there have been many campaigns led by international firms to raise the awareness of discrimination in general, and more specifically and typically focused on gender inequality and LGBT. The stories in this book also show the goal of building an inclusive society here in Hong Kong is far from being reached. We may look at the recent “Black Lives Matter” movement in the US and feel that it is irrelevant to us in Hong Kong, while we politely distance ourselves from new immigrants making a living in Hong Kong for years as cleaners or construction workers etc. We don't even know or care enough about the left-behind families of our domestic helper at home. Discrimination can be subtle and we ourselves can be oblivious to our own prejudice and indifference. Everyone has a part to play to pursue this goal of betterment of our society through the elimination of discrimination. We just need to care more.

These real-life stories are more than examples. They are beacons of hope as they show what can be achieved if people are determined enough with the right support. So I sincerely wish that my translation of these remarkable stories can help someone out there. You are not alone! I also hope this book can contribute to building a more caring community around us.



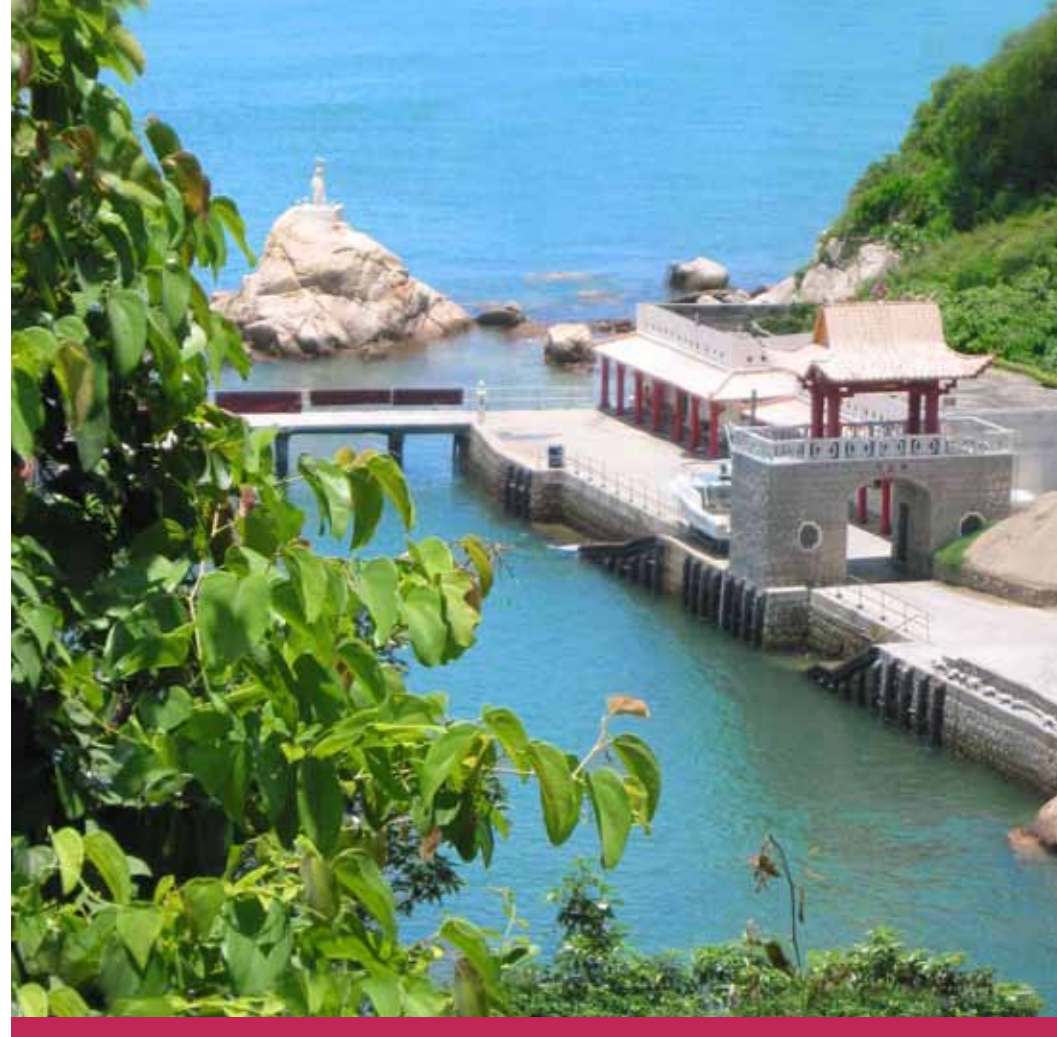
Mr. Aaron CHOI

Aaron Choi 蔡昀 was born in Hong Kong but spent his formative years in England. He has been working in the Finance industry since he came back to Hong Kong in 1994, at the same time pursuing many diverse interests and has always been active in volunteering. He is naturally curious and forever wants to learn. He firmly believes in contributing to a better society by helping others.

## Editor's Note

Since 2011, I had been sharing true stories of drug treatment and rehabilitation with readers on Sky Post every week for almost two years, I am really grateful to Sky Post. We named our book “No Drug Addict Left Behind” taking on the essence of the Confucianism – “In teaching, there should be no distinction of classes”. Regardless of age, gender, religion or ethnicity, everyone has the opportunity to receive treatment and rebuild their lives. I was much encouraged by the feedbacks to my column from different sectors, our colleagues and the service users, which led to the “birth” of this book.

Drug problem affects all levels in our society. Hong Kong is a diverse city, with the number of ethnic minorities accounting for around 8% of the total population and representing a 3%<sup>1</sup> increase when compared to the result of 10 years ago, according to the 2016 Population By-census. The



2019 figures provided by the Central Registry of Drug Abuse showed that non-Chinese drug abusers represented 11.3% of the total drug addict population, comparing to 7.9% in 2014, an increase of over 3%<sup>2</sup> was recorded in 4 years. Apart from serving local drug abusers, SARDA is one of the few organization in Hong Kong providing treatment for non-ethnic Chinese residents and has served people of different nationalities including those from Nepal, Vietnam,

Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States.

Ethnic minorities are the “minorities” of the underprivileged, and it is a lonely and helpless to rehabilitation path for them. This book introduces 8 successful cases of non-ethnic Chinese drug abusers to raise the awareness of the society on their needs. They were interviewed and the stories were

written in first person for the readers to easily understand their experiences and transformations. I would like to express my gratitude to all of them for sharing their stories, as well as to my editorial board.

We recognise the courage of the Hong Kong people who are facing numerous changes and challenges in the society. Some of these challenges are particular related to hidden drug abuse, changing drug abuse population to the youth, the prevalent abuse of psychotropic substance as well as the increase number of drugs taking among non-ethnic Chinese people. We have to work with the government and different stakeholders to face up the challenges. I believe, similar to the successful rehabilitation cases mentioned in our book, our effort will eventually pay off.

Lastly, I would like to thank our guests for their time to write the foreword for our book, our board members who selflessly guide and uplift me, the support of various government departments and different sectors of our society, as well as the efforts and professional work and team spirit of all our colleagues and volunteers. Thank you for working with SARDA to build a harmonious and healthy society.

Ms. Angelique TAM, JP  
Executive Director  
The Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of  
Drug Abusers (SARDA)

<sup>1</sup> Hong Kong 2016 Population By-census <sup>2</sup> Central Registry of Drug Abuse, Narcotic Division



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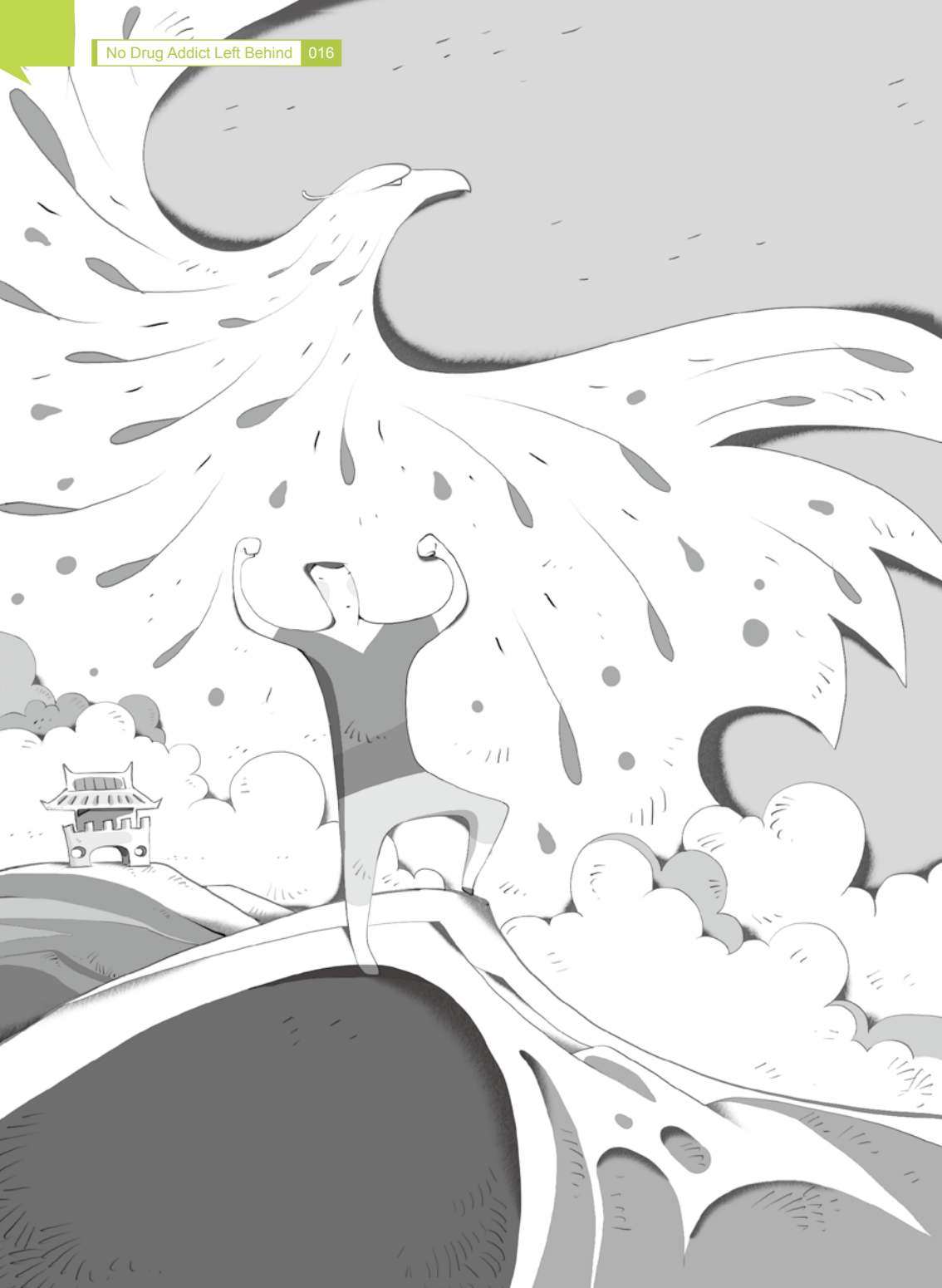
## Part One

### Eight rehabilitation Stories of Non-ethnic Chinese

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From darkness to light, from solitude to friendship,  
from uncertainties to changes, from giving up to learning,  
from recipient to giver, these stories were told by several people  
who overcame their hurdles, inspired others,  
changed their own lives and started anew.

---



Story

1

## An old Eagle with a broken wing

*Only after an exhausting struggle,  
I realise I am capable of fly higher and farther.*

Legend has it that an eagle can live a life spanning seventy years, but when it reaches the age of 40, its physical state would start to deteriorate. Those once sharp claws would become blunt and clumsy, its beak begins to become long and bent. Its wings feel too heavy to take flight. So the eagle now faces a choice: either it lets its body ages to death, or it can fly up to the top of the hill, hides in solitude, enduring the pain as its sheds its venerable beak, claws and feathers, while waiting for their replacement newly grown. Then and only then, the reborn body would allow the eagle to soar up to the sky once again.

David (pseudonym) is such one old eagle. He is a Brit. Fascinated by this dynamic city, he was determined to stay and develop his career and lived here in Hong Kong. However, drugs found him, and utterly destroyed his dream. So he faced a choice: he can stay and get off the drugs, or he can run off and continue to wreck his life through drug addiction. With nothing to lose, at the end he decided to go to Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre operated by the Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA). In this completely new and strange environment, he re-invented himself.



## It all started with “Ice”

To me, Hong Kong was love at first sight. The city never sleeps. Living in such colourful place with the sub-tropical weather is so dazzling. Originally, I was passionate about my work, and I dreamed about making a great life here. At the time, it had never occurred to me that ‘Ice’ (Crystal Methamphetamine) can be so terrifying.

In the beginning, it was all for fun and it didn’t prevent me from living and working as usual. After a while, before I recognised it, my behaviour and mood became erratic and unstable. Somehow I became unable to deliver the promises I made at work, so eventually I was fired and lost the ability to support myself financially. The most



surprising and terrifying thing about it was that I did not consider that an issue, as I continued to consume ‘Ice’ as if I need it like the way I need air to breathe. Then I did everything I could possibly do, to meet new people, with the sole aim to fraud them for their money. I even resorted to stealing.

All of a sudden without knowing how, I became this un-reliable, greedy, selfish, dreamless and heartless person.

## Two choices: run away or face it

Actually at the time, I did recognise that I have to change somehow, but I felt so helpless about it. Then I stumbled into the website of SARDA and saw a

glimpse of light. I thought there was no harm to give it a try. So I enrolled in the “Project SARDA” programme at Shek Kwu Chau. The programme

## Reported drug abusers by race

Race \ Year	2017		2018		2019		2019 first three quarters		2020 first three quarters	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Chinese	6,102	89.0	5,979	89.0	4,908	88.7	4,151	89.2	3,913	89.6
Non-Chinese	756	11.0	741	11.0	623	11.3	501	10.8	453	10.4
Nepalese	275	4.0	261	3.9	230	4.2	190	4.1	176	4.0
Indian/ Pakistani/ Bangladeshi/ Sri Lankan	212	3.1	206	3.1	180	3.3	128	2.8	114	2.6
Vietnamese	166	2.4	138	2.1	112	2.0	96	2.1	94	2.2
British	8	0.1	14	0.2	8	0.1	14	0.3	12	0.3
Filipino	14	0.2	18	0.3	14	0.3	6	0.1	11	0.3
Others	81	1.2	104	1.5	79	1.4	67	1.4	46	1.1
Total	6,858	100.0	6,720	100.0	5,531	100.0	4,652	100.0	4,366	100.0

Source: Central Registry of Drug Abuse, Narcotic Division



is designed solely for young men who suffer from psychotropic substance abuse issues. I ended up staying for 7 months. The early days were difficult, as I was the odd foreigner who could not speak the local language. I had no ideas what was happening every day in the Centre as I rarely talked to others, which was depressing. And I kept asking myself whether I should just leave. I remember a social worker came to see me and asked:

“Don’t you like Hong Kong?”

“Would you want to stay in Hong Kong after leaving the Centre one day?”

“Do you always just try to run away from your problems?”

Of course the answers to those questions were crystal clear to me. I really hope to stay in Hong Kong with a fresh start. But it was tough for me to live in this place where I couldn’t talk to anyone. Then she encouraged me to make some changes, try something new. Eventually, she convinced me to stay. Then I made up my mind to work on a new goal: I wanted to learn Cantonese, properly.

## Carmen opened my heart and let me fit into the life here

Then in the days after, this social worker and other staff helped me to develop different channels of communications, and created opportunities for me to interact with other residents, and learn Cantonese. I remembered those small talks started with each other’s favourite food. Then the staff asked me to look after a dog sent here by LAP (Lifelong Animal Protection Charity). It was a black dog named Carmen. She was so insecure that she would often try to bite new-

comers. I got a lot of help and support from the social worker, staff and other residents in taking care of Carmen. Then I surprised everyone by becoming Carmen’s friend in the shortest period of time among other residents. The two of us became inseparable. And thanks to Carmen, her presence made it easier for me to strike a conversation with others. I began to receive encouragement and acceptance from the people around me, and fit into the life in the Centre.

## Project SARDA

“Project SARDA” was launched at Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre in August 2010. In this project, 6-12 months of free comprehensive treatment will be provided for young males aged 18 or above. Most of the clients are referred by Probation Officers of Social Welfare Department, social workers of Counselling Centre for Psychotropic Substance Abusers (CCPSA) and other voluntary agencies. “Project SARDA” is characterised by 5 developmental stages including (1) Detoxification stage (2) Assimilation stage (3) Growth stage, (4) Change stage and (5) Care stage. This project focuses on in-depth individual counselling and helps residents to improve their self-reflection and sense of responsibility. Moreover, it emphasises job skills training programmes such as Painter & Decorator Course, Joiner Course, Bricklayer and Plaster Course. Residents are arranged to attend accreditation examinations administered by the Construction Industry Council. These vocational training courses aim to enhance their competitiveness and help them reintegrate into the society.



## New experiences had uncovered my potential

The Centre provided me with ample opportunities to try something different. I enrolled in a series of courses and activities which were parts of the “Project SARDA” programme, like a painting class certified by the Construction Industry Training Board in Hong Kong. I also joined a band and the Centre’s long-distance running team. Having a go at some new experiences had made me realise that I actually had un-tapped potentials that I was never aware of previously. I was surprised to find my persistence as I insisted to run every day when I was training for long-distance running, which quickly boosted my physical abilities. I knew nothing about paint-work but after the classes, I realised that I could do a decent job with it. Joining the band and giving performance allowed me to discover that I could mingle well with other residents, while the music put me in a better mood and satisfied my new found artistic inclination. Then closer to the date of leaving the Centre, I was selected to participate in a 18 days outward bound course. To me, the physical challenge was secondary to the challenge to communicate well with others. It was like a test of everything I had learnt in the past 6 months in the Centre, my patience, humility and perseverance. In the process, I had rebuilt my self-confidence, and learnt to face my issues and emotional turmoil, and not run away from them.

Looking back at the 7 months I spent in the Centre, there were different kinds of challenges. The difference in language, habits, background and culture between me and others, had compelled me to constantly re-value

my thoughts and feelings, and to refine my expression and behaviour. I understand the key for me to maintain a healthy life from this point onwards, is to establish a new set of attitudes and values, to completely revamp the life-style I used to have. My drug addiction days represented a low point, a failure and lost time of my life. I need to remind myself and re-examine those darker days, admit the failure of my past, in order to re-build my life with courage and perseverance.

Once the social worker came with me for my check-up. During lunch, she encouraged me to order in Cantonese. I casually just yelled “Chicken salad please” in Cantonese which won the applause by the restaurant staff. Deep in my heart, I am very aware what I have mastered in Shek Kwu Chau is way beyond language skills.





## Would I be able to stretch my wings and fly high?

After Shek Kwu Chau, I was admitted to a halfway house also run by SARDA. I tried hard to adjust to my new life, searching for work, actively talking to other people living there. Initially I was dirt poor and relied on 4000 dollars wired to me by my family overseas. I knew the beginning would be tough for every endeavours, so I had to bite the bullet and used this money wisely before my payday. At the time, I spent as little as I can, I ate barely a bun for breakfast before I went to work. I cherished the opportunity to be employed, and longed for having a stable income. When I looked back how I used to do anything for money, I realized I was a totally different person then. I remained actively engaged in the various activities of SARDA, particularly the practice in the band. Through music, we in the band became close, and had a positive influence on each other. When I put myself into the music whole-heartedly, I found new strength and confidence in myself. That told me something: I can shake off the strangle-hold of drugs and stretch my wings. What's a wonderful world!

I realise the road ahead remains long and tough. The temptation of drugs did come back to haunt me at some point, but I reminded myself about what I have learnt and how I have grown from my experience in the Centre, the support and encouragement I got from the social worker, staff and fellow residents there. These people care

so much about me, so I simply just cannot let them down. I also cherish my days in the halfway house. They help to strengthen my resolve, which empowers me to get further in life in the future.

### Epilogue

One does need courage and persistence to re-shape one's life. It means one has to leave one's familiar comfort zone, to embark on a journey to the unknown future. Nobody is exempted from the trials of life, but after getting it through, one would find oneself capable of flying higher and farther.

David is developing his career in music performance. He can now fly over the blue sky like an eagle with freedom.



Story

2

## Metamorphosis into a Butterfly

*He radically changed his life and found happiness. Then he dedicated his life to help his fellow countrymen.*

During one's moment of ultimate despair, is death the only way out? How did he, a chronic drug addict by the name of "Ah Yong", shake off the darkness and break free?

A faithful day 9 years ago would have been the last day of Ah Yong's life. At the time, he lost the closest person in his life, had a terrible relationship with his family, and he could not shake off his drug addiction. He was convinced that there was nothing in life worth living for. So he brought himself a huge amount of drugs, climbed up to the rooftop of a 40-floors building. He simply wanted to get high for the last time before taking his own life.



## Where am I from?

I am a refugee from Vietnam. The Vietnam War had driven a lot of people to flee the country out of fear. Throughout the seventies, many came to Hong Kong to seek refuge and a stable life. I was one of them. It was 1986, and I was 19. I came to Hong Kong as a stowaway, longing for a better future. Two years later, I was classified as a political refugee and was transferred from a closed camp to an open camp. That meant I was allowed to visit other places in Hong Kong during designated hours. By day, I worked in a weaving factory in Kwai Chung. By night, I returned to the refugee camp.

I had absolutely no knowledge of Cantonese and was unable to fit in with the other people in Hong Kong. So I rarely interacted with anyone outside

the camp. Life in the camp was very confined and boring, with a lack of options for entertainment. At one point I found out someone was taking drugs in the camp and I realised how happy and relaxed they looked. So I gave it a try and instantly I fell in love with the feeling of letting go and how the day passed by easily as I chilled out with the help of drugs. Since then, I had totally succumbed to the mystical power of drugs which imprisoned me like a cage from which I could never escape.

AH YUNG  
Vietnamese  
51 years old

## Drugs was my companion for twenty years

When I was in Vietnam, fellow countrymen living overseas used to send me all kinds of scenic photos

of their new homes. It really led me to think that “the grass is always greener on the other side”. But in

## Reported heroin and psychotropic substance abusers by race

Type of drugs/ Race	2017		2018		2019		2019 first three quarters		2020 first three quarters	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Heroin</b>										
Chinese	3,176	85.5	3,085	85.6	2,385	84.0	2,022	85.0	2,043	85.4
Non-Chinese	537	14.5	519	14.4	454	16.0	356	15.0	350	14.6
Sub-total	3,713	100.0	3,604	100.0	2,839	100.0	2,378	100.0	2,393	100.0
<b>Psychotropic substance</b>										
Chinese	3,763	92.3	3,687	92.5	3,140	92.2	2,660	92.4	2,328	92.6
Non-Chinese	312	7.7	299	7.5	267	7.8	220	7.6	187	7.4
Sub-total	4,075	100.0	3,986	100.0	3,407	100.0	2,880	100.0	2,515	100.0

Source: Central Registry of Drug Abuse, Narcotics Division



reality, in my twenty years in Hong Kong, I had hardly been to anywhere. My life revolved around drugs. For the sake of feeding my addiction, I did everything I could possibly do to get my hands on some money. I took drugs, broke the law, went to jail. Then I was released, took drugs and repeated the same cycle. Apart from the refugee camp, I spent most of my time in either jail or rehabilitation centres. It was only until my daughter was born after I got married, I stopped engaging in criminal activities. But I was still unable to shake off my drugs addiction. In the span of ten years or more, I voluntarily admitted myself to the rehabilitation centres for twenty times, but each time I failed to succeed in ridding myself of the addiction. I was like the main character in “The boy who cried wolf”. Every time I told my wife that I was determined to shake off my addiction as I signed up in the rehabilitation centres, I always ended up quitting before completing the programme and took up drugs again. Time and time again, I failed my already disappointed family.

### The day of despair

In 2011, I was going through the lowest point of my life, I almost took the road of no return.

Because of drugs, I often got into a fight with my wife, and my relationship with my daughter was very strained. Taking drugs was like a toxic affair intruding and ruining my family. I eventually moved out of my home after one such fight with my wife. The worst thing about it was that every time I ran into my daughter on the street, she would keep her head

### Words from mum

In my loneliest moment, I received a piece of bad news from home. My sister who had been suffering from illness decided that she couldn't take it anymore and committed suicide. I hurried back to Vietnam to attend her funeral. During the funeral, my 80 years old mum came to me and said, “Ah Yong, you are my only son. I am old and I shall be gone soon. I really hope that I can see you change, or I would not be able to die in peace.” I was so ridden with guilt after hearing this from my mum. Then I came back to Hong Kong, thinking about how my father died young, and now my sister was gone, leaving behind my mum and me, separated afar. The series of mishaps had led me to feel nothing but hopelessness and despair. I lived under a flyover for half a year without any purpose in life. So on that one particular day, I chose to end my life. I went up to the rooftop of a 40 storeys building, injected myself with a large dose of drugs to get high for the last time, then I just made the leap... But as it turned out that, I was so overdosed that I ended up falling on my back. When I eventually woke up, I was lying flat on the rooftop, looking at the sky and saw the face of my mum in the clouds. Her words came back to me again. It was like an epiphany or a strong wake-up call. I decided that, since I failed to kill myself, from now on I must live my life to the full. At that moment, I became determined as ever to get rid of my drug addiction. I decided that it was time to really change for good.



down and pretended she didn't know me. That really hurt but I was unable to do anything about it. As my mood worsened, I just ended up taking more

drugs more frequently. I even mixed heroin with midazolam and injected them together, which put me in a deranged and confused state of mind.

## My 21<sup>st</sup> admission to Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre

In 2014, for the 21<sup>st</sup> time, I was admitted to the Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre. I never completed the programme during my previous stays, but this time I was determined to stick to it and see it through. I was and still am extremely grateful to the Centre who gave me another chance, even though I behaved and performed badly so many times prior. The social workers and staff in the Centre remained supportive to me, guided me throughout the process. They encouraged me by

explaining to me that it did not matter how long I had been taking drugs, there would always be the possibility of change which I should never give up. There was some staff member who themselves used to be addicts, who shared their experiences with me. That made me realise that I could turn from someone who needed help from others into someone who can help others. This time I stayed in the Centre for 3 months. Finally, I managed to complete the entire treatment and rehabilitation programme.

## The Halfway House has changed my life

After I completed the programme, the social worker encouraged me to enrol into a Halfway House, where I learned how to get along with others and get an appreciation of what it is like to live a normal life. I tried to take charge of my life by giving it some structure and discipline. The drug-free days of living with others not only helped to reinforce my newly formed

discipline, it also prepared me to re-integrate into our society. During my stay in the Halfway House, the social worker encouraged me to participate in various activities in the centre, e.g. the band, the volunteering etc. I started to develop my hobbies and expanded my social circle, which gave me a social life which was very positive. I started to care about other people, and in

## + Percentage of Chinese and Non-ethnic Chinese residing in four centres operated by SARDA

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020
Race	%	%	%	% first three quarters
Chinese	88.2	89.8	87.5	86.7
Non-ethnic Chinese	11.8	10.2	12.5	13.3



return, I felt accepted by others as a Vietnamese. This was the first time in over twenty years that I believed I am truly part of the Hong Kong society.

My mum and daughter, and my ex-wife began to have some confidence in me after they recognised how I had been changing. So we started to have more contacts than before. Nowadays, I would have dim sum with my daughter every month, and she would always give me a hug. My current girlfriend is very supportive. I have even started working part-time in the methadone clinic as peer counsellor and as a translator for fellow Vietnamese, helping the social workers there to understand their needs and help the addicts as someone who has gone through what they are going through.

### Never give up: Metamorphosis and turn into a butterfly

When I was standing on the rooftop of a 40-storeys high building that day, I was a helpless addict back then. Now I have a lot going in my life. I am

grateful that I have not given up my life. "Cherish those around you, and keep at it" has become my new motto. For the sake of happiness of myself and those around me, I shall continue to keep at it, firmly.

### Epilogue

When one becomes an addict, the whole family suffers. Ah Yong from Vietnam has his family torn apart because of drugs, and he almost ended his life. Then he went through rehabilitation and won back his self-esteem, trust and understandings from his family. Now he had transformed himself and found happiness. Then he devoted himself to help his fellow countrymen. He is a shining example that if one does not give up, one can bounce back from the most desperate situation.

### + Percentage between Chinese and Non-ethnic Chinese receiving Methadone Treatment Programme Counselling Service in SARDA

	Year	2017	2018	2019	2020
Race		%	%	%	% first three quarters
Chinese		88	81	86	85
Non-ethnic Chinese		12	19	14	15



Story

3

## "Reaching for the Stars" - Embark on a Career of Social Worker

*"Land needs to be painstakingly farmed;  
knowledge needs to be rigorously studied."*

Kazy is a Nepalese studying for the Higher Diploma in Social Work at Caritas Institute of Higher Education. He was 38 years old at that time, picking up his long left-behind school bag from 20 years ago. His tanned body shows off the natural and brawny physique typical of a Nepalese. Together with his gentle and kind demeanour and the friendliest smile, he really stands out from his peers of local students mostly in their twenties.

In the beginning, Kazy took marijuana and cough syrup. Then he moved onto heroin and couldn't get enough of it. He was admitted to the Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre for drug treatment and rehabilitation. He had come out of the lowest point of his life and emerged on a journey of recovery and re-birth.



My name is Basnet Pankaj (Kazy), I am a Peer Counsellor working in SARDA. At the same time, I am a year 1 student in the Department of Social Work at college. It has been 20 years since I quit school and now, I have enrolled in a course on Social Work. Here I would like to share my past and my story in how I get to where I am today.



## Start of the fall

I was born in Hong Kong and my father was a Gurkha. When I was young, I used to shuttle between Hong Kong and Nepal, until I finally settled in Hong Kong at the age of 16. I was then schooled in the Shek Kong Barracks. It was during that year I became close with a classmate who took drugs. He was always telling me good things about getting high on cough syrup. Driven by a growing curiosity, I gave it a try, as well as marijuana. Then he introduced me to heroin. At first, I thought I was just trying it out, and it never occurred to me that it would have such a destructive effect on me and how I would completely change to a different person after a few months.

The addiction had such a stranglehold on me that I could not stay away from it, while I gradually distanced myself from my best friends and even my family.

While I did my best to act normally in front of co-workers and friends, I became a horrible person when I returned home from work. I was rebellious. I knew I was hurtful to myself, my family who loved me and my close friends. Drugs had eaten me alive for 14 years, during which I had sold my soul, lost any hope and all I felt about myself was self-pity and despair. In 2005, I decided to be honest with my parents about my drugs problem.

## Road to rehabilitation: admitted for the first time

I started to confront my problem head-on, thanks to the encouragement I received from the social workers working in the Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA) on the out-patient methadone clinic. I

mustered all my much-needed courage as a descendant of a Gurkha and confessed to my parents on everything about my drug addiction. The social worker also spoke to my parents, explaining my inner struggle and how I

## + Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre

The Centre is providing rehabilitation services to male heroin addicts of all ages. For male psychotropic substance abusers, they can apply residential treatment under the "Project SARDA". There is also a service especially for Nepalese people. In addition, a 12-month follow-up counselling service will be provided starting from the discharge day.



### + General treatment programme in Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre

Detoxification	1-3 weeks
Rehabilitation	3-6 months
Halfway Houses	3 months (after completing basic treatment, optional)
Aftercare Counselling	12-month follow-up counselling service starting from the discharge day.

really would need their support, caring and encouragement. I was so thankful for the help from him at the time. Without him, I was not sure if I would be able to convey to my parents in a way that they would accept my issues and acknowledge my determination to change. I was referred to the Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre for voluntary drug treatment and rehabilitation services. It was only then I realised there is a non-religious inpatient facility for drug treatment and rehabilitation in Hong Kong.

When I was first admitted to Shek Kwu Chau Centre, I was fearful and anxious about this totally new environment. But the quietness and natural beauty of the place was soothing and reassuring, as I began to notice and appreciate the abundance of green trees and the stretched view of the sea. With the guidance and support of the doctors and nurses there, I completed the first phase of detoxification, then relocated to the 'Kei House'. The group leader was himself an ex-addict who could speak English. On the first day, my

fellow residents welcomed me with a bowl of curry rice which they specially cooked for me. That was so heart-warming. In the House, I could borrow English books to read anytime, while my residents tried to introduce me to the Cantonese language and aspects of the Chinese culture. I joined some of them to form teams to play football or other activities, which reminded me of the fun I had in my younger days. So we played together, going through therapy and the programme together. My residents and I formed a very solid bond and friendship between us, as we had so much in common and shared similar experiences, joys and sorrows. With the encouragement of the social workers, I had successfully completed the rehabilitation programme and was referred to the halfway house to continue my journey of recovery. When I left Shek Kwu centre, the residents and group leader of the centre bid me farewell and blessings. I was very confident that I could complete the whole programme to fully recover.

## Fallen and relapse

Often things don't work out the way they are supposed to. Shortly after I was admitted to the Halfway House, I was getting nowhere with my job applications which stressed me out totally. Then at one point, I could not resist the temptation and lied to myself that I would take the drugs just one more time and I would not become addicted again. Of course, that didn't happen the way I wished and I was again completely fallen. I thought about how my parents would be so agonised and disappointed, which only

made me hate myself even more. I was wandering on the streets when I ran into the social worker of the Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre, who tirelessly encouraged and supported me, asking me to go back to the Centre to rid myself of the drug addiction again. In 2011, I followed his advice and went back to the Shek Kwu Chau. He did not give up on me, which led me to have stronger faith and trust to the social workers and staff there, as well as a greater determination to re-enter the rehabilitation programme.



To this day, I am so grateful to their acceptance of me, and their unwavering support to help me through. I became more careful and thoughtful, following

the advice of the social workers in every step of the way. I was not going to make my parents cry because of me again, as I loved them so much.

## Shocks in life

In 2013, by then I was rehabilitated for 2 years and my parents were happy with me getting my life back. One of our relatives told me that my younger brother in the US had been taking cocaine and his problem was getting really bad. So I went to the states by myself to try to take him to Hong Kong with me. I talked to him earnestly to convince him to do something about his addiction. He promised me that he would get rid of it. But 10 days later, he died of overdose. I was devastated and felt so guilty for not being able to help him in time. During that time,

the social worker stayed with me and helped me cope with the pain and sorrow.

The way my brother lost his life through drug addiction really got me thinking about the meaning of my life again. Now my parents only had me as their son around, I need to fight this drug addiction, live well, and look after my parents physically and emotionally. That was how I became determined to stay away from drugs and I kept reminding myself of why I insisted on doing so.

## Dream of being a guiding star

In 2013, I met Cheng Ming-fai.\* He also had a similar past with darker days like mine. After drug rehabilitation, he re-did his 3<sup>rd</sup> form secondary school study, then progressed to get a university degree in social work. His experience was very inspirational and encouraging to me. It led me to believe I could do the same and his journey became my goal which I could pursue in the same way. I noticed that among the drug addicts in the minority community, a lot of them were like

what I used to be, deprived of good information about drug treatment and rehabilitation. In the Centre, there were only a small number of staff who were of similar ethnic minorities background to help them. So I believed it was my mission to help the addicts of Nepalese background to rid themselves of drugs addictions. I lived in a place within Jordan nicknamed 'Little Nepal'. There lived a lot of young Nepalese who were originally from Hong Kong, then they went back to Nepal to complete their

\*Cheng Ming-fai had been taking drugs for over 10 years since the age of 14. He was jailed multiple times. With the support of SARDA social worker in the Methadone Treatment Counselling Programme, he was admitted to the Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation centre and successfully rehabilitated. As he strongly empathised with other addicts, he was determined to become a social worker to help others in need. So he re-joined the 3rd year of secondary school at the age of 26. He overcame whatever challenges there was to finish his study and progressed to study for a degree in social work in Polytechnic University, winning the 'outstanding student' award 5 times during the 4 years degree programme. After graduation, he became a social worker of SARDA. In 2012, Cheng won the award of 'Hong Kong Spirit Ambassadors' in Hong Kong. He has also been sharing his experience in many places across Hong Kong and China, getting young people to develop a fruitful life, and stay away from drugs.



secondary school study before returning to Hong Kong. In Nepal, they were regarded as outsiders. In Hong Kong, mainly due to language difference, they found themselves difficult to integrate with society. So they didn't know where they belong. Often they were distanced from their parents and felt really empty inside. They were unhappy, had no clues on how to spend the day and had no ideas what to hope for tomorrow. So drugs were the easy way out for them to find some comfort in life. I believed that my experience could give hopes to my fellow Nepalese, knowing that they could change their life too. And I could be the bridge between them and society. Now I am a peer counsellor of the Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA). I always accompany the other social workers to reach out to the Nepalese community in our community outreach programme. I would visit various primary and secondary schools to educate kids about the danger of drugs abuse. I help fellow Nepalese to enrol in drug treatment and rehabilitation programme. To further my professional skills, I have enrolled in a higher diploma study. I am determined to truly live through the motto of social workers to "help people to help themselves" and to "devote my life to change other's life", to help individuals and families of the minority community to get rid of drug addiction, and rekindle hopes in their lives.

## Epilogue

Drug Rehabilitation treatment is a very tough process in itself, and it is even more difficult for non-ethnic Chinese addicts, who need to overcome additional challenges due to language barriers and cultural differences. Even though it is an arduous journey, with the support and encouragement of the social workers and other staff members of SARDA, they are able to work hard to overcome such difficulties. Some of them even became the guiding stars of their fellow countrymen. It is success stories like that which gives us hope.

Kazy was awarded "Guiding Star Scholarship Award in 2017/18 by Drs Richard Charles and Esther Yewpick Lee Charitable Foundation administered by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service. He had completed his higher Diploma in Social Work in 2018 and he is a social worker in SARDA. He finally reaches for the stars and starts his journey as a helping professional.



## Probation Order

Story

4

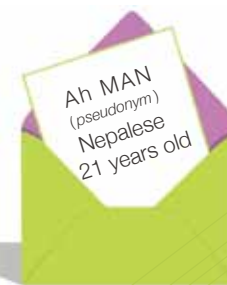
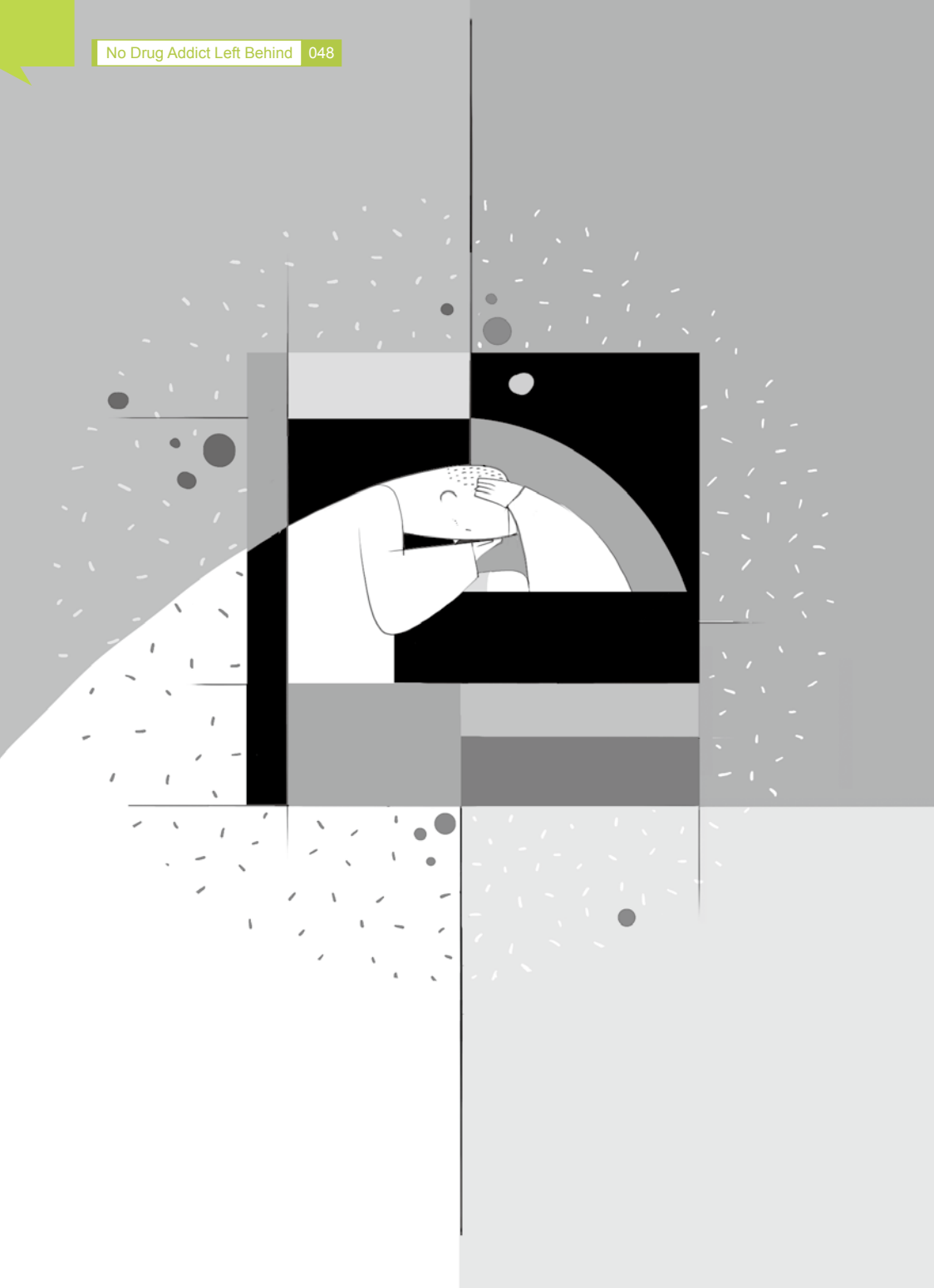
### The Erupting-volcano-like Nepalese boy

*I said to myself, "I have to face this and learn, by trying very very hard".*

Nepal is on the seismic belt between the European and Asian continents, the Alpine-Himalayan belt. A few years ago that place was struck by a strong earthquake, killing tens of thousands of people like the wrath of God. When Mother Nature gets angry, it leads to loss of lives. What about the anger inside a person, what kind of damage would it cause?

Ah Man (pseudonym) had just reached the age of 18 at that time. While he has the look of a Nepalese, he can speak fluent Cantonese and even write in Chinese. His parents are separated. He had been moved in and out of different boarding centres and homes since he was young, growing up without any family support. He was jailed for drug trafficking and got held in custody at Pik Uk Correctional Institution awaiting trial. So his come-of-age gift was a court probation order.

Because of his cocaine addiction, the probation officer referred him to the SARDA's youths centre at Au Tau Youth Centre for the rehabilitation treatment. Typically when people are being subjected to such arrangements, they would be very worried, or unhappy. But for Ah Man, he didn't show any feelings as if he had accepted his fate and whatever was coming his way. However, not known to us at the time was that underneath this calm surface, the anger of this young man would suddenly erupt. What was his inner world look like?



## Leave me alone!

Earlier on, I was shouting, “Don’t believe me! I cannot be trusted! I would only end up hurting someone. I am a friendless thief without family. All I know is stealing! So it is better off for everyone if nobody cares about me!”. That’s me, I am just a forever angry person.

In my earlier days in Au Tau Youth Centre, I thought of leaving. But I had no idea where I could go, with no family to go to either. So I thought I may as well stay. During the weekends, the other 10 or more residents all had a family to come to the centre to visit them. I was the only one who never had any visitors. “Why me? Why was

life so difficult for me?” I was feeling so down and agonised that I began to care about nothing, interested in nothing and just wanted to hide in a corner.

Every time the social worker came to talk to me, I just could not be bothered. I know I was being negative. Thankfully the social worker did not give up on me and was persistent with me to try to find out what I wanted and what went through my mind. He guided me to talk about my issues. Eventually, I opened up to him and it was like a heavy stone being lifted off my chest all of a sudden.

## Don’t pick on me! I am so angry!

Bang! The door was shattered with broken glass all over the place.

Since I was young, I had been living in different boarding centres, with different people. I long for friends to share stories with or have a laugh together. But it never works out in real life, as I always end up in a fight or argument with people over something trivial, like

the other time I got into a fight over a game of football somewhere else I was staying. I always felt being targeted, and my emotion was un-controllable. I scolded at whoever came into my sight, other housemates, staff, social workers, everyone had been yelled at by me.

## + Au Tau Youth Centre

The Centre provides voluntary residential treatment and rehabilitation to young male drug abusers of and under the age of 25, ranging from 3 to 12 months. In addition, a 12-month follow-up counselling service will be provided starting from the discharge day.



In Au Tau Youth Centre, again I started an argument with a new housemate over ping-pong. He was swearing at me with foul language which got me so worked up. It was obviously not my fault! I was still very upset when I was alone, thinking about the whole thing. Why did he pick on me? I was so angry that I punched into the glass door of the main entrance.

Then the social worker came and went through my unhappy experiences with me so as to coach me in getting a better understanding of the process of how I would be easily provoked

and how I was often misled to believe that I was picked on by others. My behaviour was guided by anger or strong emotion, and it was hard for me to calm down and look at the situation from a different perspective. The social worker explained to me that there were people around me who cared and willing to help. So he encouraged me to overcome the darkness of my past and learn to communicate properly with others, and just to try to understand the other person. He taught me how to manage my emotion and change the way I think.

## Learning to take responsibility

The other day my homework was due. For some reason, I tore it up out of anger on something else prior. So I had nothing to hand-in and a hard time to explain myself in front of the social worker. So he naturally pressed me for an explanation and I just got upset and emotional. At that moment, I had completely forgotten what I had learnt and what I was supposed to self-reflect on.

Then the social worker calmly asked me a question, "What kind of person you want to be? Don't you want to change or not?"

For a moment I was speechless, as I realised I seemed to manage to change a little bit, but I had returned to my old self. I was still under the control of my emotions, and not the other way around. I realised I needed to be responsible for my actions. So I became determined to learn to face and deal with my emotions and feelings. I could not let myself down.

## + Rehabilitation programme in Au Tau Youth Centre

Detoxification Treatment	The programme provides individual counselling and 24-hour medical care.
Rehabilitation Treatment	Adopting the Therapeutic Community (TC) model, together with a variety of interest classes and a spectrum of vocational skills trainings, to help patients to taking concrete steps to maintain abstinence and prepare to re-integrate society on a positive note.



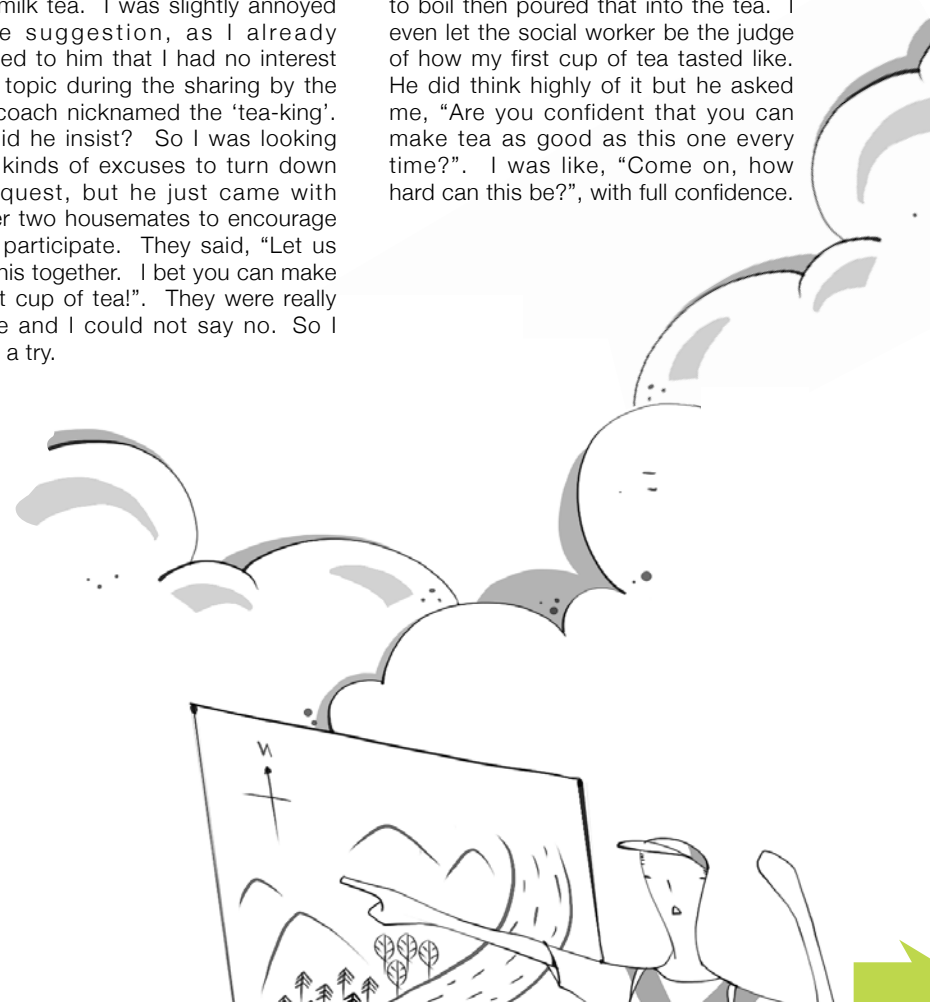
The social worker again encouraged me to change my ways. He asked me to not just think about myself but tried to care about the others, which might lead me to act differently. I tried my best to follow his advice. Then there was hiking organised by the Centre. For many in the class, it was the first

time for them to navigate with a map, which was something I knew how to do it before. So during the hike, I was naturally helping and teaching others. I surprised myself to realise that it actually felt good to be in a position of responsibility.

## Making tea is hard!

A few months after I was admitted to the Centre, the social worker recommended me to learn how to make milk tea. I was slightly annoyed by the suggestion, as I already indicated to him that I had no interest in this topic during the sharing by the other coach nicknamed the 'tea-king'. Why did he insist? So I was looking for all kinds of excuses to turn down the request, but he just came with another two housemates to encourage me to participate. They said, "Let us learn this together. I bet you can make a great cup of tea!". They were really sincere and I could not say no. So I gave it a try.

When I set out to make milk tea for the first time, I thought it was just a simple procedure. I just waited for the water to boil then poured that into the tea. I even let the social worker be the judge of how my first cup of tea tasted like. He did think highly of it but he asked me, "Are you confident that you can make tea as good as this one every time?". I was like, "Come on, how hard can this be?", with full confidence.





But something was not quite right the next time I attempted to make tea again. The tea turned green and tasted somewhat differently to the last time and was a little bit bitter. It was clearly not good enough so I tried again and again, but never did I succeed to get it like the first time... However, I was not angry and I did not give up. Things may look simple but when you get down to try to do it well consistently, it is not that easy. So I told myself, "I need to deal with this calmly, I should not be looking for an excuse for a way out. I should learn this properly and work hard on it."

I was so happy that I eventually mastered the required skill and was able to teach others to do it too.

## Life Planning

Have I thought about what I would do after I am discharged from the Centre? Yes, I have. I do have plans for the future.

After I complete the rehabilitation programme in Au Tau Youth Centre, I would need a place to stay. I thought about staying at the Centre and find a job to start saving money. The social worker asked me, "Why would I want to have savings?" I gave it some serious thoughts many times in my head. I replied, "I don't want my children to go through what I have been through. So I need to think and plan out my future. I need to be ready, I need to save up....."

## Epilogue

Anger, if not properly channelled, may erupt like a volcano and ruins one's life. The social worker encouraged Ah Man to address the root cause of his emotional outbreak, and changed his way of thinking, and kept it that way. He now knows how to plan for his path to his future, and he has a chance to live a different life.



Story

5

## Thai Love

*Learn how to love yourself before  
you have the capacity to love others*

In Thailand, besides the popular Four-Faced God Erawan, there is also the Trimurti Shrine, the god of love, whose shrine is frequented by single men and women. The countless roses laid in front of the shrine shows how many believers come all the way every day to pray for love. Pursuit of love and a sense of belonging is the start of the story of this chapter's main character.

Young Lok Lok (pseudonym) is half-Chinese and half-Thai. Her Chinese father from Hong Kong died young, leaving the children to be raised by her Thai mum, who would leave the house early every morning and would only come home late into the night to make a living. As her brothers and sisters starting to have their own family and moved out, her once bustling and noisy home which she was used to, had gradually become quiet and lonely. That drove her to look for fruitful relationships and emotional attachments from friends.

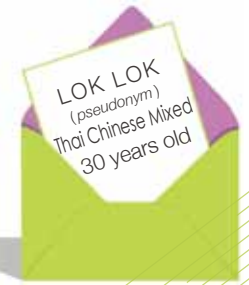
Lok Lok tends to be very dependent on others and she is relatively gullible. She would easily vest her emotions into a relationship, whether it is for friendship or love. To gain respect and recognition from her peers, she started to take Ketamine. Then she was betrayed by friends, which led her to take comfort in drugs. After she broke up with her boyfriend, she drowned her sorrows with drugs. The need for emotional attachments had led her to befriend drugs, while her body paid the price immensely for that. If not for the non-stop pain in her bladder, her family might never be aware of her drug addictions. Anxious and worried, they got her to seek help from the Sister Aquinas Memorial Women's Treatment Centre (WTC), which is run by The Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA).



## Drugs left me nothing but skin and bones at 32kg

The social worker told me that she was so shocked when she first saw me in the detoxification ward. She said for someone of 1.62 m in height, I was unbelievably light weighted at 32kg. I looked pale and weak. I spoke with little energy. My hands were covering my abdomen with my twig like body convulsively bent in pain. So, it was very obvious to her that I suffered badly from severe bladder issue.

Sustained abuse of Ketamine had caused damage to my bladder, such that I had this recurring pain extending from my bladder to the entire abdomen area. Every night, my body was curled up in pain and I could not get any sleep. When I pee, it was even more painful and sometimes there was blood in my urine. I had no energy left in my body. I was suffering badly. I lost my job. I was so scared...



## Encouragement from the family, support from social workers and medical staff

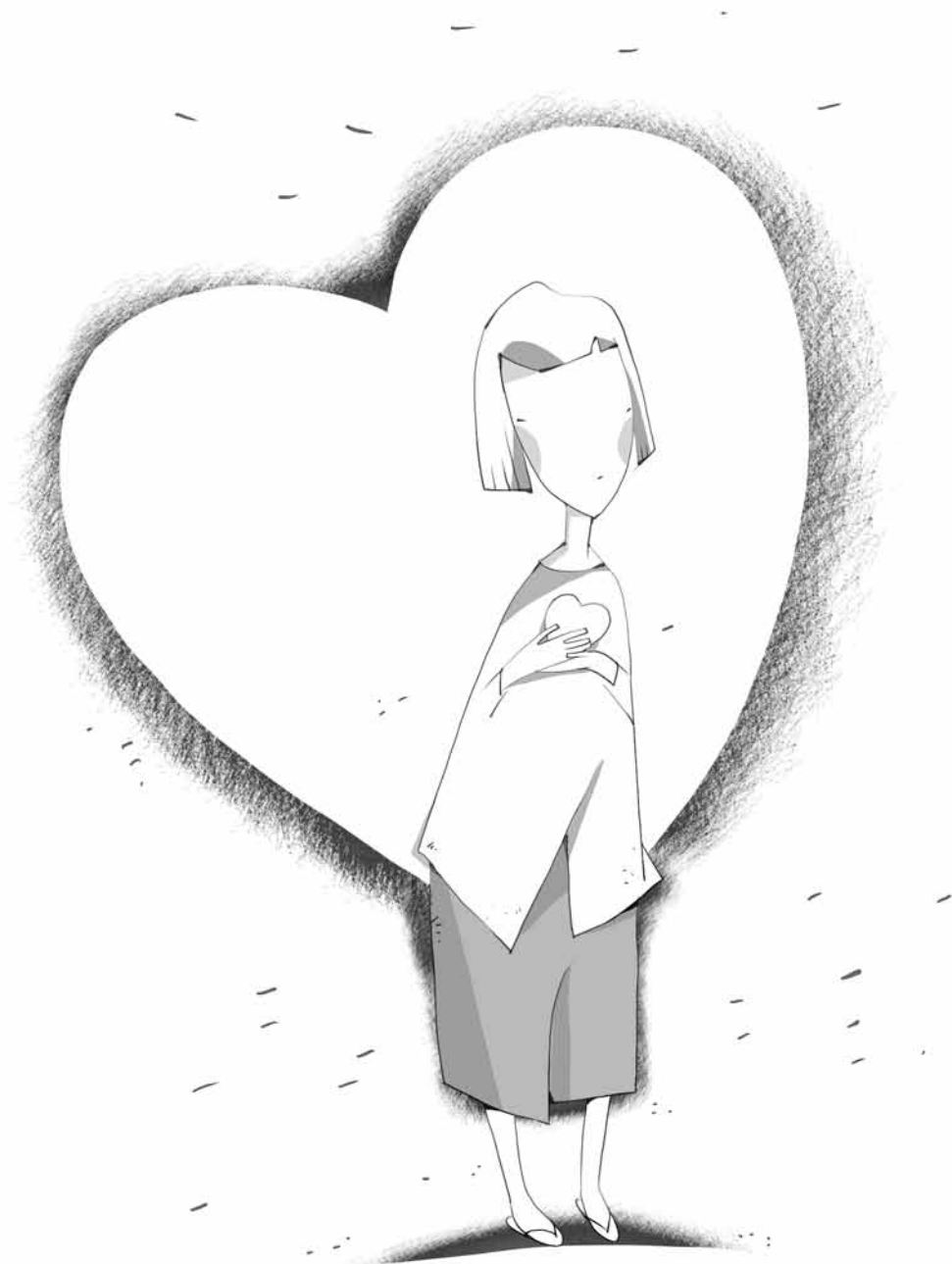
My family loves me. When they learnt of my addiction, they were also shocked and worried sick about me. They kept asking me to quit. They even thought about locking me up and set out to send me back to Thailand to get rid of my drug problems. But I just didn't want any of it. Then my sister found out about the Sister Aquinas Memorial Women's Treatment Centre (WTC), run by The Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA). She urged me to go there for treatment, for which I was hesitant initially. Then I heard my mum said to the social worker, "Thai family is very united, the whole family will do

everything we can to help her.", which made me realise how much my family cared about me and I could not let them worry anymore. So I took up my courage and signed up for the treatment.

At the Centre, the social workers, doctors and nurses really took good care of me. They tried to ease my pain with medications and urged me to care for and look after myself, to say the least, I should get off drugs which would only worsen my condition. I could feel how sincere they were and how much they genuinely cared for me.

### Sister Aquinas Memorial Women's Treatment Centre

The Centre provides 3 to 12 months of voluntary residential drug treatment and rehabilitation to young female drug abusers of and under the age of 29. In addition, a 12-month follow-up counselling service will be provided starting from the discharge day.



## Knowing how to love oneself is a pre-requisite to loving others

Once the social worker asks me, “How would you feel if you are in your mum’s shoes?”. I gave it some serious thoughts. “My poor mum! She is even more unfortunate than me.”, I replied. My dad died young. So she raised the family on her own which must have been tough. My drug addictions must have caused her tremendous anguish and distress. The social worker arranged many family meetings for us so we could be frank and honest with each other. My family recognised my sense of guilt and understood why I gave up and left them. And I came to understand their unwavering and persistent love for me. The social worker has become a bridge to connect me with my family, enabling us to understand each other properly.

The social worker also asked me, “What does it mean to be a real friend? Among your circle of friends who took drugs with you, was there anyone who really wanted to help you from the heart?”. I put a lot of importance to friendship in my life. If a friend of mine asks for help, whether it is about money or whether my friend needs me to do something, I would always try my best to help without holding back. This was because I long for

recognitions by others. And I felt that my life would be meaningful only if I had someone regarding me as friend and companion. These questions from the social worker made me think and I realised that I blindly held onto those friends who took drugs with me, only to be betrayed by them many times. They were not my real friends, were they? Now I knew.

The social worker also got me to reflect on many things around my addiction, the self-inflicted damages to my body, the inner struggles and conflicts I had, how I avoided talking about it to anyone, and my shame and guilt towards the family. These issues were something I never dared to face it myself. I realised how drugs had ruined me physically and mentally, and deprived me of the ability to love myself, which resulted in me having no capacity to love others. I also began to understand that I need to learn to love myself first, before I have the capacity to love others.

### Rehabilitation procedure at Sister Aquinas Memorial Women’s Treatment Centre

Short-term Programme	3-month programme include detoxification, basic rehabilitation training based on “Therapeutic Community Model” and counselling service.
Long-term Programme*	12-month programme include detoxification, advanced rehabilitation training based on “Therapeutic Community Model” and counselling service. Trainees would be transferred to halfway house for 3-month re-integration training.

\* Long-term programme is compulsory for people under the “Probation Order” or “Care or Protection Order”.



## Learning to live with others

I learnt to live and get on with others in the Centre. Apart from other housemates, there were social workers, doctors, nurses and staff (group leaders) of the Centre. We lived together, learned together. Each of us had our duties or roles to play. It was like a big family. At times I had stepped out of line and not followed the rules, the social workers and staff, or other housemates who were more advanced in the programme would talk to me and tried to bring me back to the right path, reminding me from time-to-time. The social worker, in particular, was very persistent. Her individual counselling led me to understand what does it mean to “care responsibly”. It is what real friendship is about. True friends have the responsibility to point out each other's mistakes but remain supportive and would always be there for each other. For me, this was a very different experience, compared to the friends I had in the addicts' circle. Those were not real friendship, as those relationships were often based on money and benefits, and they never last. If they could not get anything out from me, they would not be there for me. Only now at the Centre, I felt truly accepted and respected by others, whom I regarded as true friends.

There were times I had fights or bickering with housemates. Once the social worker said to me, “I feel so sad and heartbroken. I wish you can get rid of your bad temper for your own sake.”. She was not related to me or anything and yet she took my problem to the heart. She did her utmost to care for me, and guided me and tried to change me for better. I made an effort to remember what she taught me. Whenever I had an argument with other housemates, I would remember what she said and control my temper. She was really pleased with my improvement. She praised me by saying, “This time you can refrain from bursting out, it means you have improved your ability to control yourself. I am so happy that you have taken my advice and change for the better.”. I understood my temper and outburst would just end up upsetting myself. So I needed to change.

My days at the Centre had taught me how to get on and live with others. This was one of the most valuable lessons I had picked up from the social worker. It changed the way I deal with people and issues.

## + The Adult Women Rehabilitation Centre

The Centre provides 3 to 12 months of voluntary residential treatment and rehabilitation service to adult female drug abusers above the age of 30. The Centre also offers short-term rehabilitation to female methadone patients who are maintained at a low dosage and are desirous of completing detoxification in a residential setting. In addition, a 12-month follow-up counselling service will be provided starting from the discharge day.



## With you by my side, I am rid of my addiction

I stayed in the Centre for a year, followed by the halfway house. In both the Centre and the half-way house, mutual trusts were developed between the staff or social worker and myself, as well as a profound friendship. After I completed the rehabilitation programme, I went back to live with my family at home. Then over half a year later, I became very depressed as I broke up with my boyfriend at the time, which led me to take drugs again. When the social worker found out what happened to me from my mum, she reached out to me again and helped. She called me and said, "Just come back to the programme, don't mess around!". With the support from my family and her, I knew I should face my problem and not try to run away from it.

During my second stay in the Centre, I learnt to manage my negative emotions. I even signed up to be a volunteer in the Centre, helping out with daily routines, sharing my own experience and the emotional journey I had gone through with other housemates about my drug addiction, rehabilitation and relapse, and rehabilitation again. I believe during this half a year with my volunteering, I had also strengthened my resolve. Such volunteering was also my way to pay back my family, the social worker and staff there for what they had done for me.

Now I work in an import-export company as a clerical staff and have kept a drug-free lifestyle since. I have learnt to carefully evaluate my friendships and relationships, and would not blindly invest all my feelings. I continue to volunteer for various activities in SARDA. When I am free, I

would spend some quality time with my family whom I now keep close contact with. Every now and then I would also take my mum to Thailand to pay respect to the gods. I want to express my gratitude towards her with actions.

I am forever grateful to my family, the social worker and staff who stay with me on my journey in life. And I shall work hard to live it to the full!

### Epilogue

"Emotional attachment" is an important element in a person's growth. This is more the case with young women. Lok Lok has re-examined and figured out what true friendship really is. She has learnt that she needs to love and cherish herself first before she has the capacity to love others. And now, she has found love and belongings which are truly hers.



Story

6

## Living in a different world? Wrong!

*I am not hiding anymore.*

Does having different skin colour, language and culture, necessarily mean people of different races should be living in separate ways like having a wall between them?

Joe (pseudonym) is a Nepalese who has studied overseas, before coming back to Hong Kong. He only hangs out with Nepalese friends and other non-Chinese, with his Indian wife. So the language he only ever spoke was English and Nepalese, and he cannot utter a single word in Cantonese, but that did not seem to bother him at all.

Joe was arrested for drugs. The probation officer recommended him to be admitted to the SARDA Au Tau Youth Centre for voluntary rehabilitation treatment. That was how he ended up living with other young people who could not speak much English. Would he manage to get along with them or would he just wall himself off because of language difference?

Good morning everybody. Today, I am going to talk about



## I don't want to make the same mistake again.

"Good morning, everybody. Today, I am going to talk about....."

My name is Joe. I am mustering all my courage to come to this morning meeting to share my thoughts with all of you, housemates and members of staff. I used to think that I am capable of dealing with any problems in my life and I should be able to take good care of my wife whatever she may need. Then I found out life was not that simple and I could not take anything for granted. I was arrested for a drug-related crime. My wife and family were heartbroken and ashamed of me, but at the same time, they were worried sick of me and my future. I am so full of regrets.



"If I am given another chance, I would never make the same mistake again.", the voice inside me kept telling myself. I hope that I can learn to restart my life in the Centre, and step-by-step I will change my attitude and lifestyle. I believe through hard work and determination, I can give myself hope for a new life in the coming days.

## Not good in expressing myself.

I always believed that blabbering would just annoy people because I used to have someone around me who would do exactly that. This notion kept me quiet about everything. Even with my problems, I would not want to share

with anyone, not even with my wife. Most of the housemates of the Au Tau Youth Centre were locals, which made me uneasy. Would I be able to fit in, or would I be living in my own bubble due to language difference?

## YOU GOT CHANCE: Integrative Holistic Drug Treatment Outreaching Service

In 2017, SARDA has developed a programme called "YOU GOT CHANCE: Integrative Holistic Drug Treatment Outreaching Service". Its scope of service includes community outreach, individual crisis counselling with short-term follow-up of cases, various activities to promote healthy lifestyle, connect with the local communities, if appropriate, matching and referral of other suitable services.



So it was a relief to me that since I was admitted, the social worker came to see me a lot. He asked why did I take drugs. I was honest in my reply that I simply didn't think of its consequence. I was hanging out with friends who started me off with marijuana, before moving onto heroin. It became a habit and it was natural for us to take drugs when we got together. But drugs were slowly ruining my life. I used to love football, but I had not touched one and had not seen my teammates for 2 years. The work was tiring which drove me to take comfort in drugs, separating me from the real world. I tried to stop

but I just could not do it. And I dared not tell my wife what was happening to me...

Then the social worker encouraged me to talk to people and express myself a bit more. He explained how I was facing my drugs issue alone and I could not find a way out by myself. If I had been more willing to share with people around me who cared about me, maybe I would have found a better way to deal with it. It made total sense to me so I decided to take the first step to open up myself a bit more with people.

## Learning Chinese

Although I had always been living in Hong Kong, there was no Chinese in my circle. So it seemed unnecessary for me to learn Chinese. At the Centre, everyone one, housemates, staff etc. all spoke Cantonese and wrote in Chinese. They would sometimes communicate in English for my benefit, or some of the housemates would try to talk to me in simple English. And I tried my best to understand what they were trying to say, with limited success.

I was determined to change this. So I took up Cantonese and set out to learn to write in Chinese, which required a lot of practice. In the past few months, I already mastered more than a hundred Cantonese sentences, but putting them in good use in day-to-day conversation, was still kind of difficult. Sometimes I repeated myself and still could not get myself understood by others, which could be a bit disheartening.

The social worker encouraged me to practice with the other housemates in the Centre. In the beginning, they looked puzzled when I spoke to them in Cantonese, which I guessed they were struggling to understand me. I was confident that through repeated practice, I would improve.

Once there was a bowling game organised by the Centre in which we competed in teams. We really did our best and my team won. When we were back in the Centre, the staff had prepared a gift for us. We were jubilant. My takeaway was that if I tried hard and did my best, I would be rewarded for my effort. My communications with other housemates were not perfect, but there was enough rapport for us to get to know each other and for us to work hard together and supported each other. It felt good to have someone around.



## Encouragement and Support

I never get into a fight, not because I am afraid of getting hurt, but because I worry that I would end up hurting someone. So when the social worker encouraged me to take up Thai boxing, I was hesitant. Then I thought I would give it a little try, as physical training and merely a way to spend time. Before I started, I had already in my mind that I would quit after a few sessions.

In the class, the instructor made the point that the essence of Thai boxing was not about how to fight better. It was really about training of will power, as much as training of muscle and physical strength. Then I realise the true reason of why the social worker wanted me to take this up. It was for me to learn to persevere.

During the days when I was addicted, I did think of quitting, but I just could not persevere. I gave up easily, which was why I never succeeded. Taking up Thai boxing made me realise that in order to succeed, I had to persist and stand firm to pursue my goal.

The class had non-stop physical training and we were all sweating a lot. There were times I was so tired and I just wanted to stop, but the other housemate around me just shouted, "The abs for the ladies!". At the time, I had no idea what it meant except that I knew it was some kind of battle-cry to keep the spirits up, but I could really feel how we were there to support and encourage each other to go through the exercise together. All these, transcending our language difference, did not stop us from caring and inspiring each other.



## Lessons of Life

“Even at times of difficulties, it is important to communicate with others and express oneself.”

“Not used to something cannot be the excuse of not changing. Life is about constantly learning to change.”

“To know myself clearly involves not just knowing my strength but also my weakness. That’s how one can know what step to take to change to a better person.”

“Open up myself, learn new things, and just talk to people more.”

“I understand family or important people around me may not be able to stay with me forever. So I need to cherish our times together, so I won’t have any regrets when they are no longer with us. While we have time to be with our family, we should use such time wisely and be kind to our family and repay their kindness.”

## Epilogue

Difference in skin colour or language or cultural difference is not the reason cause people to separate and isolate themselves. It is drugs which separates a person and put him/her in a different sphere of existence. Drug abuse pushed Joe away from his family, work and society, caused him to live in his own bubble, disconnected from everybody. The days he spent in Au Tau Youth Centre was an awakening for him, which let him reflect on his issues and faced his true self. At the end, he re-connected with people, the world and no longer live his life in isolation.

Story

7

## Go Home and Love Your Family

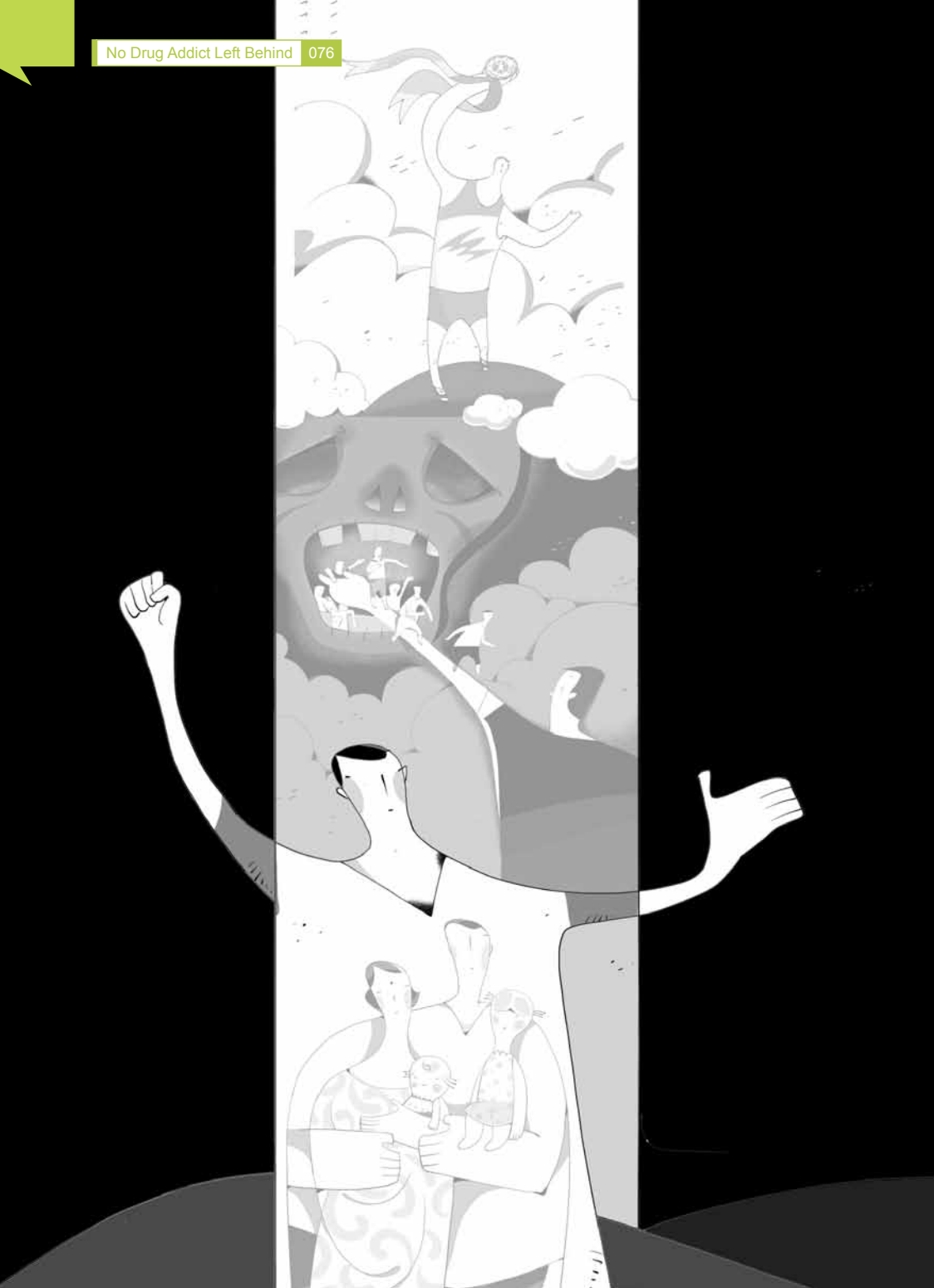
*Find my true self through hardship,  
start a new life with helping others as its purpose*

"What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family."

~Mother Teresa~

Thapa came to Hong Kong when he was 18 years old. He and his girlfriend, whom he met back in Nepal, were married in 2005. His wife saved every of her penny for the family, while he squandered his on drugs. She would confront him and complaint, and the complaint would turn into a serious argument. Nevertheless each time she would always end up forgiving him and accepting him for the person he was, which only made him feel more ashamed of himself than before. He was keen to get rid of his addiction, and was admitted into different rehabilitation centres. However, he was unable to complete the programme and quit because he could not get used to living there. Thapa was lost in life, with no hope, and utterly ashamed of himself and unable to face his family, as he felt that he had lost his rights to be a part of the family.

Then in 2012, he was admitted into Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre, operated under SARDA, which became a turning point in his life. The Centre encouraged him to participate in different training and competitions like Trailwalker and Community Chest Wheelock Swim for Millions etc. He won many awards from these competitions. The experience helped him to build a healthy life-style and strengthen his will power, which boosted his confidence in himself. Nowadays, Thapa is determined to help his countrymen in the Centre. He started as a volunteer, then became a peer counsellor, eventually promoted to assistant group leader. He has mended his relationship with his wife. Together they are raising two daughters. He has returned home, in every sense of the word.





## From Brown Sugar to Heroin #4

I am Nepalese, named Thapa, aged 31. In my hometown, 'Brown Sugar' is not some kind of sweet candy. It is a very popular drug, a cheaper version of heroin with low purity. In a more affluent society like Hong Kong, the pricier and purer form of heroin named No. 4 heroin is more popular. When I was 16, I was in Nepal and had my first taste of Brown Sugar. Someone once asked me, whether I knew I would become addicted when I took it for the first time. I knew the true answer to that, but I was too full of pride and had too much confidence in myself to admit it. Then I gradually became dependent on it and could never shake it off. Twice I was admitted to some voluntary rehabilitation centre, but on both occasions, I ended up taking drugs again after I was discharged.

In 2004, I came to Hong Kong to be re-united with my family here. I



was living in Temple Street in Yau Ma Tei. Nepalese are closely bonded people. A lot of Nepalese live around the Yau Ma Tei and Jordan areas. Referred by friends, I started working in construction sites. At that time, I did not take drugs so I thought I would start to live a normal life in Hong Kong. Then I realised many of my friends were taking heroin and under their influence, I joined them too. I was only taking a very small amount as it was very strong. I enjoyed getting high on it. Eventually, I was controlled by the drug and needed to find money to buy drugs as the only way to find happiness. At the same time, I was suffering badly each time I had the cravings.

## It was like being lost in the sea with no hope

In 2005, my girlfriend and I got married in Nepal. We knew each other years ago. She was aware of my drugs habit but thought it wasn't very serious. After we were married, we moved to Hong Kong. We lived together and supported the newly formed family together. She spent money prudently, and she was willing to work very hard to save up for the family. But I was wasting most of my earnings on drugs. For that, she would complain about it and occasionally we would get into a fight because of it, which always end up with her forgiving me, accepting me for who I am, and supporting me. In the height of my madness with my addiction, I could spend over 800 dollars every day, which was very much

beyond our means. And I was too ashamed to face my wife. I realised the only thing I had contributed to this family was pain, hatred and regrets. So, I sought help from some rehabilitation centre, but I left after a while as I could not fit in very well. I tried to get rid of my addiction twice with different rehabilitation centres but failed on both attempts.

At that time, I felt that I was drifting alone in the sea, with no hope, and had no idea where my life would be heading.

In this moment of despair, I met a social worker who worked for The Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA) near the Methadone Clinic in Yau Ma Tei. He introduced me



to the Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre, which had a lot of Nepalese residents going through the detoxification and rehabilitation programme. I was then admitted there in 2009 for the first time. However, I did not have the needed discipline or

confidence, and quit before completing the programme. I was powerless about my addiction problem, and I knew I was so selfish, as I tried to live in my own fantasy world with drugs, avoiding reality and causing sufferings to my family.

## Can't let my daughter have a drug addict father

The birth of my daughter was a driving force of change which I was lacking in me until then.

In 2012, our first daughter was born in Hong Kong, which added to our financial burden. Because of my drug addiction, I did not have much to give them. I was always in some arguments with my wife, and deep inside my heart, I was worried sick that one day they would just give up on me and left me. I wanted to shake off my drug addiction but was

afraid of trying because I might fail again.

My wife encouraged me to seek help again from SARDA. This time, the social worker guided me to think a lot about my daughter's future, and how I truly feel about her. I really love her. My drug addiction made me hate myself, so I had no rights nor capacity to love her. Then I made up my mind and said to myself, "I would not let my daughter grow up with a drug addict father."

## The feeling of being respected

In 2014, I was admitted again into the Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre. After 3 weeks of grilling experience of gradually decreasing the intake of Methadone to detoxify, I was assigned to a rehabilitation house by the name of "Kei", designated for non-ethnic Chinese rehabilitants. In "Kei", the social worker came to talk to me often. During my most vulnerable times, he would offer me encouragement and support. He also challenged me on my stubbornness, revisiting my past with me so I could see the mistakes I made, and helped me to plan for a better future for myself. With his support and this approach, this time I started to see that I did have the ability to rid myself of the addiction problem, which allowed me to pick myself up once again.

"Kei" is like a mini-community. There

were Nepalese, and a small number of locals. In the past, I was overly defensive about myself and I used to think that the locals would label us in some way and treated us unfairly. So I did not hang out with any locals much. In "Kei", we ate together, worked together. Even though we had our language and cultural differences, we accepted each other. That experience changed the way I felt about local Chinese in Hong Kong.

At times, the staff would let us make some local dishes. There was a band who would give us opportunities to sing English or Nepalese songs. The social worker would regularly organise meetings specific to the Nepalese residents, so they could hear from us directly about our concerns or what we needed. Here I felt I was valued as a person and treated with respect.



## What can I do for my fellow countrymen?

During my times at Shek Kwu Chau, I had seen many fellow countrymen from Nepal. Like me, they came and they left, quitting in the middle of the programme. I felt sorry for them and wondered if there was anything I could do for them.

One day, a social worker introduced me to Kazy, who was also Nepalese and he had completed the programme, then he dedicated himself to help his fellow countrymen. He came to the Centre to talk about his experience. His talk had really left an impression with me, on how one could take an extra step, and used one's own experience to inspire and help others.

So I decided to follow his footsteps that after I completed the programme, I would also join the volunteer programme and used my own experience and my credentials as someone who had been through it all, to help my fellow countrymen to settle in the Centre and complete the detoxification and rehabilitation programme.

I told the social worker, "I knew a lot of Nepalese addicts who lost all their money, family and slept in the street because of drug addiction problem. I wanted to help them and became a role model for them. So I need to equip myself and conduct myself in the proper way.....".

## Winning hardened my will

To strengthen my willpower, I signed up for the "Run for a Mission" long-distance running team and many other competitions organised by the Shek Kwu Chau Centre. They also helped to build a healthy routine in my life. So far I had participated in the long-distance running beHERO Run by Centum Caritas Foundation, "Race for Water", "GeoMazeing Hunt Orienteering Competition", "Oxfam Trailwalker", "The Community Chest Wheelock Swim for Millions" and "18 Days Outward Bound" etc... I won quite a few medals from those competitions. During these competitions, I was grateful to the support of the staff members, who accompanied me in every competition. I started to see myself improving. I started to see hope in my life, which was not something I saw when I was addicted. So from the bottom of my heart, I was grateful to the Centre, who

gave me a second chance in life. Now I am no longer feeling lost and alone. I feel that I am surrounded by love and support from others, and I have a clear goal and direction in my life.

There was a slogan in our running team: "We don't need to be fast, we just need to finish it.". What it really meant was that our participation of the race was not about winning any awards, it was about completing the course, doing our best, living up to one's expectation of oneself, training of will-power, learning to persevere, and not backing down. This is just like the path of rehabilitation. One needs to make a real effort, learns to resist the temptation of drugs, and maintain one's conduct of oneself. Through such training, my self-confidence had much improved and I found myself becoming much more resilient against the temptation of drugs.



After I completed the rehabilitation course, I returned to the Shek Kwu Chau Centre as a volunteer. The social worker and staff there helped me to settle into my new role and advised me on how best to discharge my duty, fulfilling my goal to help my fellow

countrymen. My wish was answered and my hard work had paid off. In 2015, I was officially employed by the Centre as a peer counsellor and a full-time staff member. In 2017, I was promoted to Assistant Group Leader.

## Thanks to my wife, for everything

I am so grateful for my wife who has always been there for me, supporting me through my rehabilitation and my volunteering, as she shouldered the burden to look after our daughter and paid the bills for the family. At that time, she was running errands for people in a construction site. It was tough as she toiled under the sun, sweating on tasks which even men would find difficult. She never said a word about it. I felt so guilty. It was this sense of guilt and gratefulness towards my wife which drove me to work hard and to complete the rehabilitation programme.

Now I have a job I like with a steady income, and I can do something for my fellow countrymen. My wife no longer needs to work at the construction site. My 2<sup>nd</sup> daughter was recently born. I am taking on my share of responsibilities in the family as a

husband and a father, putting my family back on track. My home feels like home, in which I am a member of this household, filled with love and support of each other.

I have everything I need, as I am with my family.

## Epilogue

Here is someone who has lost his self-worth, his direction in life, but he has gone through much hardship to rediscover himself, and launch a new life, and becomes determined to help others. All these changes came from his love of his family.

“Family is where life begins and love never ends.”

Thapa is promoted to be Group Leader at Shek Kwu Chau and keeps on helping his fellow countrymen at centre as well as in outreaching work. He enjoys his life very much.

## My wish

I hope to continue to influence others around me, and I shall continue to work hard to help the ethnic minorities in Shek Kwu Chau to rid themselves of drug addictions, so they can return to society. I truly believe, whatever our skin colours or nationalities, if we give our heart to it, we can build ourselves a drug-free community.



Story

8

## Let go of the past and move on

*Kia is no longer the reason for him to take drugs,  
but she remains to be the best part of his memories.*

We cannot change the past, but we can change the way we view it.

People have different experiences, good or bad. We hold those happy days dear to our hearts, and we also cannot forget those painful times. Wounds may heal, but they tend to leave scars. It is difficult to forget and even harder to let go. In the journey of one's growth, one has to accept one's past and move on. If one cannot let go, one would be trapped by the past, unable to journey into one's future.

Peter (pseudonym) had been scarred, and unable to free himself from the shackles of his mind. He chose to use drugs to numb his senses to escape from reality. Luckily he saw a need to change and accepted the help of SARDA (The Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers). He successfully went through the Methadone Treatment Programme and rid himself of drug addiction, and started a new life.



## I fell because of love

I am a Nepalese. My family took me with them when we emigrated to Hong Kong when I was 17. Hong Kong was a fascinating and strange new world to me. I was curious about everything. I quickly found a job in a bar as a bartender. My life went smoothly and I was happy.

Kia (pseudonym) was my girlfriend whom I knew back in my hometown. We had a solid relationship despite being separated, as the distance only made us feel strongly about each other. We kept in touch often, and long for the day we would meet again. Then one day I heard from my friend in Nepal that she was killed in a car accident.



It was so sudden and shocking that I could not take it. Then I felt detached from this world and trapped in an overwhelming sense of guilt and sorrow. Why was I not with her when she died? Why couldn't I see her for the last time? Why was I not given a chance to talk to her again? My mind was full of questions with no answers. The only thing I knew for sure was that I had lost her forever.

## Drowning my sorrows in alcohol only put me deeper into my abyss

I am never the sharing type when it comes to my personal issues. So I was carrying this sadness by myself. In fact, in Hong Kong, I could not find anyone with whom I could really share anyway. I needed something to take my mind off. I was working in a bar, so it was convenient for me to take up drinking. So I drank all day. But I

realised I could not quite put my sorrow away and there was always a sense of emptiness. Then I met someone from my hometown and he was trying to help by "kindly" offering something more potent in helping me to escape from reality.

That was my first contact with heroin.

## Should I keep doing this?

My first encounter with heroin was quite unpleasant. I had nausea and felt like vomiting. After a while, strangely it became enjoyable and soothing. Eventually, taking heroin became my daily routine, and I began to take more. When I could not find drugs that day, my body would suffer badly with runny nose, cramps and insomnia. And my

mind would be pre-occupied with some kind of insatiable craving, which was like having a constant and desperate urge to finish something which cannot be completed. In the two years which followed, I exhausted my savings and was often in debt. My friends had all left me. So I spent every day with other addicts from my hometown.



During my drugs-taking days, I felt alone and guilty, and even more empty than before. Kia left. My friends were all gone. Should I just watch my family leave me too? So one day I summoned up all my courage to be honest with my family about my drug problem, hoping that they would accept me and trust that I would try to get rid of it.

## My Treatment Plan

At first, I was sceptical about the programme, particularly whether it could really ease the pain during withdrawal. In the early days of the programme, I was really struggling to resist the temptation when I ran into my addicts friends. I was very grateful to the social worker and my peer counsellors for their encouragement and guidance, as they responded to my worries and explained the process to me. They helped me to go through the programme involving a gradual reduction of the methadone dosage. When I started to reduce the amount of methadone in-take, I was faced with many challenges, temptation, depression, anxiety and physical discomfort. The social worker showed me how to cope with them by changing my habits bit by bit. I changed my phone and stop hanging out with my addicts friends. I worked hard in my job and made new friends proactively.

Perhaps more importantly, the social worker has helped my parents and my brother to understand the nature

My parents reacted by searching for rehabilitation services together with me. In the end, we went to the Yau Ma Tei Methadone Clinic to sign up for the methadone treatment programme. So I stopped taking heroin and used methadone as a substitute.

of methadone treatment programme. While my parents were very supportive in me joining the programme, they were concerned that continual usage of methadone, being a kind of drugs itself, would be harmful. So they were pressuring me to complete the programme in the shortest possible time so I could stop taking methadone as soon as possible. This kind of stress was actually counter-productive in my rehabilitation as it made me lose faith and it was depressing. I even thought of quitting the programme at one point. Luckily, the social worker was there to address their concerns by explaining how the programme worked.

She pointed out to my family that methadone rehabilitation was not something which could be accomplished in days. To get rid of the drug addiction totally, preventing relapse is very important. Being overly aggressive on the time-table would increase the risk for the patient taking drugs again to deal with the stress incurred, which would mean all the progress

## + Methadone Treatment Programme Counselling Service

SARDA has joined hands with the Department of Health to provide counselling service for methadone patients since 1993. Methadone patients under the age 21, first-time applicants and female patients are given priority to receive the counselling service. Other patients may also apply the service through self-application, referral by doctors or invitation by social workers.



made would have been lost. So it is important to proceed in a gradual and steady manner, following the programme. After she patiently explained it to my parents, my family became aware that the treatment could not be rushed, and they were willing to follow the set pace so I could continue without stress or pressure from them. The understanding, support and trust offered by my family was the key reason why I was able to endure and overcome the various challenges

which came with the reduction of the methadone dosage.

When my intake of methadone was reduced to 2.5 mg, it was the toughest time in the programme. I was full of self-doubts. When would I be able to completely stop taking methadone? Could I overcome the sickness and withdrawal symptoms? Would I relapse? I had already quit alcohol, drugs, so I should be able to finally live a normal life without Methadone.

## My last dosage of Methadone

With the support of the social worker and my family, I came to a point in the programme where I decided that I was ready to finally cease the methadone intake. So I took my last cup of 2.5mg of methadone. The following 4 weeks were filled with poor sleep quality and tiredness, but I understood its necessity. In the road of recovery, I could not rely solely on medication. My social worker encouraged me to be

more integrated into the lives of Hong Kong. So I was active in participating in various activities organised by SARDA such as the Thai boxing class, volunteering services and I joined the band comprising people of ethnic minorities. Slowly but surely, I regained the sense of curiosity I once had when I first came to Hong Kong. I became willing to try new things and broaden my horizon.

## + Methadone treatment Programme : Maintenance and detoxification

There are 2 types of treatment programmes undertaken in Methadone clinics:

1. Methadone Maintenance Programme – the patient receives the proper dose of methadone daily for a period as long as the patient feels necessary. There is no time limit for this type of programme.
2. Methadone Detoxification Programme – for those patients with determination, their dosage of methadone is reduced gradually over a period of time, until there is no need for the patients to continue treatment.

“Patients in the methadone maintenance programme can join the methadone detoxification programme at any time. Their methadone dosage will be reduced gradually over a period of time, until there is no need for the patient to continue treatment. So long as the patients do not relapse to taking heroin or opium, they are considered as detoxified. Each patient's treatment plan is variable and can be changed to suit individual need. Counselling and advice can be obtained from the doctor and / or SARDA social workers of the clinic.”

SARDA social worker would exercise certain flexibility and customize the treatment for each individual, based on his/her unique circumstances, to help the patient to cope with issues encountered so they would not recourse to drugs. They would also help them to rebuild a set of correct values and views of their lives, so they can be re-integrated to society to live a normal life.



## Open up my heart and overcome the language barrier

My journey of rehabilitation had been a tough one. I am a Nepalese, not growing up here in Hong Kong. My social circle was very limited. When I faced difficulties, I found it difficult to find solutions or someone to get advice from. As an addict, I was met with criticisms and discrimination by others, or I was simply being ignored.

The first time I met the social worker in the methadone Clinic, I had my reservation about her and was unwilling to open up to her. During the course of detoxification, not only did she meet me regularly in the clinic, she also

called me and talked to my family often, to learn about my life. She encouraged me to join the various activities organized by SARDA, like the Thai boxing training and the volunteering team. They gave me opportunities to get to know different people outside my Nepalese circle, which would help me to be re-integrated to the Hong Kong society. After she learnt that I had a strong interest in music, she made an effort to refer me to join a band composed of people of ethnic minority background. She got me to try different things to broaden my circle.

## Back on the right track and open up my heart

I now have a stable job, and I have continued to participate in the various activities organised by SARDA. The social worker has invited me to share my detoxification and rehabilitation experience with other addicts of an ethnic minority background, so they have a better understanding of how the Methadone treatment would play out for them and what to expect.

Eventually, I revealed the deepest secret in my heart to the social worker. "I could not let go of the guilt I had about Kia. I felt that it was my fault and I owed her everything." She looked at me and listened to me earnestly. She patted me on my shoulder and let me tell her everything, and all my emotions were let out. Looking back on my drug addiction days, it was a real nightmare. Now I am awake from it, I feel that Kia has always been there, at a corner of my heart, watching how helpless I was with the addiction. I am very grateful to the social worker in SARDA. Not only has she helped me to rehabilitate, she has also helped me to stop avoiding

how I truly feel, to deal with and untie the biggest knot in my heart.

I wish my story can encourage other addicts to take a step forward towards a new and better life. If I can do it, you can!

### Epilogue

When facing difficulties, some people would use drugs as an escape from their harsh reality. But drugs would only bring more pain and sufferings. The best way to cope is by dealing with the issue positively and head-on. Now Peter cannot change the fact that Kia is gone, but he manages to choose how he deals with his loss. He cherishes the happy times he has had with Kia. Kia is no longer the reason for him to recourse to drugs and remains as the best moments of his life.

## Clippings of newspaper column

Since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011, Ms. Angelique TAM, JP, Executive Director of SARDA, has been an invited author by the Sky Post to publish a column entitled "No Drug Addict Left Behind". Ms. Tam has written a total of 95 successful rehabilitation stories and received lots of positive feedback from the community.

晴報 06 | 新聞 9月1日 星期四

**有戒無類** 譚紫樺  
香港戒毒會總幹事

### 重生的約會

「有戒無類」這成語源自《論語》，意指不管甚麼人都應有機會接受教育，本欄名為「有戒無類」就是要秉承有戒無類的精神，借此專欄與讀者分享成功戒除毒癮和奮發圖強的故事，鼓勵大家珍惜人生，活出健康生活。

去年9月，一對父母帶著17歲兒子來到本會的回頭青少年中心，接受為期半年的戒毒康復治療。

他們三人很用心聆聽職員簡介，瘦削的父親在整個過程中不發一言，面上卻流

露着對兒子的叮囑和冀盼。母親多次提醒兒子要緊記與父親的「約會」，說到動情處，眼一紅，別過臉，不禁黯然淚下。其實，在兒子入住中心翌日，其父也打算到石鼓洲接受戒毒康復治療。父吸食白粉經年，兒子憤懣，多次離家出走，更吸食k仔。整個家幾乎散了，父在本會駐美沙酮診所的社工鼓勵下，決心戒毒。父子兩人就誓言要在農曆新年重聚。

香港戒毒會自1961年成立以來，致力向不同性別、年歲、宗教背景 and 不同國籍人士，提供醫療及社會心理輔導服務，我們堅信那些誤墮毒網的，心底裏還愛着自己和家人，只要我們伸出援手，他們終有一天改變自己，重建新生。

(本欄逢周四刊登)

晴報 06 | 新聞 2011年10月27日 星期四

**有戒無類** 譚紫樺  
香港戒毒會總幹事

### 人在異鄉

「流落異鄉已經夠衰啦！仲學人吸毒，真係無鬼用！」這是一個本地人向一位尼泊爾裔人士在美沙酮診所排隊起爭執時，罵出的一句話，差點演變成流血事件。

SURYA是回歸後，選擇留港定居的前外籍英軍（俗稱嘅喀兵）的後代，父母現居尼泊爾。尼泊爾中學畢業後，他一心來港賺錢回鄉。可惜因語言不通及學歷不獲認可，實在很難在香港找到一份穩定工作。最後他只好跟幾位同鄉租住一間少於一百呎的板間房。

人在異鄉，強烈感受到孤單及挫敗，遇上同住的人有毒癮，久而久之，為了得到認同，SURYA竟也成了他們的一員。自此，意志逐漸被消磨；自我價值日漸低落，甚至想隱藏自己，完全失去動力，自覺無面目面對家人。

他知道吸毒是人生中最錯的抉擇，現在變得既不屬於香港，也不屬於尼泊爾。如果可以讓時光倒流，他絕對不會吸毒。

面對尼泊爾裔吸毒人士的獨特需要，前幾同工會多走一步。透過尼泊爾裔工作人員的幫忙，以及與他們的同鄉夥伴接觸，打開有成癮問題人士的心扉，及早處理問題。

(本欄逢周四刊登)

晴報 2012年3月22日

**有戒無類** 譚紫樺  
香港戒毒會總幹事

### 再生人

Rai的噩夢始於1996年。

父親是個嘅喀兵，為了生計，舉家來港定居。那年Rai剛好21歲，他努力嘗試融入社會，可是由於語言的隔閡和文化上的差異，未能適應香港的生活。被捕、入獄、吸毒、婚姻失敗、家庭關係破裂，這些都並不是噩夢的結束，更糟的事情陸續有來。

Rai不是沒有計劃過自己的將來，無奈每一次都敵不過毒品的誘惑，更因貪圖方便，與朋友共用針具注射毒品，2008年被確診感染愛滋病毒。正值壯年卻要面對死亡的威脅，他感到晴天霹靂，整个人也崩潰了。

在戒毒會的支持下，Rai終於作出了改變。他準時覆診，依時服藥，有效控制了愛滋病毒的數量，後期更降至不可被偵測的水平。現在Rai不單有一份穩定的工作，亦於兩年前成功戒除毒癮，持守至今。

愛滋病雖被視為「世紀絕症」，如能積極面對，一樣可以活出新天地。

(本欄逢周四刊登)

晴報 10 | 新聞 2011年11月3日 星期四

**有戒無類** 譚紫樺  
香港戒毒會總幹事

### 關懷原是無疆界

去年，我們一間康復院已幫助了過百位非中國裔人士接受治療，當中包括越南、尼泊爾和菲律賓等。他們住在同一個院舍，自行煮食，我們亦尊重他們本身的宗教信仰。由簡單的英語和廣東話開始，加上身體語言，這種文化交流亦有助日後適應居港的生活。

我們又會主動做一些窩心的非語言溝通。同事會在返工途中拿免費英文報紙給他們閱讀；其他院友則播放一些外語片或一起看有字幕的英語節目。院內的膳食較清淡，學員不時煮些咖喱給少數族裔的朋友品嚐。雖然資源有限，但這份關愛正是最好的調味料。

在學習職業技能及進修方面，8月初便有一位尼泊爾籍的青年不單完成了專人教授的「個人成長」系列，還學懂電腦文書和「狗隻護理」，更獲得建造業議會發的工藝測試證明書，其家人還出席了頒獎典禮。

事在人為，多點關懷，將心比己，是幫助少數族裔融入社區的不二法門。

(本欄逢周四刊登)



02

Part Two

## Care without Limits

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Thank you for the concerted efforts in providing service to the needy non-ethnic Chinese people and their families, and to improve their well-being.

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## Community Volunteer

### I am sister Di Di from Nepal

म एक नेपाली दिदि हूँ ।

I am a Nepalese college student. I have worked at The Nethersole School of Nursing of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. I met SARDA in a meeting and knew about their work.

By the end of 2014, I joined SARDA for the HRCC Project for Nepalese Drug Users to deliver anti-drug and health-related information to Nepalese drug users. Through this opportunity, I hoped that I could help the South Asian in Hong Kong. SARDA arranged me to work in the methadone clinic. It was a good opportunity for me to really understand the real drug abuse scene in Hong Kong, the provision of Methadone Treatment Counselling Programme, as well as access to Nepalese drug addicts living in Hong Kong. I was surprised that there were quite a lot of Nepalese drug addicts. From my observation, the majority of Nepalese drug users were under the age of 50, and some are teenagers.

In the programme, I assisted the social workers who regularly organised various recreational activities, such as health education talks, language training and cultural exchange activities for the Nepalese drug users in methadone clinics. During this

period, I came into close contact with a group of Nepalese drug users. As we were both fellow citizens, they would express their fears and feelings without any worry and were happy to share their drug abuse experience and the reasons for their drug abuse such as the lack of health education, peer influence, cultural practices, lack of proper work, low language proficiency and education, lack of family support, etc. Even worse, they were labelled by the social stigma attached to drug use, and living with the unpleasant experience in society.

I could hardly forget that there was a 20-year-old Nepalese drug addict. He kept calling me "Di Di" (Nepalese means big sister). He was an outgoing and helpful guy. He told me that he started taking drugs with friends for a long time while he was in Nepal. He failed to adapt to a new life in Hong Kong and began to recall fragments of drug abuse in Nepal in the past. As a result, he started looking for drugs. Eventually, he met Nepalese friends with drug abuse habits and once again he addicted to drugs. Whenever he wanted to quit taking drugs, he found he cannot live without drug and feeling powerless to stop. Fortunately, he has



**Ms. Tika Rana**

PhD Scholar in Nursing,  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

now taken the first step towards drug detoxification by opting for treatment and social work counselling services at the methadone clinic in Yau Ma Tei.

By participating in this programme, I had deep feelings about what we can do for Nepalese drug addicts. As a matter of fact, the project could give them support and encouragement to create an appropriate environment for them to start afresh and live with dignity. I hope they could believe they were capable of fighting drug addiction and do their



New year celebration



Christmas party

utmost to get rid of the temptation of drugs and recognise the harmful effects of drugs on their bodies and minds.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank SARDA for its continuous efforts in providing services to drug addicts and their families among ethnic minorities. I felt honourable indeed to be involved in this work. I am grateful to all the social workers and their teams for their efforts in providing services to a group of needy Nepalese and their families to improve their lives.



Language training: Chinese class

## Work hard for the future

### उज्जवल भविष्यको लागि प्रयास

I am an educator and have taught minority students in different schools in Hong Kong for many years. At first, a Nepalese female volunteer introduced me to the service of SARDA. When I learned that many Nepalese young people were addicted to drugs, I really felt very sad and heart broken. From her, I learned that SARDA has always tried its best to assist drug abusers to get rid of the drug addiction, get them back on the right track and bring new life to the socially marginalised groups. I am really touched and have

left a deep impression on SARDA. By coincidence or fate, I involved with SARDA's work and helped to assist young people with drug problem too.

I began to hear more stories among Nepalese drug addicts. Because of their drug addiction or criminal activities, they were labeled and treated negatively by the society and even their families. In fact, they all would have the desire to get rid of drug use when they first started, but due to the challenges of social stigmatisation and

## Community Volunteer



### Dr. Chura Bahadur Thapa

Host of Saptahik Sandesh, RTHK Radio 3,  
Non-official member of The Committee on the Promotion of  
Racial Harmony, Home Affairs Department, HKSAR

lack of support, they eventually were unable to quit.

I feel pity for drug addicts, but I believe they can do better for their own future. Perhaps, they were labeled as anti-social people in the society, which proved that a comprehensive rehabilitation approach is needed in helping them to change. I believe if we can have appropriate plans fit for their needs, they could recover from drug addiction easier. I hope people with drug abuse problems can learn how to resist various temptations. If you encounter problems or difficulties, as well as unfair discrimination or prejudices, you need to learn even harder to get away from those negative stereotypes and labels and work hard for your life and future.

And that is the reason why I think the work of SARDA is really indispensable.



Ms Angelique Tam, JP, Executive Director of SARDA (second right) and Dr. Chura (second left)



## SARDA Methadone Treatment Counselling Programme: Nepalese Together

In recent years, a host of group activities for methadone patients have been developed to clarify the myth of methadone treatment, to encourage patients to stay on medication and to provide information on AIDS prevention, as well as to organise recreational activities, to help them to get back to normal life. “Nepalese Together” is one of our counselling groups launched from 2005, providing small group counselling services, specifically for the Nepalese methadone patients.

“Nepalese Together” is held on Tuesday night at Yau Ma Tei methadone clinic. To attract more Nepalese drug users, our group organises recreational activities like Carrom board (Traditional Nepalese Games), Chinese Billiard, snooker, band show and basketball playing in open spaces near the methadone clinic or in Yau Ma Tei Community Hall. Special event is held on the last Tuesday of the month, like Chinese New Year celebration party and making of traditional handicrafts. In April, our group also holds Nepalese New Year celebration and traditional snacks sharing. Through these activities, we hope to enhance mutual understanding with our Nepalese patients and to help them to tune in the life in Chinese culture.

We also have set up Nepalese volunteer team to empower them to serve their fellow countrymen. The team visits methadone clinics regularly. They talk with the Nepalese methadone patients and to deliver them useful information on different drug treatment and rehabilitation services.

Recently, in our Tuesday night gatherings, we provide our Nepalese patients with more practical social resources information, such as medical services and public transport information to facilitate their integration into the society.

## Nepalese Group



## SARDA Aftercare Service: Ethnic Minorities Group

Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre provides comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation services to male drug abusers of all ages. In recent years, there are more Nepalese drug users asking for drug treatment services. SARDA is very concerned with their needs in regarding the drug problems in Hong Kong. For those who have completed our drug treatment and rehabilitation program, we provide aftercare counselling and supporting services to strengthen their drug free life. Since October 2015, SARDA has organised a series of "Night for Nepalese Group" activities at North Kowloon Social Services Centre, like "Night for musical sharing", "Night for photography", "Night for Christmas", "Night for games" and other volunteer services. These activities aim to encourage our Nepalese members to have more participation in centre's activities, to strengthen their ability to say no to drugs and to be more familiar to our community resources for better integration into society. The activities are all welcomed by the group members.

Recently, there are Vietnamese rehabilitants joining the group. Then, the group is renamed to "Ethnic Minority Group" officially, and it is held on the last Wednesday night of the month. It implies that SARDA hopes the services provided can reach to all people with different ethnics. So, they can have the opportunities to receive holistic drug treatment and rehabilitation services and comprehensive anti-drug education

## Nepalese Group



W e  
C A R E

## Living a new life

### **SARDA: Integrative and Holistic Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Strategy**

SARDA provides diversified services with caring attitude in providing services for the non-ethnic Chinese drug users. We respect and accept their diversified cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs. With professional medical and social work supports, we give them drug treatment and rehabilitation opportunities, help them to enhance their self-confidence and capacity that are essential for their reintegration into the society, and to evolve hope and meaningfulness in life again.

### **We C.A.R.E.**

C : Cultural diversity  
A : Acceptance & Care  
R : Resilience  
E : Evolving hope & Meaningfulness



18-day Outward Bound Training Programme

## Treatment and Rehabilitation Services for Non-ethnic Chinese



Community Outreach Workers



Non-ethnic Chinese Peer Counsellor

Registered Social Workers



Health Care Professionals

## Multi-disciplinary Collaboration

### Outreach Service



### Participating in Various Trainings and Competitions

1. Raleigh Challenge - Wilson Trail
2. Race for Water
3. The Community Chest Wheelock Swim for Millions
4. Oxfam Trailwalker
5. Music Training Course
6. Hong Kong-style Milk Tea Vocational Training Courses
7. Muay Thai Fitness Instructor Certificate Course
8. Basic Chinese Class Certificate Course
9. 18-day Outward Bound Training Programme
10. Shek Kwu Chau Vocational Skills Training Course Certificate Presentation Ceremony
11. Dog Trainers Courses
12. Leap Soccer Training Course





Music Busking



Graduation Night



Ms Angelique Tam, JP, Executive Director of SARDA with advisors from Hong Kong Nepalese Federation (right 1), Hong Kong Nepalese Women Association (right 2) & Philippine Youth Ambassador (left 2)

## Aftercare Services



Anti-Drug School Talk for Ethnic Minority Children



Awareness on Drug Abuse for Ethnic Minority Parents



Vocational Counselling

## Community Care & Reintegration



Football Competition with Hong Kong All Star Sports Association Limited



Hair Styling Class



Integrative Programme for Nepalese Drug Users



Celebration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2019



Graduation Ceremony of 18-Day Outward Bound Training programme



Outdoor Training of SARDA Running Team



NGO forum 2018 cum Outstanding NGO Volunteer Award Presentation Ceremony



Kazy in Joint Graduation Ceremony



Midsummer Race



Community Visit



Volunteer Work of International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking



Training for Long-distance Running



Gurkha Trailblazer



03

Part Three

## Drug-free & Inclusive, Community in harmony

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SARDA endeavours to provide quality services to rehabilitants and their families with an ultimate goal of creating a drug-free community

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## What our staff say...

Detoxification is definitely not an easy way. Our mission is to care and to accompany all those who are in need. We do care a lot, hang in there, keep on fighting and don't forget that you are always not alone.



Effy WONG  
Nursing Officer

Life is full of choices. Some get hooked on drug abuse. Fortunately, there are options which can help them to get rid of drugs in the society. Regardless of backgrounds and nationalities, I hope that drug addiction treatment and rehabilitation services provided by SARDA will help them to get back on the right track in life.



Dr. LAU Ka Yip  
Medical Superintendent

One of my main duties in Shek Kwu Chau is taking care of Vietnam's residents. They have been facing the experience of discrimination and misunderstanding in the past. I remind myself to keep unbiased, and non-judgemental manner to all residents and to communicate more. The sense of security is vital for them to continue their rehabilitation.



LAW Chun Kei  
Senior Group Leader

Many people may think quitting drugs is only a matter of willpower, but I reckon we cannot ignore the impact of environmental factors. Accepting one another is the first step. Embracing different ways of life, respect and understanding of their ethnic cultures, caring for each other, treating one another with kindness, less blaming, more smiling, to deal fairly and justly with the problems. Let non-ethnic Chinese drug abusers be able to feel safe and integrate into a healthy and wholesome life.



YU Mau Wing  
Senior Group Leader

I am deeply moved by the efforts of our non-ethnic Chinese residents to recover from drug use. I am pleased to have one of my former clients now becomes my working partner. "To quit drug use is not easy and be able to sustain drug free life is further harder." Our SARDA team sincerely hopes to hold hands with our non-ethnic Chinese drug abusers and to support them to start a new life.



LI Kwok Leung  
Registered Social Worker

Non-ethnic Chinese drug abusers are always having difficult times on the path to recovery. Their differences in culture and languages together with the lack of supportive networks are great hindrances for them to receive treatment services for drug rehabilitation. Whenever I see them succeed in having life change, I really feel that life is full of hope.



YIP Chai Fan  
Registered Social Worker

I have met many of my fellow countrymen lose their families and become homeless because of taking drugs. In view of this, I really want to be their role model and to share with them my successful experiences of detoxification and rehabilitation in Shek Kwu Chau. So, I decide to work in Shek Kwu Chau to assist them to find their way back and to reunion with their families, just like what I have achieved.



Thapa Magar, Ramu  
Group Leader

It is really a great challenge to overcome the language barrier when communicating with non-ethnic Chinese residents. Sometimes, body language is also used to make communication possible. In the halfway house, non-ethnic Chinese residents have different eating and drinking habits. We should show our respect and care for each other so that our sincerity can be felt by all.



YAN Ming Leung  
Warden

The non-ethnic Chinese residents I contacted are mainly Vietnamese. They seldom expressed themselves. I realised that as long as we take the initiative to care for them, it is not too hard to find that they are open-minded and straightforward as well as hard working.



MA Sek Kan  
Assistant Warden

## Concluding Remarks

SARDA's efforts in providing drug treatment and rehabilitation service for non-ethnic Chinese is manifested, from the newspaper column at the very beginning to the release of this publication under the same titled "No Drug Addict Left Behind". Based on the concept of whole person recovery, regardless of race, sex and age, SARDA develops and delivers services for non-ethnic Chinese drug abusers and their families in a holistic approach.

According to the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA) in 2019, the total number of reported non-ethnic Chinese drug abusers was 623. Among them, 230 were Nepalese, 112 were Vietnamese and the remaining 281 were of other races. In the first three quarters of 2020, the total number of reported non-ethnic Chinese drug abusers was 453, which reflected the situation was still a concern.

In response to the needs of non-ethnic Chinese drug abusers, we employed two full-time Nepalese staff in our Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre to serve the Nepalese drug abusers. A wide range of vocational training courses have been organized including painting class, carpentry class, bricklaying

and tiling class, exhibition booth setting and decoration training, etc. In addition, they participated in various accredited examinations by the Construction Industry Council. All these training can enhance the ability and skills of our non-ethnic Chinese rehabilitees which was vital for their reintegration into the society. A total of 146 non-ethnic Chinese drug abusers were admitted to four residential drug treatment and rehabilitation centres in 2019. In the first three quarters of 2020, we have provided drug treatment and rehabilitation services for 37 non-ethnic Chinese drug abusers and 296 non-ethnic Chinese cases were recruited in our methadone treatment counselling programmes.

Funded by Department of Health of Special Preventive Programme, SARDA has launched an outreach programme to provide HIV/AIDS preventive education to Nepalese and Vietnamese drug abusers every year.

To cater for the needs of non-ethnic Chinese youths, SARDA was sponsored by the Beat Drugs Fund to launch her project, "A Drug-free Pluralistic and Harmony Community" since July 2017. Adopting the community-based reaching out approach, the Project aims at disseminating drug preventive education and conducting some interest classes to the high-risk and hidden non-ethnic Chinese youths in the community.

Facing increasingly hidden nature of drug abuse in Hong Kong, SARDA shall continue to support the drug abusers and their families. Joining hands with the government and various stakeholders, SARDA aims at fostering Hong Kong as a healthy and harmonious city. Finally, I would like to make an appeal to the general public to accept, support and provide opportunities to rehabilitees to build a new life and reintegrate to the society.



Ms. Angelique TAM, JP  
Executive Director  
The Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of  
Drug Abusers (SARDA)



## About SARDA

The Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA) is established in 1961, is the largest provider of voluntary drug treatment and rehabilitation services in Hong Kong. SARDA adopts medical psycho-social counselling model, endeavours to provide free and diversified drug treatment and rehabilitation services to all drug abusers on a voluntary basis, regardless of age, gender, race and religion, helping drug abusers to build healthy lives, and actively collaborates with Government and stakeholders to promote anti-drug preventive education, creating a harmonious and inclusive society.

SARDA comprises four residential drug treatment and rehabilitation centres, including Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre, and also four social service centres and five halfway houses, which provide drug treatment, aftercare and supporting services for social reintegration. In addition, SARDA joins hands with Department of Health to provide individual and group counselling services in all methadone clinics.

SARDA stays ahead in the pursuit of a drug-free society and responds proactively to the needs of the disadvantaged. SARDA has gained awards and recognition from the society including "Nominator of Hong Kong Spirit Ambassador", "Top Ten Best Practice Social Services Projects by HK Council of Social Service", "Touching CSR Award of the Association of Distinguished Corporation" and "Hong Kong Ten Outstanding Community Services 2018".

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YOU GOT CHANCE Integrative Holistic Drug Treatment Outreaching Service	Tel & WhatsApp	: 5264 4716
Reaching Out Drug Prevention and Intervention for High-Risk Non-Chinese Ethnic Youth	Tel & WhatsApp	: 5547 3501
"Re-structuring Life · A Better Tomorrow" - Strengthening Inpatient and Aftercare Support for Drug Rehabilitates	Tel & WhatsApp	: 6467 0535
Project SARDA	Tel & WhatsApp	: 9667 9027
"Special Care for the Special Mothers" Residential Detoxification and Rehabilitation Project for Pregnant Women	Tel	: 2574 2311

Male Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre		Tel
Shek Kwu Chau Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre (Intake Service)		
- Hong Kong Social Service Centre	15/F., Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong	2838 2323
- East Kowloon Social Service Centre	Rm 405, Tower A, Hung Hom Commercial Centre, 37-39 Ma Tau Wai Rd., Kln.	2356 2663
- North Kowloon Social Service Centre	2/F., Hung Fuk House, 45-51 Fuk Wa St., Sham Shui Po, Kln.	2776 8271
Au Tau Youth Centre	2C Castle Peak Road, Yuen Long, N.T.	2478 7026

Female Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre		Tel
Sister Aquinas Memorial Women's Treatment Centre	13/F., Tak Wah Mansion, 290-294 Hennessy Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong	2574 2311
Adult Female Rehabilitation Centre	No. 2-3, 5-8, G/F., & No. 1-8, 2/F., Sun Ming House, Sun Chui Estate, Shatin, N.T.	2699 9936

### Methadone Treatment Programme Counselling Service

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## 機構簡介

香港戒毒會 (SARDA) 成立於 1961 年，為全港最大型的志願戒毒機構。以醫療及社會心理輔導模式，致力為不同年齡、性別、種族和宗教的自願人士，免費提供多元化的戒毒治療及康復服務，協助濫用藥物的人士建立健康人生，並與政府及持份者攜手推動禁毒預防教育，締造和諧共融社會。

本會轄下有四間住院式戒毒治療及康復中心，其中包括石鼓洲康復院，另設四間社會服務中心及五間中途宿舍，提供戒毒治療、善後輔導及重投社會的支援等服務。此外，本會在衛生署轄下全港美沙酮診所，提供個人及小組輔導服務。

香港戒毒會與時並進，積極回應弱勢社群的需求，得到社會各界的肯定，並獲得香港精神大使「提名機構」獎、「卓越實踐在社福獎勵計劃十大卓越服務獎」、「觸動社會慈善嘉許大獎」及「2018 香港十大優質社會服務」等殊榮。

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## No Drug Addict Left Behind

– Treatment and Rehabilitation for non-ethnic Chinese through a Holistic Approach

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(Designated services for Non-ethnic Chinese)

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The Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA), established in 1961, endeavours to provide treatment and rehabilitation services for all drug abusers regardless of age, gender, religion and race with whole person recovery approach. The Hotline is answered by registered social workers who offer emotional support, respond to inquiries on substance abuse problems and provide drug treatment referral services for the people in need and their parents.



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