

**Minutes of the
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting
held on 24 April 2006**

Present

Mr Wilfred Wong (Chairman)
Mrs Cheung Ang Siew-mei
Dr Miranda Chung Chan Lai-foon
Ms Christine Fang Meng-sang
Mr Herman Hui Chung-shing
Dr Benjamin Lai
Mr Keith Lam Hon-keung
Mr Vincent Lo Wing-sang
Mr Timothy Ma Kam-wah
Prof Tang Kwong-leung
Mr Tung Chi-fat
Dr Jimmy Wong Chi-ho
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)
Ms Salina Yan	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Elderly Services and Social Security)
Mr Freely Cheng	Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Family)
Mrs Grace Ng	Project Management Officer (Community Investment and Inclusion Fund)

Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Mr Paul Tang Director of Social Welfare

Mr Fung Pak-yan Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Development)

Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Dr Ting Wai-fong Associate Professor, Department of Applied Social
Science

Absent with Apologies

Dr Stephen Chow Chun-kay

Mr Quentin Fong

Prof Japhet Sebastian Law

Item 1 : Welfare Planning Framework

- (a) **Proposal on Welfare Planning Framework (submitted by Ms Christine Fang, Member of SWAC) (SWAC Paper No. 6/06); and**
- (b) **Government's Response to the Proposals submitted by a Member of the Social Welfare Advisory Committee on Welfare Planning Framework (SWAC Paper No. 7/06)**

Ms Christine Fang, a SWAC member, presented a paper to SWAC setting out the views of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service on an integrated and forward-looking welfare planning framework in the four aspects of:

- (a) Annual Welfare Priorities Setting Exercise;
- (b) Review of Rehabilitation Programme Planning (RPP) Process;
- (c) District Planning Protocol; and
- (d) Long Term Strategic Direction.

2. Members noted Government's response to the paper submitted by Ms Fang. The Government had put in place various new initiatives of enhancing the welfare planning process such as the annual consultation mechanism with the welfare sector to discuss work priorities for the coming year and beyond as well as the enhanced district planning mechanism. Under the annual consultation mechanism, the welfare

sector could not only express their views before the formulation of the Policy Address but would also be briefed by the Bureau on the work priorities set after the delivery of the Policy Address. The Bureau and participants of the consultation sessions last year agreed that the new mechanism was a good attempt and should continue for the coming years.

3. Members made the following comments:

- (a) SWAC should take a more coordinated role in considering priorities from a broader conceptual level and advise the Government on longer term strategic planning;
- (b) to facilitate Members in giving professional advice to the Government, more comprehensive information and research-based data on relevant welfare subjects should be provided to them;
- (c) family core value should be a priority in future welfare policies as it was instrumental in preventing social problems. Community involvement in promoting tripartite partnership was also important;
- (d) as the concerns of welfare-related committees/commissions might sometime overlap with one another, there should be more joint meetings between SWAC and other related committees on a need basis to enhance the interfacing and collaboration on cross-cutting issues such as family, elderly and poverty, etc. Inter-bureaux/ departmental cooperation and collaboration should also be strengthened in identifying district needs;
- (e) certain flexibility should be allowed under the overall welfare planning mechanism to cater for the specific needs of districts. The communication between the SWD headquarters and District Welfare Officers should be further enhanced in district welfare planning; and
- (f) the strategic direction of welfare development such as social investment and tripartite partnership should be further promoted in the community. Public consultation, especially with the service recipients, should also be strengthened.

4. The Government made the following responses:

- (a) the Bureau had engaged the welfare sector, including the SWAC, in agreeing on the broad strategic direction of welfare development in the context of the discussions on the Strategic Framework for Social Welfare in 2004. It was agreed that we should adopt a social investment and tripartite partnership approach in helping the needy. And with this broad direction set, SHWF introduced the annual consultation mechanism with the welfare sector in 2005 by discussing with the sector on the work priorities in the coming years. While discussions were primarily focused on immediate priorities for the coming year, there were also exchanges with the sector on the longer term development;
- (b) given the favorable response from the welfare sector, the Bureau had decided to continue with the mechanism this year. The first session would be held in late June 2006 and the second one would be held after the Policy Address say in November 2006 to debrief the sector of the new initiatives announced in the Policy Address;
- (c) on individual programme areas, RPP planning process for rehabilitation which involved longer planning cycle, might not be applicable to other programme areas which required greater flexibility in view of the changing needs of the service recipients and society;
- (d) a territory-wide family education campaign with a series of publicity programmes would be rolled out in the coming year to promote family core value. In addition, the Bureau would assist Members if they wished to have relevant background information and researches to facilitate their consideration of welfare issues; and
- (e) some key priority areas that the SWAC could focus for the coming year included strengthening family services, promoting good corporate governance for NGOs, encouraging tripartite partnership among the Government, the business sector and the community, as well as promoting family core value.

5. Members generally supported the current approach the Government had adopted in planning welfare policies and priorities, which included an annual consultation mechanism with the welfare sector to discuss work priorities and an enhanced district planning mechanism.

6. Members agreed on the key priority areas for the coming year and considered that SWAC should play a more strategic role in advising the Government on the longer term policies that contributed towards a harmonious society and assisting in the articulation of the broad directions of welfare development to the general public.

7. To better equip Members with knowledge of key welfare issues and district welfare needs, the Meeting welcomed the Bureau's suggestion in providing useful information and researches on relevant subjects as appropriate.

Item 2 : Community Investment and Inclusion Fund – Progress Report (SWAC Paper No. 5/06)

8. Members were briefed of the latest position of the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF), the assessment of impacts achieved since its establishment in August 2002, and the outline of the Fund's strategic focus for the coming year. On the overall operation of the CIIF and its projects, an evaluation Consortium with seven research teams from five tertiary institutions was formed in September 2004. The Consortium study reports, completed in March 2006, provided unique local data on social capital formation, confirmed the effectiveness of strategies being promoted by the CIIF, captured insights on critical success factors and identified good practices. A range of recommendations were also put forward for enhancing the future operation of the CIIF, promoting good practices, and assisting the future development of social capital in Hong Kong including the revision of academic training curriculum and start up of new academic courses on social capital development.

9. Members made the following comments:

- (a) as other funding schemes with similar objective in promoting cross-sector cooperation to help the needy were also recently established, such as the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged, the Government might consider merging the CIIF with these funds;
- (b) on site visits to selected projects, more varieties should be added other than those projects which had already had substantial media exposure in the past;

- (c) more consideration should be given on the better integration of the CIIF social capital initiatives with services funded under the Lump Sum Grant funding mode to address the needs in districts;
- (d) the CIIF should further assist in the promotion of the new concepts on social capital and tripartite partnership, etc. to the general public in more concrete and laymen terms;
- (e) there was concern as to whether the scale of the CIIF could be further extended and became sustainable given that only 102 projects (involving \$80 million) had been approved under the Fund so far.

10. The Government made the following responses:

- (a) given the requests from political parties for more funding sources to help different groups, it might not be appropriate at this stage to merge the CIIF with other funds;
- (b) as more projects were approved and became successful, the pool of projects that could be showcased had increased;
- (c) on enhancing public awareness of new concepts for the future, a design consultant would be engaged to assist in the promotion of the CIIF concepts and repackaging of its promotional materials;
- (d) on integration with district needs, a number of district management of SWD had shown enthusiastic support and encouraged local participation in CIIF projects. The CIIF would continue its close liaison with the participating NGOs in implementing projects to meet district needs; and
- (e) while there was not a pre-set target on the number of projects and amount of funding to be approved under the CIIF for each year, the number of approved projects had been steadily increasing in recent batches. Furthermore, the project budgets proposed by many of the successful projects were generally prudent and reasonable, hence utilization of the Fund was able to be maintained at a cost-effective level.

11. The Meeting affirmed that the CIIF had yielded positive outcome in the promotion of social capital building. The progress of the Fund was satisfactory as it took time for the community to understand new

concepts and take up new strategies. On the way forward, the CIIF should enhance its operation by promoting the good practices of projects with more varieties, repackaging the promotional materials and concepts for easier engagement with the general public, and assisting in the further development of social capital in Hong Kong.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
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