

## The Difference We Make

“Thanks to the work of Leaders’ Quest in China and to its rich and accessible network, I was introduced to an organisation that has enabled us to turn a new page in China’s social work history. Not only have we begun to significantly raise the profile of a marginalised section of society, we have pioneered the first officially-registered, non-governmental organisation in China that is sponsored by a private company (Flextronics) and backed by the Chinese government.”

**Richard Wong, VP, Global Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee Relations, Flextronics**

Flextronics, one of our hosts in China, is a leading global electronics manufacturer with over 100,000 Chinese employees, 90,000 of whom are migrant workers. In late 2006, Richard identified an increasing strategic requirement to address the needs and aspirations of migrant workers in China. On his request, Leaders’ Quest, through our partner ActionAid China, introduced him to ‘Culture and Communications Center for Facilitators’ (CCCCF), a Beijing-based NGO committed to migrant worker issues, and another LQ host and LQ Foundation beneficiary.

“For me, migrant workers are our unsung heroes. 90% of our employees are migrant workers – they’ve helped China become a manufacturing giant. Unfortunately, while their basic economic needs might have been met, many of their other needs, including emotional and developmental, haven’t been sufficiently addressed.”

There are thought to be over 130 million migrant workers in China, often living a lonely and harsh existence. Despite some reforms, they are often denied rights to adequate health and education services and are vulnerable to exploitative working conditions. Many have left their families in search of a better life as the ever-increasing disparity between rural and urban incomes has spurred rural workers to move to the cities in search of better pay.

“The aim of the collaboration between Flextronics and CCCC was to bring to the forefront the difficulties faced by migrant workers in urban environments, as well as their positive contribution to the growth and prosperity of China. We began in 2007 by sponsoring a photo exhibition and drama performance – ‘A Migrant Worker’s Beautiful Expectation’ – in major cities throughout China that was an amazing success, and the performances generated significant TV, radio and print media coverage.”



Flextronics' Zhuhai factory, workplace to some 54,000 migrant workers

Continuing the momentum and after two years of careful planning, Flextronics provided seed capital to help CCCF set up the Zhuhai Social Work and Education Development Center for Facilitators (SWEDCF) in Xinqin Industrial Park in Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, one of the major economic hubs of south China and home to some 30 million migrant workers. Launched in May 2009, the centre aims to provide counselling, advice on social welfare issues, legal aid and training for migrant workers, as well as educational and recreational programmes for their children – all free of charge. The centre also seeks to promote social work by training volunteers, and organises activities to promote the better integration of migrants into the local community. SWEDCF is the first officially-registered, non-governmental organisation in China that is sponsored by a private company and backed by the Chinese government, establishing a brand new 'tripartite' social partnership model in China.

"We are the largest employer in Zhuhai with some 60,000 employees. It is impossible for us to build a community unless migrant workers have a sense of belonging. We also cannot build a sustainable business unless Zhuhai is a vibrant, harmonious community that attracts and retains talent. SWEDCF is not a mere service institution for Flextronics but serves the greater community and I hope that other companies will also show their support for the growth of such community service centres. Indeed, our partnership with CCCF does not end with the launch of SWEDCF. Very much in line with our company CSR goals to deliver sustainable impact throughout the global communities in which we live and work, we want to continue to be a bridge between NGOs, government and other enterprises to facilitate dialogue and joint partnerships to make migrant talent-related work sustainable."



Team building workshop for migrant worker volunteers, SWEDCF

The CCCF partnership model has been so successful that Flextronics has struck a similar partnership with Hand-in-Hand, an Indian NGO dedicated to women's health, to establish and operate a women's health services centre near its plant at Chennai, India. It is also exploring a partnership with a similar NGO in Penang, Malaysia. Furthermore, as a core member of Global Business Initiative on Human Rights, Flextronics plans to host a conference with its major customers and suppliers, and government officials, to discuss how electronics companies operating in China can help improve human rights compliance throughout the supply chain and address the changing needs of migrant workers in the country.



Telling their stories through drama to promote mutual understanding between migrant workers and management, SWEDCF

The relationship has also been particularly important for CCCF, which had previously only worked with charitable foundations in China on a project basis. It has enabled CCCF to partner with a wide range of stakeholders – businesses, government, migrant workers and their families, and residents – in a new model for China, and has opened up to it a new geographic location, from Beijing to China's Pearl River Delta Zone.

"It has really allowed us to develop our organisation strategically and improve our professional capacity to serve our target audience. We are truly grateful to Leaders' Quest without whom we would probably never have made this connection. Over the years, LQ has given us the opportunity to encounter outstanding people, excellent ideas and concepts, as well as to learn from many differing points of view. On a personal level, by meeting with some of the world-class leaders brought to us by LQ and sharing experiences and best practices, I have grown substantially in confidence, power and commitment to continue the journey I have chosen. Having been working on the plight of migrant workers for some considerable years now, I have seen so much of the darker side of humanity. Meeting and communicating with outstanding people through Quest visits re-energises me with positive thoughts and courage. It has also enabled me to see another side to working with companies who employ migrant workers. It is not all about the conflict between profit-pursuing employers and hardworking migrant workers. It has provided me and CCCF with the opportunity to witness significant change, and to meet people in the business world who want to safeguard the well-being of their staff and bring about all round positive progress."

**Li Tao, Founder and Chief Coordinator, CCCF**