The Help Portrait Shanghai team presents

A guide to organizing HELP-PORTRAIT in   your city

What is Help Portrait (照片助人) all about?

[Help Portrait](#) was first started by celebrity photographer Jeremy Cowart in the US in 2009. **It is based on the idea of photographers giving back to their local community through their equipment and skills.** The movement has since bloomed into a global one that spans across all the continents, including cities across the USA to London, Paris, Tokyo, UAE, South Africa, Malaysia and Australia.

THE IDEA

Find Someone in Need ▶ Take Their Portrait ▶ Print Their Portrait ▶ and Deliver Them

OUR PROGRESS TO-DATE (2009-2011)

169,523	15,558	21,447	1,520	56
portraits given	photographers	volunteers	locations	countries

When? 8 Dec, 2012 **Where?** Your home city! **Who is involved?** Photographers, volunteers and NGO partners.

Let's get started on a Help Portrait event in your city!

1. Register your home city

Register and check the Help Portrait website to see if there is a group registered in your city. If it is not listed, [create a group on the Help Portrat website](#) to connect with potential volunteers. If it is already listed, connect with other volunteers.

2. Build a team of photographers and volunteers for the event

Meanwhile, reach out to fellow photographers and helpful volunteers to be involved. Is there a local photographer club in your city or a photography course with the university? Rope in colleagues for an office volunteer event or gather close friends for a worthy cause! For more ideas, check on the Help Portrait's ["Get Started"](#) page.

Remember, this is more than just photographers shooting away on a single day. A successful Help Portrait event depends on a dedicated group of organizers planning and communicating, and volunteers ensuring the subjects are comfortable and support the event flow.

3. Find the right NGO partner and suitable group of people to help

Think about who you would like to help photograph. Reach out to a local NGO working with migrant workers and their children, lower-income families, orphans or handicapped. Or work with hospitals to cheer up sick children or adult patients.

However, it is not always easy to find the right subjects to help. Here are a few considerations:
- Think about what groups of people would work best with a group of photographers/volunteers. Will they be comfortable physically and emotionally being photographed?
- Seek feedback from your local NGOs and logistics of how an event will be run. Do you go to your subjects or a third-party location e.g. migrant school or hospital. What kind of logistical support can they offer?
- Visit the location to access the suitability and help plan the set-up of cameras and other equipment.

4. Organizing location, logistics and equipment

The event can be as simple or elaborate as you want. To make sure you as a photographer/volunteer and the subjects are not overwhelmed, work within your capabilities and resources.

Location and organization
To contain the flow of people to be photographed, it's best to have separate spaces for registration/waiting, and photography/printing. Our experience is to stagger the waiting time throughout the day. Each family is given a registration card to guide them through the process and help us keep track of the photo taking and printing.

Photography and lighting equipment
Work with what you have. In Shanghai, we have shot mainly indoors with photography set ups including neutral color backdrops, umbrella lights and external flash units. A browse of other Help Portrait events have seen similar semi-pro set ups but also more casual outdoor shoots with nothing more than a camera and colored wall under natural sunlight.

Printing on the day or post-shoot
The photos do not necessarily need to be printed on the same day. But if you have access to a few color printers and more importantly, volunteers who can process them efficiently, we encourage you to do so. We recommend at least 2 portraits - one for the family to keep and the other to send home – which can be printed on one sheet.

For volunteers, it is difficult to produce all prints on the same day and volunteers arrange another day to deliver the prints. They will be greatly appreciated!

Gifts, t-shirts and others
For two years, we had Help Portrait badges made for the children while Help Portrait teams overseas printed T-shirts and banners for volunteers. Please use the official logo or any other trademark instructions from the Help Portrait website by [downloading them here.](#) You're welcome to bring food, toys or games to lighten the mood and cheer the subjects up.

5. Seek funds and sponsors

It doesn't cost much to bring together talented and passionate people willing to help. But costs may be incurred along the way, the largest being printing of the portraits. Consider finding a local print shop or camera store to sponsor or offer discounts on printing, or raise funds among office colleagues or friends that will be spent entirely on the portraits.

6. Respect the privacy of individuals

A rule of Help Portrait is to respect the privacy of the individuals we photograph so the portraits should NOT be posted online or used commercially. The subjects will also feel more comfortable knowing that. Any photos we have shared online are of the day's activities and of photographers and volunteers interacting with families etc.

7. Share the success of your Help Portrait event

Keep a tally of the number of photographers, volunteers and logistics involved in the Help Portrait event. After your event, [report your success to the Help Portrait global team](#). Spread the word with local blogs and press to help build a bigger team of volunteers and raise awareness for the next year!

Sharing our experiences: Help Portrait Shanghai

We are the first and only team of volunteers organizing Help Portrait in China.

The Shanghai team launched its first Help Portrait volunteer event in 2009. Over the years, we have worked with local NGOs to photograph and deliver professional portraits to migrant families and children in Shanghai's suburbs.

Our team is made up of hobbyist photographers from [Shanghai Flickr Meetup](#) group, a mix of local and expatriate photo enthusiasts who gather regularly for fun photo excursions, nerdy cameras talk and the occasional Strobist session!

We hope to spread Help Portrait to other cities across China.

There are so many people in need in China such as lower-income families, migrant workers and their children, orphanages and the elderly. They are worried about day-to-day issues and may not have the easy opportunity to have their portraits professionally made. Nowadays, with good cameras and printers easily available, let's give back to society.

Our experience over the years

Since 2009, we have expanded the number of volunteers and Help Portrait's outreach in Shanghai and have improved our efficiency. We have worked in a large school gymnasium, classrooms in a migrant school to a community centre.

In 2011, working with the NGO HandsOn Shanghai which works with migrant communities, our team of over 35 photographers and volunteers rotated through 8 camera and 4 printer set ups and delivered photographs for 63 families and 210 portraits of migrant children and parents. Each family walked away with a total of 5 photos each: 1 large 8x10 portrait and 4 smaller portraits for them to send to their loved ones in their hometowns. One for each set of grandparent!

We hope this guide can help you to set up a Help Portrait event in your city. If you have further questions, feel free to contact us in Shanghai: **Sue Anne Tay** (sueannetay at gmail.com), **Kirk Lau** (kirk1978 at gmail.com) and **Lutz Michaelis** (lumi3005 at yahoo.com).

Volunteers' experiences of the Help Portrait Shanghai event

Photos from Flickrites 拉撒人 jinhai, 小Lynx, kirk lau, Woods I Damien, Lumi, panterry, sucremina, S(u)e A(n)ne