III.   *Research Findings*

This survey aimed to understand the situation and concerns, if any, of using Internet communication tools for youth service among the local NGOs. The key findings are highlighted as follows, please refer to the respective frequency tables for more details (Appendix II). It should be noted that, figures reported hereafter have been rounded up to the nearest integers after considering the second decimal place, hence some figures may appear not in agreement with those in Appendix II which are presented in one decimal place.

I)   Current Situation of Youth Service Provision

3.1   The survey began by investigating what methods these organizations used when communicating with their youth targets. Results showed that majority of the NGOs interviewed in this survey usually used "social networking websites" (70%) to communicate with the youth nowadays. Those who used "telephone", "face-to-face interviews/ home visits", "email" and "instant messaging apps" as communicating tools accounted for 60%, 58%, 49% and 42% of the sample respectively. Meanwhile, less than one-fifth each would communicate with the youth via "SMS" (15%), "websites" (15%) and "publications/ letters" (13%). While "online instant messengers" (9%) and "blogs" (9%) each accounted for less than one-tenth of the sample, other less commonly cited means included "activities" (6%), "online forums" (2%) and "street outreach" (2%). Please refer to Table 1 in Appendix II for more details on other channels cited by the respondents.

II)   Comparison with Traditional Communication Methods

3.2   Compared with the traditional methods, what were the advantage(s) of using Internet communication tools to reach out to the youth? More than 60% of the NGOs interviewed appreciated its "fast / instant responses" (62%). Followed at a distance, nearly two-fifths of the representatives thought Internet communication tools were "easy to be accepted by the youth" (38%) and a quarter found them "convenient" (25%). Besides, 17% of the NGOs thought using these tools "could reach the youth proactively", around one-tenth said it was "easy to keep in touch

with the youth" (11%) and "made the youth more willing to voice their feelings and difficulties" (9%). "Free from geographical constraints", "able to reach a wider scope of teenagers" and "low cost" each accounted for 8% of the sample. Other less commonly named advantages included "leaving record for analysis" (6%), "one-to-one interaction to enhance privacy" (4%), "increasing the youth's sense of security" (2%), "reaching the youth who always stay at home" (2%) and "easy to establish relationships based on mutual trust" (2%). Merely 2% of respondents thought these tools had "no advantage" at all. For the details on other advantages suggested by the respondents, please refer to Table 2 in Appendix II.

3.3   As for the restriction(s) or difficult(ies) of using Internet communication tools to reach out to the youth, nearly one-fifth of the NGOs considered "inability to obtain instant responses" (17%) as one of the major problems. At the same time, 15% and 13% respectively regarded "the youth may not have or use the tools" and "inability to pay attention to the youth's facial expression and gestures" as obstacles. Next, 11% each said they had concerns over the "need to conduct counseling at night or after midnight" and "insufficient resources or manpower", while 9% each said it would be difficult to "keep in touch with the youth", "identify the youth's problem", "ensure information reliability" and "express thoroughly by words", followed by the concern that "social workers might not be familiar with latest devices / Internet tools" (8%). Other less commonly cited concerns included "it seemed unreal" (6%), "difficult to seek out the youth in need through the Internet" (6%), "privacy protection" (6%), "difficult to understand the youth" (2%) and "social workers could not keep track of online information / topics" (2%). However, 8% believed there was no restriction and difficulties at all in using Internet communication tools to reach out to and communicate with the youth. Meanwhile, another 9% opted for "don't know / hard to say". Please refer to Table 3 in Appendix II for more details on other limitations cited by the respondents.

3.4   Generally speaking, social workers in half of the NGOs interviewed used "multiple accounts" (51%) to handle youth services whereas one-third used "one account" (34%) and 6% had "no account" at all. The remaining 9% of representatives opted for "don't know / hard to say" when asked about the social workers' practice in this regard in his / her organization (Table 4).

3.5   On disclosing identities on the Internet, more than half (53%) of the NGOs interviewed did not provide any guideline to their social workers on the disclosure

of their own identities when using Internet communication tools to reach out to the youth as contrast to 42% did so. The remaining 6% of respondents did not have a clue (Table 5).

3.6   Assuming there was an "organization cloud" system, which could assist the front-line social workers to streamline their daily work in using Internet communication tools to reach out to the youth and handle the information of the target groups , all respondents were asked to evaluate, on a scale of 0 to 10, the usefulness of a system that allowed users to use a single login name to handle multiple Internet communication accounts in helping social workers to handle daily tasks, with 0 representing no help at all, 5 representing half-half and 10 representing great help. Most of the respondents gave "6-7" marks (40%), leading to an average score of 6.6 marks, meaning the NGOs generally inclined to recognize the usefulness of the system with this function (standard error: 0.28, Table 6).

3.7   Under the same assumption, another question was asked which concerned about the usefulness of a system that enabled the setting up of different discussion groups for youths to share content while information access right and content could be managed by the social workers, using the same scale of 0-10. Similarly, 40% gave 6-7 marks, with an overall mean score at 6.0, meaning the NGOs also tended to think this system would be helpful to social workers (standard error: 0.27, Table 7).

3.8   Likewise, the NGO representatives were further asked to evaluate the usefulness of a cloud-based system that enabled multimedia connections with the youth, such as text messages, voice messages and video, using the same rating scale of 0-10. The average score obtained was 6.5, meaning the NGO representatives generally considered such system useful to their daily work (standard error: 0.28, Table 8).

III)   Directions for Youth Service Development

3.9   With regards to the suggestions that would help encourage the youth to use Internet communication tools more when communicating with social workers, almost one-third thought the "content and information of platforms should match youth's taste or interest" (32%), followed at a distance by "promotion" (15%) and "easy / convenient for the youth to use" (11%). Other less commonly cited suggestions included "having social workers / staff to always provide instant

response" (9%), "setting up discussion forums" (8%), "setting up chat rooms" (4%), "launching Internet games" (2%), "regular activities for creative exchanges" (2%), "setting up Internet radio" (2%) and "setting up schemes that encourage frequent browsing" (2%). Meanwhile, 8% and 26% opted for "no possible method" and "don't know / hard to say" respectively (Table 9).

3.10   In terms of future allocation of resources, 47% of the NGO representatives interviewed anticipated their organization would increase resources in the coming year to further promote the use of Internet communication tools in youth service, in contrast to 43% who thought the opposite. The remaining 9% replied "don't know / hard to say" to the question (Table 10).

3.11   Results also revealed that, "well-equipped computer facilities" topped the list of NGOs' most needed IT support when using Internet communication tools to provide youth services, as cited by two-fifths of the sample (40%). Slightly over one-fifth of NGO representatives said they needed "IT training" most (21%). Meanwhile, 17% each thought that "professionals to develop websites" and "a stable mobile communications network" were most needed for their organizations and around one-tenth needed "professionals to develop mobile apps" most (11%). Besides, 9% and 8% respectively were in need of "professionals to monitor the server" and "a service management system", while 6% each needed "simple and easy-to-use online interactive platforms", "a stable fixed communications network" and "privacy protection for online communication" most. Just 4% claimed that "an online donation system" was most needed and 2% mentioned "archive / backup copy for online communication". At the same time, 13% of the NGO representatives said their organizations did not need any IT support and the remaining 8% did not give a definite response (Table 10).

3.12   With regards to whether the Government should provide support to youth servicing organizations in using Internet communication tools, a landslide majority held a positive view (91%), among these representatives, 40% and 38% said the Government should provide "subsidies for purchasing hardware" and "training" to the qualified NGOs respectively. More than a quarter would like "subsidies for purchasing software" (28%), while 23% suggested "setting up a regular subsidy mode". More, 15% each suggested the support should be "through one-off specified subsidy" and in the form of "providing relevant guidelines, e.g. privacy protection". Meanwhile, one-tenth suggested "assistance in network service, e.g. public wifi" (11%), and other less popular items on the wish list

included "assistance in promotion" (8%) and "communication record" (2%). Another 2% agreed the Government should provide certain assistance to the NGOs but did not specify what they needed whereas 6% did not think the Government should provide support to youth servicing organization and 4% opted for "don't know / hard to say" (Table 12).

3.13   On security measures in using Internet communication tools, almost two-thirds of NGOs surveyed provided relevant staff guideline, such as archiving, backup and privacy protection of using Internet communication tools (64%), while 30% admitted they did not have such guideline. Those who had opted for "don't know / hard to say" accounted for 6% of the sample (Table 13).

3.14   As far as "private cloud" system was concerned, 62% of the NGOs interviewed admitted that they would not consider switching from "public cloud" to "private cloud" system, while only one-third said they would consider so (32%). The remaining 6% failed to provide a definite answer for this (Table 14).

3.15   Among those 17 NGO representatives who said they would consider switching from "public cloud" to "private cloud" system, "better protected information security" was the chief reason which accounted for over 80% of this sub-sample (82%, i.e. 14 NGOs). Two representatives said they were "more confident in the system of their own organizations" and another two believed "the systems of their organizations were more stable". One representative said it was "advised by the information technology department of his / her organization". One other representative could not give a reason for considering such plan. For the details on other reasons, please refer to Table 15 in Appendix II.

3.16   As for those 33 NGO representatives who had hesitation to switch from "public cloud" to "private cloud" system, "lack of resources to set up a 'private cloud' system" topped their list of concerns, constituting nearly two-thirds of this sub-sample (64%, i.e. 21 NGOs). Six representatives hesitated owing to "security issues" and 4 each attributed to "the absence of an IT department in their organizations to manage a 'private cloud' system" and "being unsure about its advantages". Only one said that "the systems of their organizations were not very stable" and 2 representatives was unsure about the deterring factors. Please refer to Table 16 in Appendix II for more details on other reasons cited by the respondents