

Microsoft Joins Forces with HKCSS to Empower NGOs Through Cloud Computing and Social Media

*Findings of a new survey reveal about 30 percent of Hong Kong youth
have been exposed to Internet security risks*

Hong Kong – June 8, 2010 – Hong Kong youth today spends an average of 20 hours on the Internet every week, with social networking being the most popular activity, according to a survey commissioned by Microsoft Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS). The survey also found that 80 percent of young people were not monitored when they are online and approximately 30 percent have been exposed to Internet security risks.

The results of this survey, conducted by the Public Opinion Programme, the University of Hong Kong, were announced today at NGO Day 2010, where Microsoft committed to empowering local non-governmental organizations (NGO) to utilize new technology and social trends such as cloud computing and social networking tools to improve their services while minimizing security and privacy risks.

“Creating a digitally inclusive society in Hong Kong is our long-term corporate citizenship goal,” said Peter Yeung, general manager of Microsoft Hong Kong. “One of the ways we aim to achieve this is by enabling local NGOs to access and benefit from the latest technologies that bring better affordability, enhanced management and new productivity. Through this year’s NGO Day, we help NGOs learn about the best ways to interact with a new generation through social media and cloud computing, while avoiding the consequent security and privacy risks of these new trends in IT.”

Cloud Computing and Social Media – A New Trend for NGO Outreach and Service

At NGO Day 2010, Microsoft highlighted that as cloud computing and online social networking become more popular, there will be more possibilities and opportunities for NGOs to connect with beneficiaries and donors, and achieve new efficiency in providing their services. However, the rise in popularity of this trend is also creating new challenges in terms of privacy and security. Not only do NGOs need to be aware of these issues, but, as frontline experts on youth affairs, many of them are also well-positioned to act as a channel of communication between the younger generation and cyber-security experts.

"The high usage of social media by Hong Kong youth creates new opportunities for NGOs," said Jeremy Godfrey, Government Chief Information Officer (GCIO). "To ensure that they can continue serving the community as effectively as possible, Hong Kong's NGOs are encouraged to start appreciating the capacity of the latest cloud technologies and social media platforms in reaching a new generation of Hong Kong citizens. A tripartite partnership that combines the resources, expertise and experience of NGOs, the IT sector and the Government, will be highly effective in empowering Hong Kong's NGOs."

"IT can play a vital role in helping NGOs deliver their services more effectively and efficiently," said Christine Fang, chief executive of HKCSS. "The [HKU] survey reveals that Hong Kong NGOs are facing a Web 2.0 era where communications and service provisioning can be much enhanced with new technologies. In service development aspect, NGOs should proactively develop online services to address the needs of the community and to reach them through various online platforms, especially to our youngsters. Furthermore, Internet education should be extended beyond the scope of basic technical skills in protecting the PCs. More important is to enhance the awareness of our youngsters on problems and risks in the cyberspace, and to help them develop ethical conduct and correct attitude in using the Internet."

Online Security a Major Concern of Hong Kong's Digitally Active Youth

At today's event, the Public Opinion Programme of the University of Hong Kong revealed the findings of the survey conducted in April and May that investigated into the online behavior of Hong Kong youth aged from 12 to 23.

The survey indicated that nearly 100 percent of Hong Kong's youth are actively online, with more than 50 percent among the group using the Internet mainly for social networking. On average, Hong Kong youth spend 20 hours per week online, with 7.7 of those hours dedicated to social networking sites among the social media users -- more than an hour a day. The main reason for using social media is to keep in touch with friends (73 percent) and to share information (26 percent).

Despite this high usage of the Internet, 80 percent of respondents claim that their online activities have never been restricted by a parent or any other type of guardian. At the same time, 82 percent claim to be concerned about security when using the internet, but only 36 percent of the respondents have ever installed anti-virus software. Worryingly, approximately 30 percent have been exposed to at least one or more privacy and security risk, such as hacking, viruses, disclosure of private information, phishing or harassment.

Donating HK\$3.4 Million and Appointing Microsoft Student Volunteers to Support NGOs

Microsoft also announced a HK\$3.4 million cash and in-kind donation to NGOs. The donation, channeled through Microsoft's Unlimited Potential program, will be provided to HKCSS and four NGOs to further improve the operation of their 6 Community Technology Learning Centers (CTLC). Run by NGOs, these centers provide IT training to enhance the employability of disadvantaged groups. Since 2003, Microsoft has donated more than HK\$38 million in cash and software to help NGOs establish 47 CTLCs in Hong Kong, which have benefitted 530,000 people.

Additionally, Microsoft launched a "Microsoft Student Volunteers" program, which nourishes a group of young students with an opportunity to build their IT knowledge and social skills by acting as voluntary IT tutors at CTLCs. This program provides an invaluable opportunity for schools to develop their own "Other learning experiences (OLE)" programs under the new academic "334" structure. At the same time, NGOs also enjoy the benefits of having additional IT resources provided by these trained student volunteers to further improve the quality of CTLC courses.

NGO Day is an annual event co-organized by Microsoft Hong Kong and HKCSS to enhance the IT capabilities and know-how of the local NGO community. This year's event was attended by around 200 representatives from Hong Kong's public, private and NGO sectors.

###