

5.12 Three Months On

Spiritual Support

When the massive earthquake struck China's Sichuan Province on May 12, one of Hong Kong's immediate responses was to send medical teams to the stricken area to assist in providing emergency care, and also to assess the human damage in preparation for possible longer-term help. Dr Ho Pak-leung 何柏良 (photo below, 1st row, 3rd right), an Associate Professor of Microbiology at The University of Hong Kong, was part of a three-member infection-control team that made the trip.

Dr Ho says his team brought along the expected items: surgical implements, drugs, vaccines and disinfectants. The team also brought medicine for the soul: books, toys and – as Dr Ho later put it in an interview with the *South China Morning Post* – “spiritual support” for the survivors. “The spiritual support Hong Kong doctors provided to the people there is more important than the physical help the team could provide,” he said in the interview.



Volunteers are Crucial

Soon after the earthquake struck, China reported that billions of renminbi worth of donations had begun arriving from around the country and abroad. But experience has shown that in natural disasters of this magnitude – 92,000 dead or missing, almost 374,000 injured, millions left homeless – much more than money is needed before relief and reconstruction efforts can begin to rebuild shattered lives. Volunteers are needed on the ground to help with rescue and relief. Experts in engineering, earth sciences and logistics are needed to advise affected governments on assessing the damage, moving relief materials, training local staff and making long-term plans. Psychologists and social workers are needed to help survivors deal with trauma and grief.



*Photos courtesy of Dr Ho Pak-leung

The HKU Response

The Vice-Chancellor's Appeal

In big ways and small, the staff, faculty, students, alumni and associated organisations of The University of Hong Kong have become a part of the worldwide effort to provide just this type of multi-faceted assistance.

University Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui released a call on May 16 for the HKU community to respond to the emergency. "I appeal to all HKU staff, students and alumni to offer whatever support they can, in whatever form that may take, to help those in Sichuan who will have to rebuild their lives after surviving such monumental destruction," Professor Tsui said in a statement.

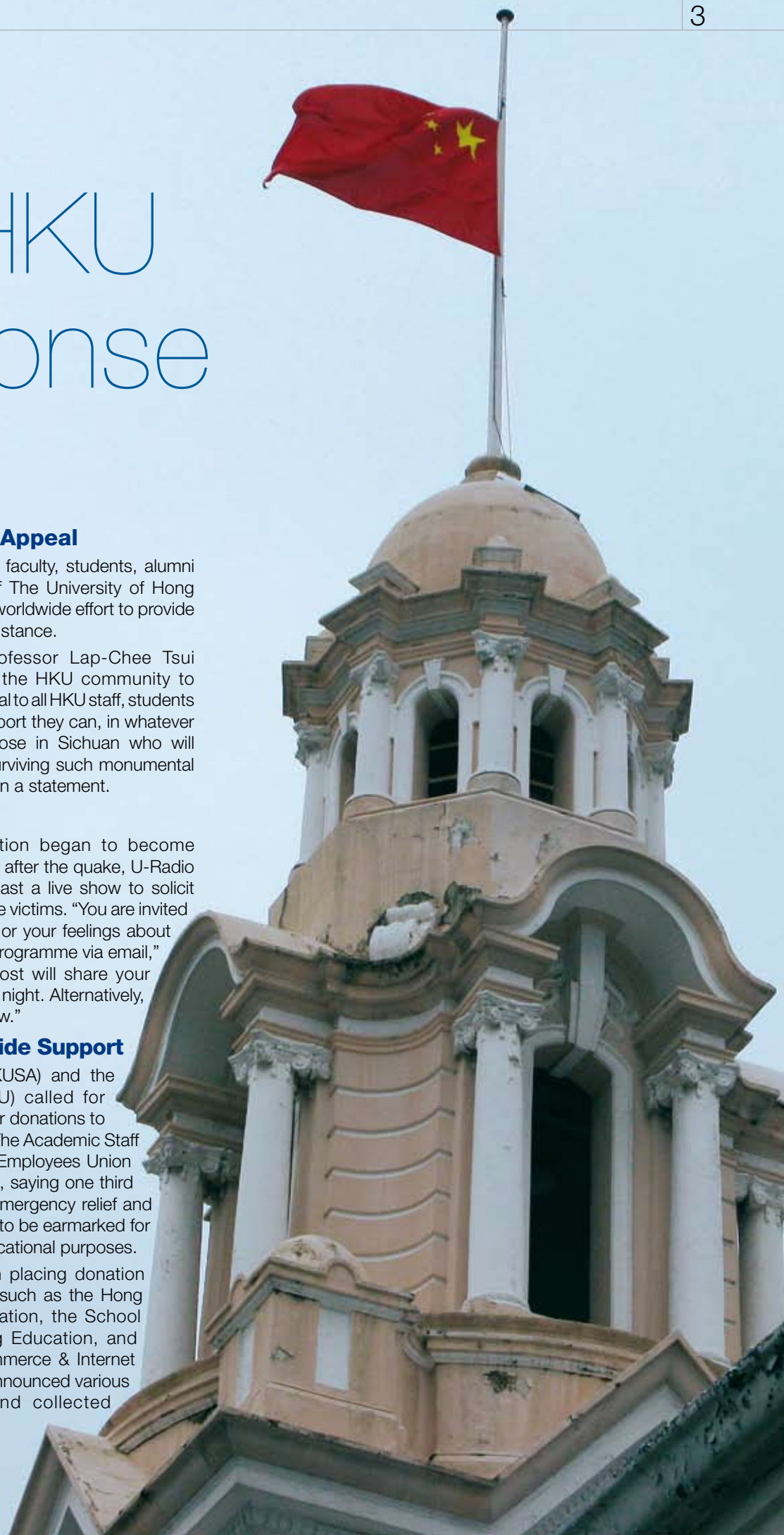
Words of Blessings

As the extent of the destruction began to become apparent in the days immediately after the quake, U-Radio announced that it would broadcast a live show to solicit donations and good wishes for the victims. "You are invited to send your words of blessings or your feelings about the earthquake to this live radio programme via email," an announcement said. "The host will share your messages with the audience that night. Alternatively, you may phone in during the show."

A Show of University-Wide Support

The HKU Staff Association (HKUSA) and the HKU Students' Union (HKUSU) called for donations via salary deductions or donations to the Red Cross Society of China. The Academic Staff Association (ASA) and the HKU Employees Union (HKUEU) also solicited donations, saying one third would go to the Red Cross for emergency relief and the rest to the Community Chest to be earmarked for rebuilding schools and other educational purposes.

HKUSU joined the University in placing donation boxes around campus. Groups such as the Hong Kong University Alumni Association, the School of Professional and Continuing Education, and the Master of Science in E-Commerce & Internet Computing Alumni Association announced various fund-raising performances and collected donations.



Expertise at All Levels

Geotechnical Specialist

This is a university, however. HKU faculty and alumni are in a position to donate more than mere cash, and they have done so, lending their professional and academic expertise to the relief effort.

Professor C F Lee 李焯芬 (BSc(Eng) 1968; MSc(Eng) 1970) (photo below), Academician, Chinese Academy of Engineering, HKU Chair Professor of Geotechnical Engineering, is a civil engineer expert who was involved in the reconstruction of Tangshan after the devastating 1976 earthquake there. Professor Lee predicts that reconstruction in Sichuan will require five to ten years, and he has offered his expertise for the effort. Quite a few others connected with HKU say they, too, expect to contribute on an on-going basis.

A Journalistic Perspective

The China Media Project (CMP) of the Journalism and Media Studies Centre (JMSC), which regularly researches and analyses the Chinese news media, has been providing steady, up-to-date commentary and analysis of the earthquake story through its web site (<http://cmp.hku.hk>). This includes columns by CMP co-director Qian Gang 錢鋼, a researcher at the JMSC. Qian is the author of the award-winning book *The Great Tangshan Earthquake* 唐山大地震, which tells the story of the 1976 quake that killed at almost 240,000 people, and since May 12 he has given dozens of interviews to journalists in Hong Kong and abroad, helping to put the Sichuan disaster into perspective.

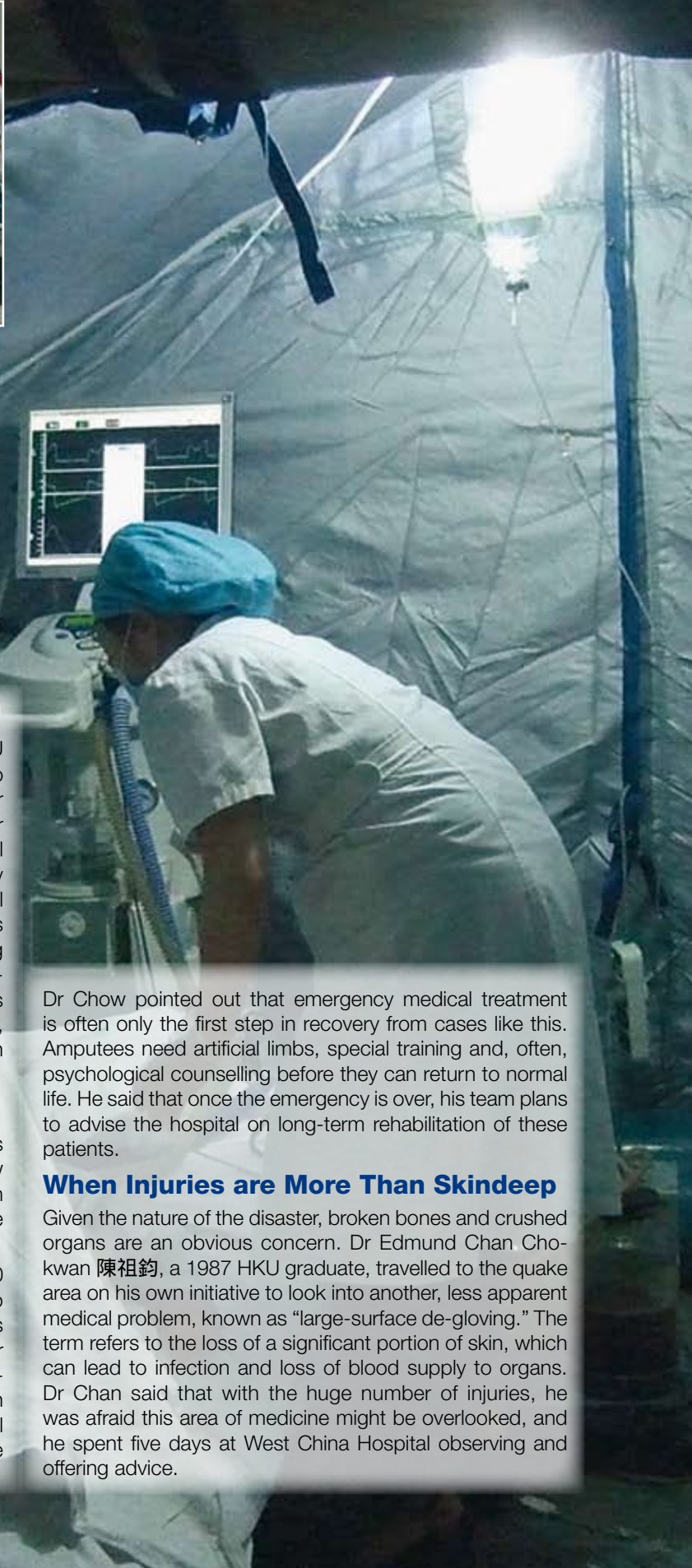
Building From Ground-Zero

What goes down in an earthquake must go back up if life is to return to normal. Albert Lai 黎廣德, a civil engineer and graduate of HKU in 1980, is Chairman of the local volunteer group Engineers Without Borders (EWB) 無國界工程師. He said the organisation sent a survey team to the disaster area in May, and has created three working groups to assist in the construction of temporary buildings and the reconstruction of infrastructure and schools.

Understanding Mother Nature

The Department of Earth Sciences held a special public lecture on May 29 designed to explain why the disaster happened, and how, from a geological point of view. Among the speakers were Professor John Malpas, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Chair of Earth Sciences, and Professor Chan Lung-sang 陳龍生, Professor in the Department of Earth Sciences.





At West China Hospital

HKU microbiologist Ho Pak-leung 何柏良, a 1989 HKU graduate, was part of the three-member team sent to Sichuan on May 19 by the Hong Kong Hospital Authority. Dr Ho told the *South China Morning Post* that one of the major treatment centres, the 4,000-bed West China Hospital 華西醫院 in the provincial capital Chengdu, was seriously short of disinfectants. He said he asked the Hospital Authority to supply more alcohol, and tetanus vaccines for patients with open wounds. He said the Hong Kong team advised doctors both at the hospital and in less-developed areas on controlling infections. Rural hospitals in the affected region had no expertise in this area at all, he said, and patients were receiving treatment, and even undergoing surgery, in tents.

A Joint Effort Saves Lives

Another Hong Kong physician sent to Sichuan was Dr Chow Yuk-yin 周育賢, a 1984 graduate of HKU and now Chief of Orthopaedic and Traumatology Services at Tuen Mun Hospital. Dr Chow was part of a four-member advance team sent to West China Hospital shortly after the quake.

Dr Chow said the hospital was swamped with up to 400 orthopaedic cases from the earthquake, people who suffered broken bones and crushing injuries as buildings collapsed around them. He said there have been a number of amputations, including both crushed legs of one 16-year-old girl. The Hong Kong team was eventually given charge of one of the hospital's wards, assisted by ten local doctors, and additional medical staff from Hong Kong were being flown in to help.

Dr Chow pointed out that emergency medical treatment is often only the first step in recovery from cases like this. Amputees need artificial limbs, special training and, often, psychological counselling before they can return to normal life. He said that once the emergency is over, his team plans to advise the hospital on long-term rehabilitation of these patients.

When Injuries are More Than Skindeep

Given the nature of the disaster, broken bones and crushed organs are an obvious concern. Dr Edmund Chan Chokwan 陳祖鈞, a 1987 HKU graduate, travelled to the quake area on his own initiative to look into another, less apparent medical problem, known as "large-surface de-gloving." The term refers to the loss of a significant portion of skin, which can lead to infection and loss of blood supply to organs. Dr Chan said that with the huge number of injuries, he was afraid this area of medicine might be overlooked, and he spent five days at West China Hospital observing and offering advice.

Psychological and Sociological Care

The Trauma of Loss

Emergency medical treatment for disaster victims can last for weeks. Treating the psychological trauma that results from personal injuries, loss of loved ones and disrupted lives can take years. Members and alumni of HKU's Department of Social Work and Social Administration have risen to the occasion, providing on-the-spot help for traumatised victims, along with written advice and offers to aid in post-disaster co-ordination and treatment.

Relief Logistics

Professor Joe Leung Cho-bun 梁祖彬 (BSoc 1971; MA 1978; PhD 1990) of the University's Social Work and Social Administration Department is an expert in social welfare in China. He and a group of specialists flew to Beijing on June 4 for a previously arranged meeting with China's Deputy Minister of Civil Affairs. They were told that volunteer relief workers and supervisors are still needed on the spot, but an even greater need is for experts in logistics.

Language Barrier

He said his group was also invited to send volunteer social workers to Sichuan and Gansu Provinces to train local staff in dealing with disaster victims. Working directly with the victims would pose a problem for the Hong Kong experts, he noted, a problem that is common in China and one that Dr Ho, the microbiologist, said he already encountered during his visit to Chengdu in May: many of the victims, especially in rural areas, speak only their local dialect, while most Hongkongers speak only Cantonese and perhaps Putonghua.

Professor Leung said the HKU Social Work and Social Administration Department is co-operating with Beijing Normal University 北京師範大學 to provide knowledge about disaster management, and he said much of this information will be placed on the World Wide Web, for Chinese officials to consult.



Capacity Building

The Social Work and Social Administration Department's Professor Cecilia Chan 陳麗雲 (BSocSc 1978; MSocSc 1984; PhD 1991), Si Yuan Professor in Health and Social Work at HKU and Director of the Centre on Behavioral Health, has contributed articles to another web site, set up by several HKU departments, called "China Earthquake: HKU Action." The articles list ways to deal with affected children and with grieving in general.

Dr Paul S F Yip 葉兆輝 is director of the Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention. He was in Sichuan in the aftermath of the quake to determine how Hong Kong can contribute to the psychological healing of the severely traumatised.

Dr Yip said the visit was arranged by the Peter K K Lee Care for Life Foundation, a suicide-prevention organisation, and included representatives from The University of Hong Kong, Peking University, Tsinghua University and local government organisations in Sichuan. The group's main aim, he said, will be building up local workers' capacity to treat post-traumatic psychological problems. "Our job is to find out what they need and strengthen their capacity-building," Professor Yip said.

今天，汶川不是地名



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今天，汶川不是地名。

今天，汶川，是我們每個人的名字。

在悠遠的汽笛聲中垂首默立，任五月的雨水和淚水交匯。這是揮別的一刻：向母親、父親、兒子、女兒、妻子、丈夫、戀人、老師、學生、朋友、同事、鄰居……；向五月十二日十四時二十八分前的平淡、忙碌、盼望、失望、憂愁、歡喜……那些習焉不察的溫馨日子。

因為汶川，我一次次想起唐山。我不由驚訝：唐山地震三十二年之後，無論是逝者還是生者，此時全都完整地存在。三十二年，唐山，有過無數祭奠，社會、集體、家庭，乃至心靈。它不再僅僅是別離和悲傷，而成為與親人友人間的相會與祝福。唐山地震讓二十四萬生靈消失，可是，它留下了一個名叫「唐山」的完整生命。那位向汶川災區捐款億元的唐山孤兒，讓你看到廢墟上生命的成長。



今天的汶川祭奠，一定也只是短暫的告別。生命，並非僅僅是呼吸和心跳。生離死別，不是生命的邊界。親人們沒有離去，一切都將延續。在廢墟上嘹亮的嬰兒啼哭聲裡，一個叫做「汶川」的新生命，今天降生。

活著，並不容易。用更好的「活著」告慰親人，要有更大的勇氣和智慧。今天，是抗震救災第八天，嚴峻的考驗正一一迫近，我們需要更為內斂的情感與明澈的理性。

願所有的逝者安息！

請所有的生者，擦乾眼淚，繼續！



科学重建 求实重建 安全重建 快速重建 发展重建

“Universities, as knowledge hubs, should contribute their expertise not only to the short-term redevelopment of the quake areas, but also the long-term knowledge-based catastrophe management worldwide.”

Professor S P Chow
Pro-Vice-Chancellor

The “512 Earthquake Roundtable” 「512 地震圓桌會議」, convened by Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor S P Chow 周肇平教授, consists of members of the University, staff, students, alumni and friends, who are contributing to formulate plans for action.

The “512 Earthquake Roundtable Fund” 「512 地震重建基金」 has been set up to provide seed money to support the rebuilding initiatives of the HKU Family. The University warmly welcomes collaborations with all sectors of the community and the government in this worthy endeavour.

512 Earthquake Roundtable

- June 7: Over sixty HKU family members met to formulate various relief proposals.
- June 21: “Wenchuan Earthquake: The Situation, Needs and Government Plans” by Professor Zhang Xiulan 張秀蘭 (1), Beijing Normal University, Director of the Research Centre for Disaster Reduction and Emergency Management Policy, Academy of Disaster and Emergency Management, Ministry of Civil Affairs and Ministry of Education, and Professor Su Youpo 蘇幼坡 (2), Dean, School of Architecture and Engineering, Hebei Polytechnic University 河北理工大學.
- July 11: “Challenges for Chinese Governance in the Response to 512 Catastrophe” 512 汶川大地震巨災對中國公共治理的挑戰 by Professor Braven Zhang Qiang 張強 (3), Secretary-General of the Wenchuan Earthquake Taskforce (WET) 汶川地震應對政策專家行動組秘書長.
- July 19: “Crisis and Disaster Medical Operation of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) - Hardware and Software, Strategies and Tactics” 解放軍的大型災難應急醫療管理軟硬件建設•策略與手段 by Professor Zhang Lulu 張鷺鷺 (4), Institute of the PLA Military Health Management Research, and lectures by Professors C F Lee and L S Chan, HKU.



Catastrophe Management Initiative: HKU and BNU

On July 27, The University of Hong Kong and the Beijing Normal University (BNU) 北京師範大學 officially signed a Memorandum of Collaboration in Chengdu, Sichuan, to launch a pioneering partnership in a large-scale Catastrophe Management Initiative (CMI) 「巨災管理工程」 in response to the Sichuan Earthquake.

The CMI will be the first-of-its-kind and the most comprehensive, holistic and integrated project in Hong Kong and the Mainland that addresses all aspects of catastrophe management, ranging from rehabilitation to reconstruction and redevelopment, at both policy and practice levels.

Professor Cecilia Chan, Si Yuen Professor in Health and Social Work, Director of the Centre of Behavioral Health, HKU 思源基金教授 (健康及社會工作學) / 行為健康教研中心總監陳麗雲教授, is a member of the "512 Earthquake Roundtable" Steering Committee.



Projects under the Catastrophe Management Initiative (CMI) include:

- **The first Annual Global Dialogue of the Wenchuan Earthquake in Mianyang 綿陽 on November 12, 2008**
- **Resource Map (GIS System) to link demand and supply**
- **Student Services and Training**
- **Pre-school Programme for Children aged 3 to 6**
- **Psychosocial Intervention**
- **Health and Mental Health Intervention**
- **Survey on Survivors**
- **Establishment of Centres for Rehabilitation, Youth and Elderly**
- **Public Awareness Campaign & Support Mobilisation**



From left, front row: Professor Han Zhen, Vice-President of BNU, and Professor Chow Shew-ping, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of HKU. Back row, starting 4th from left: Ms Liu Chuan-sheng, Chairperson of the University Council, BNU, Ms Huang Yan-rong, Vice Governor of Sichuan Provincial People's Government, and Mr Shan Chun-chang, State Councillor cum Deputy Director, Expert Committee of the National Disaster Reduction Commission.

前排左起:北師大副校長韓震教授及港大副校長周肇平教授;後排左四起:北師大黨委書記劉川生女士,四川省副省長黃彥蓉女士及國務院參事暨國家減災委專家委員會副主任閃淳昌先生



Professor S P Chow visits Xia Hailin 夏海林 and her father at the transient housing facilities in Huangtu, Mianyang 綿陽市安縣黃土鎮過渡安置板房區. Hailin who is ten years old now is busy with her English homework. She hopes to go to school again when the new term starts.

The CMI is just an important example and a beginning of how visionary ideas can be realised through concerted efforts. Many inspiring quake-related initiatives are being put into action. You are welcome to support and contribute to this long-term project.

www.hku.hk/chinaearthquake/