



Donor's stories

WU ZHI QIAO CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

Wu Zhi Qiao (Bridge to China) encourages volunteers, especially students, to build bridges and other facilities in remote and poor villages in mainland China. Discover how they enlist the support of major donors.



“Our projects are more than just about building bridges. At Wu Zhi Qiao Charitable Foundation, we take bridge building and other village enrichment activities as a platform to engage students from Hong Kong and mainland China to enhance their understanding, provide life-changing learning experiences, and to build relationships. Our projects help build a spiritual bridge of minds and experiences - cementing people together is even more important.



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Wu Zhi Qiao Charitable Foundation began with a single charity bridge building project in 2005. Professor Edward Ng, founding chairman of the Foundation and professor in Architecture, built a footbridge with the help of local villagers as well as Hong Kong and mainland Chinese student volunteers. The footbridge

allowed children to easily get to school. Our bridge building projects have become meaningful learning experiences for young people, especially those from Hong Kong, because it gives them the opportunity to understand, live and work in rural areas and help those in need with their own hands.



“All our funding comes from individuals and corporate donors.”

We were fortunate to draw media attention for the first project, and received international recognition and overwhelming support and donation from the Society. A major Hong Kong television station filmed a documentary about the project, which also helped to spread the word. In 2007, key founders of the Foundation, including Leonie Ki and Sir David Akers Jones came together to expand this single charity project into a greater initiative. So far, we have engaged support and participation from over 20 universities from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and US, and the list is growing.

All of our funding comes from individuals and corporate donors. New World Development, a family run company in Hong Kong, and several founding donors provided us with seed funding when we first established the Foundation. We also have key project sponsors including Victoria Education Organisation, Wharf, Goldman Sachs, etc.

One of our major donors at the million dollar level has been the Lee Hysan Foundation, a private family foundation which has supported meaningful and impactful charity initiatives in Hong Kong for over 40 years. They sponsored our village rebuild demonstration project, following the Sichuan earthquake in 2008, where we built footbridge but also helped villagers to rebuild their homes and community. The project gained international recognition, including the UNESCO award.

We are grateful that we have the trust and staunch support from the Lee Hysan Foundation and they have encouraged us to build up our capacity and become more sustainable. We now have a five-year commitment of support from them to upscale and build up our infrastructure and knowledge.

Spending donor money is a serious job. If others trust you with their money, you must manage it well, even more so than your own. No matter whether the donor is giving a large or small gift, every dollar must be spent wisely.

In terms of balancing major gifts with smaller ones, we try to mix the two. As a charitable foundation, we have to maintain our independence rather than staying too close to a specific party. It is good for us to receive support from different companies and people from different walks of life. We value both large and small donations – even if the amount is different, we spend every dollar in a worthwhile way and report back to donors. We do find that corporate donors increasingly want to engage their staff in their philanthropy. In addition to financially supporting Wu Zhi Qiao, for example, they might have their staff volunteer on a sponsored project.



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We do work to measure our impact. We look at quantitative items like the number of bridges built or people trained. For qualitative measures, after projects have been completed, we do encourage our students to conduct debriefing and share their reflections. Some of our teams also champion further charity initiatives, fundraising acts, or become leaders for next projects and influence others.



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Reporting to donors on our impact has helped us to do our work better. We have conducted evaluations, reviews and tried to crystallise our past experiences to develop manuals, systems and strategies to improve our operation and enhance the learning experience of our students. This has helped us to come to a place where we are ready to scale up our work.

Potential donors should know the charity they want to give to quite well. If donors focus too much on the measurable impacts, this may potentially divert the charity's efforts. There is an art and science of giving. Donors should have parameters measuring the success of a charity cause, but the charity should have space to strive for the best for the cause, not just for a good report. Donors need to identify the charity people with a heart, and also have trust in the charity to spend their gifts wisely, and should give the charity the space to be innovative.

Charities must be transparent. No matter how much the amount they receive, it's important to maintain credibility and be responsible in order to gain the trust of the donor.”