

**Minutes of the  
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting  
held on 25 July at 2:30 p.m.  
in Room 2005, Murray Building, Garden Road, Central**

**Present**

Mr Wilfred Wong Ying-wai (Chairman)  
Miss Maggie Chan Mei-kit  
Dr Miranda Chung Chan Lai-foon  
Mr Quentin Fong King-sang  
Mr Herman Hui Chung-shing  
Mr Kwan Chuk-fai  
Dr Benjamin Lai Sau-shun  
Ms Lam Shuk-yee  
Mr Christopher Law Kin-chung  
Mr Vincent Lo Wing-sang  
Mr Timothy Ma Kam-wah  
Mrs Agnes Mak Tang Pik-yee  
Prof Tang Kwong-leung  
Mr Tung Chi-fat  
Ms Lisa Yip Sau-wah  
Miss Vicky Cheung (Secretary)

**In Attendance**

***Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB)***

Mr Paul Tang Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare (PSLW)

Miss Eliza Lee Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)1  
(DS(Welfare)1)

Miss Helen Tang Acting Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare  
(Welfare)2 (Ag. DS(Welfare)2)

Ms Irene Young Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare  
(Welfare)1 (PAS(Welfare)1)

Miss Cherry Wong Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Poverty)  
(AS(Poverty))

*Social Welfare Department (SWD)*

Mr Stephen Fisher            Director of Social Welfare (DSW)

**Absent with apologies**

Mr Bunny Chan Chung-bun

Dr Stephen Chow Chun-kay

Dr Lam Ching-choi

Dr Leung Wing-tai

Mrs Teresa Tsien Wong Bik-kwan

Dr Jimmy Wong Chi-ho

Mr Silva Yeung Tak-wah

**Item 1 : Child Development Fund (CDF)**

The LegCo Panel on Welfare Services supported, and the LegCo Finance Committee approved, the allocation of \$300 million to establish the CDF. Members were briefed on the latest development.

2.            Members made the following comments:

- (a) there should be co-ordination in the matching of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with business donors to avoid confusion;
- (b) companies should be allowed to choose their own NGO partners;
- (c) there should be arrangements to cater for contributions from individual donors;
- (d) sufficient training and support should be provided to mentors;
- (e) flexibility should be given to NGOs in operating the pioneer projects to suit the needs of the different districts; and
- (f) there should be arrangements to handle the situation if the number of participating children exceeded 100 for each pioneer

project.

3. The Government gave the following responses:
  - (a) the selected operating NGOs were expected to use their own network in recruiting mentors and seeking matching contributions from the companies. While there was no need, at this stage, for the Government to coordinate the NGOs' work in this regard, the Government would strengthen the publicity of the CDF;
  - (b) a non-government Child Development Matching Fund (CDMF) would be established soon to receive private donations for the CDF pioneer projects;
  - (c) flexibility would be given to the operating NGOs to run the pioneer projects in a way that best suited the community's needs;
  - (d) 100 was only the minimum number of participants for each pioneer project. The operating NGOs were encouraged to recruit more children if their capacity allowed; and
  - (e) the performance of the NGOs would be closely monitored by the Government. An evaluation of the first batch of projects would also be conducted.
  
4. Members also noted that a Steering Committee on CDF had been established to oversee the implementation of the CDF.

**Item 2 : Report on the Singapore Study Tour (SWAC Paper No. 04/2008)**

5. A delegation comprising ten SWAC Members and four representatives from LWB and SWD visited Singapore between 19 and 21 June 2008. The Administration presented the report (Paper No.4/2008) and highlighted major observations regarding the welfare system and policies in Singapore.

6. Members offered the following comments:
- (a) Singapore emphasized family values and community participation in assisting the needy; the private sector was strongly encouraged to sponsor and collaborate with Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) in the provision of welfare services;
  - (b) the Singaporean welfare system relied heavily on local and community contributions. The Singaporean Government only subsidized 50% of the operating costs of the VWOs. While would be difficult for Hong Kong to adopt such a service model, it would be in the interest of Hong Kong for the Government to develop tripartite partnership with the business and welfare sectors;
  - (c) the People's Association (PA) in Singapore played a pivotal role in fostering social cohesion and enhancing interactions amongst different groups of people in the community. The community centres operated by the PA provided one-stop localized social services to meet the various needs of residents in the neighbourhood. In comparison, the provision of welfare services was more centralized in Hong Kong and our community centres were often perceived as venues for providing basic social services to the grassroot rather than a place for social gathering for everyone in the community;
  - (d) the Singaporean Government had successfully built a community network to promote mutual help and assistance. This had helped to reduce people's reliance on welfare. The Hong Kong Government should also promote mutual help in the neighbourhood;
  - (e) the Singaporean Government was willing to subsidize pilot social enterprise projects which might not be fully financially viable but could produce remarkable outcomes. Hong Kong could provide more incentives for the development of social

enterprises and encourage the NGOs concerned to adopt more effective strategies to sustain the operation of these enterprises;

- (f) Singapore could effectively implement their policies and programmes because they had a strong Government and there was close collaboration among the different government departments. These factors allowed the Singaporean Government to have a longer-term vision and to plan its policies in a holistic manner;
- (g) the Singaporean Government was forward-looking in its social planning. For instance, in anticipation of an ageing population and a rising demand for elderly and ancillary services, the entire Government was focusing its attention and resources on that front;
- (h) the National Council of Social Services (NCSS) helped the Government to execute and manage a wide range of social service programmes and disburse funds to the VWOs to operate these programmes. In this respect, the NCSS was like an executive arm of the Government, and sectoral interests were not its primary concern;
- (i) compared to Singapore, Hong Kong had a stronger team of professional and well-trained social workers. Social work training in Hong Kong had a longer history and was more institutionalized;
- (j) NGOs in Hong Kong enjoyed greater autonomy and flexibility than VWOs in Singapore, and Hong Kong had a more diverse welfare system;
- (k) Hong Kong was a more open society and that the Government was fully accountable to the public. These qualities encouraged freedom of expression and were conducive to the development of a healthy welfare system;
- (l) to balance different interests and address more effectively the

many complex social problems, the Government might consider setting up high-level steering committees to coordinate the work of the relevant departments where necessary; and

- (m) the welfare system in Hong Kong had its own merit because it was less politicized and there was a strong team of professionally trained social workers. Hong Kong's other strengths included our social worker registration system and manpower development for the welfare sector. While we could make reference to Singapore's experiences where appropriate, we should also cherish and uphold our own strengths.

Labour and Welfare Bureau  
October 2008