

**Minutes of the
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting
held on 27 February 2006**

Present

Mr Wilfred Wong Ying-wai (Chairman)
Mrs Cheung Ang Siew-mei
Ms Christine Fang Meng-sang
Mr Quentin Fong
Mr Herman Hui Chung-shing
Dr Benjamin Lai Sau-shun
Prof Japhet Sebastian Law
Mr Vincent Lo Wing-sang
Mr Timothy Ma Kam-wah
Prof Tang Kwong-leung
Mr Tung Chi-fat
Ms Marina Wong Yu-pok
Mr Silva Yeung Tak-wah
Ms Lisa Yip
Ms Wendy Cheung (Secretary)

In Attendance

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB)

Ms Linda Lai Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food
(Family and Women)
Mr Freely Cheng Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare &
Food (Family)
Mr D C Cheung Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare &
Food (Elderly Services) 2
Ms Cherie Yeung Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food
(Elderly Services) 4
Ms Looi-Looi Low Senior Research Scientist/Social Science

Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Mr Paul Tang Director of Social Welfare

Absent with Apologies

Dr Miranda Chung Chan Lai-foon

Dr Stephen Chow Chun-kay

Mr Keith Lam Hon-keung

Dr Jimmy Wong Chi-ho

Item 1 : Research on Families in Hong Kong (SWAC Paper No. 2/06)

The paper briefed Members on the outcome of the stocktaking exercise undertaken by HWFB on past researches on family issues in Hong Kong by local authorities, academics and organizations. For ease of reference, the studies reviewed had been classified into different themes including family values, family functioning, family structure, family needs, family problems and harmony, and family policies and services. Members were briefed on some of the major findings of the research under these themes.

2. Members made the following suggestions on family issues for further research:

- (a) since our families had experienced many socio-economic changes, basic information on the population profile of families in Hong Kong, such as age of marriage, number of children, etc. was necessary in policy formulation and service provision to meet the changing needs of families;
- (b) it was necessary to be cautious with the scientific basis for the family studies as some of them might have just taken a narrow sampling size and the conclusions reached could not be taken as representing the general phenomena. We should be careful when making reference to the recommendations of those studies in formulating policies;
- (c) research on families of the ethnic minorities might be carried out;

- (d) how families managed change and their help-seeking pattern might be worthy of further study. In addition, research on the changes in family values over the past few decades might also shed light on the traditional core values of families that should be preserved and promoted to the general public;
- (e) study on the influence of mass media and Internet on children could be considered;
- (f) while parent used to be the focus in studies on families, the perspective of children such as the desired parenting style of their parents, etc. could also be taken into account;
- (g) carer issues might also be looked into given our ageing population;
- (h) studies on the aspiration of quality family life might be conducted;
- (i) while past researches on families tended to be problem-oriented, a more positive approach should be taken in considering further studies on the sustainability and resilience of families in light of pressure and changes. The successful examples would provide useful reference for those families facing problems;
- (j) a stocktaking exercise on the existing family services and programmes provided by SWD and NGOs and their effectiveness so as to identify any service gaps as well as successful programmes for extension; and
- (k) studies might be undertaken on a longitudinal basis rather than cross-sectional basis to facilitate trend tracking over time. Furthermore, the socio-economic status of the families should also be distinguished as the needs of a poor family and those of a middle-class family would differ.

3. The Government made the following responses:

- (a) it was appreciated that Members had made many constructive

suggestions on various family issues worthy of further study in support of policy formulation. The Government should consider whether to undertake research in those areas and, if so, the priority;

- (b) since family issues were complicated issues which cut across many policy areas, some other Government bureaux/departments and commissions such as the Central Policy Unit, the Commission on Strategic Development, the Commission on Poverty, etc. were also undertaking studies on families. HWFB would consult the relevant parties in identifying areas of further studies to avoid duplication of efforts; and
- (c) on family profile, since local studies, especially those conducted by academics and NGOs, usually focused on particular target groups, there might not be an analysis on the overall picture of family structure in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the Census and Statistics Department should have such basic information. The Bureau would liaise with the Department to obtain any relevant ready data.

Item 2 : Proposed Study Tours to Australia/New Zealand and United States/Canada (SWAC Paper No. 3/06)

4. This paper briefed Members of the proposal to conduct two study visits in 2006, one to Australia/New Zealand in May 2006 primarily on family issues and the other to USA/Canada in autumn 2006 mainly on social security issues respectively.

5. Members agreed with the two study tours as proposed. They also made the following comments:

- (a) Singapore might also be a suitable country for visit given its similar cultural background to Hong Kong;
- (b) to facilitate fruitful discussions at the study visits, some briefing sessions and relevant background information should be provided beforehand; and

(c) each of the study tours should be compressed into one week as far as possible. Each member was encouraged to join one visit. If some wished to join both, the Bureau should accommodate their interests as far as possible.

6. On the choice of country for the visits, the Government explained that Singapore was not included in the current visit plans because there were not many relevant services or programmes available. Nevertheless, HWFB would give further thoughts as to whether another short visit to Singapore should be arranged.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
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