

Dialogue in Dark aims to enlighten

Simon Wan

A new series of training courses aims to develop participants' communication and teamwork skills by keeping them in the dark.

The Dialogue in the Dark workshops, organised by the Social Entrepreneurship Forum and Council of Social Service and being held in Hong Kong for the first time this month, will present participants with the usual gauntlet of team problem-solving scenarios, with the added novelty that they will be robbed of an ability often taken for granted – their sight.

Participants, immersed in total darkness for two hours and supervised by blind guides, will have their powers of communication tested and further honed by a series of eight problems, including setting a table.

"Whether you're at the bottom of the company or its CEO," noted Lui

Yuet-ming, one of the 10 blind guides in Hong Kong who will facilitate the workshops, "you need to know how to communicate effectively".

Home Affairs undersecretary Florence Hui Hiu-fai and legislator Tanya Chan have expressed interest in the workshops.

"It makes a great difference whether you can see the person you're communicating with or not," Ms Lui said. "If you cannot see what's

in front of you, you cannot simply take what you've been told as given."

The organisers hope the sessions will raise awareness and appreciation of the difficulties experienced by the visually impaired and also of their starkly different abilities.

Billy Yau Wai-lok, another of the workshops' guides, who has been blind since childhood, hopes the sessions will serve as an opportunity to let the public share the everyday experiences of the visually impaired.

"Our senses of hearing, of smell and of touch are much more perceptive," said Mr Yau, a recent graduate of the University of Hong Kong who has just become a secondary school teacher. "The abilities of the blind and of those without visual impairment reverse completely in an environment of complete darkness."

For more information or to register, go to www.hksef.org.



Florence Hui (left) and Tanya Chan