

Minutes of the
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting
held on 2 March 2004 (Tuesday)

Present

Mr Wilfred Wong Ying-wai (Chairman)

Ms Vivien Chan

Mr Darwin Chen

Mrs Cheung Ang Siew-mei

Dr Stephen Chow Chun-kay

Dr Miranda Chung Chan Lai-foon

Ms Christine Fang Meng-sang

Mr Keith Lam Hon-keung

Dr Leung Cho-bun

Mr Poon Huen-wai

Ms Marina Wong Yu-pok

Mr Stephen Yau How-boa

Mr Silva Yeung Tak-wah

Miss Jessie Yu Sau-chu

Ms Wendy Cheung (Secretary)

For Item 1 only (Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) Committee)

Dr. WU Wai-yung, Raymond, GBS, JP (Chairman of CIIF Committee)
Dr. CHAN Sze-tong, Thomas, JP
Dr. CHOI Yuen-wan, Philemon, BBS, JP
Ms. KAO Ching-chi, Sophia, JP
Mrs. NG WONG Yee-man, Gloria
Mr. TSO Kai-lok, MH
Mr. WONG King-cheung, JP
Mr. WONG Siu-ye, JP
Prof YUEN TSANG Woon-ki, Angelina, JP
Mrs Grace Ng (Secretary of the CIIF Committee)

In Attendance

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB)

Ms Susie Ho Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Welfare)

Miss Diane Wong Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Welfare)

Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Mr Paul TANG Director of Social Welfare

Mr. Fung Pak-yan Assistant Director (Family & Child Welfare)

Mr. Gary CHEUNG Senior Social Work Officer (Family)1

Absent with Apologies

Mr Wilfred Lee Chee-wah

Prof Diana Mak Ping-see

Mr Aaron Wan Chi-keung

(1) Proposed Actions to take forward the 2004 Policy Address initiatives on Social Welfare (*discussed jointly with the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund Committee*)

(Joint CIIF-SWAC 01-04)

The paper reported on the 2004 Policy Address initiatives which tasked SHWF to work with the CIIF Committee and SWAC on how best to enhance social capital and to further the development of tripartite partnerships to address social issues more effectively. Two main strategies were to be pursued. The first strategy involved applying a social investment approach to shift perspectives from passive welfare provision to active capacity building. At a micro-level, the social investment approaches had been applied in a number of CIIF projects. The next phase of development involved translating these theoretical concepts and experience from the CIIF projects into broader practical applications within mainstream services. Further work would involve more interactive processes with the third sector in prioritization of issues and evaluation of what works. The Government would take the lead in initiating and facilitating the dialogue. The second strategy involved scaling-up and transferring successful tripartite partnership experience to broaden the bases of support and hence address the question of sustainability. The Seminar planned for 3 April 2004 would focus on discussing welfare philosophies with primary focus on the 3rd sector, while future sessions would focus more on private sector involvement, which apart from sponsorship and philanthropy might include the provision of expertise and resources such as mentoring of individuals, advice on business start-ups.

2. Members made the following comments :

- (a) clarifications should be made on whether the proposed social investment approach would involve a major paradigm shift. It should supplement and complement but not completely replace the existing welfare service provision models because certain remedial and continuing care services were still needed. The new approach should however reshape mainstream service delivery and strengthen the preventative and developmental ends of the service spectrum;
- (b) the two approaches could co-exist in which the social investment approach might focus on those with the capacity to prevent and reduce problems leading to greater social inclusion. For others, protection and care services would still be needed to ensure social stability and social development;

- (c) as a result of socio-economic transformation, the number of people who needed help would increase. We had to consider strategies to increase cost-effectiveness on the one hand and tap into new resources on the other to ensure long term sustainability;
- (d) for the dialogue about social investment to proceed constructively, it was important for the welfare sector to help prevent any unnecessary suspicion and speculation that social investment was linked to further budget cuts;
- (e) while the proposed ideas about capacity building were good, care had to be exercised in having clear definitions with a more detailed “basket of strategies” and it would be preferable to have more concrete plans before the April 3 Seminar;
- (f) everyone involved in the welfare sector, including the Government, had to tune into the new mindset before making any real shift. While certain level of service provision might continue, their functions might change. Skepticism had to be taken into account. While it was noted that a real paradigm shift on welfare development was already taking place within the academia and some individual welfare organisations had been moving ahead with the ‘self help and mutual help’ philosophies, a more fundamental process of public education process was required;
- (g) NGOs needed support and understanding from the Department (SWD). Apart from the NGOs, a wider range of participants, including service organisations who had extensive business experience with services to the community as their key objectives, should be engaged;
- (h) the business sector certainly had a role to play by contributing “alternative” resources, in terms of money, knowledge and expertise. It was important to increase the awareness of the sector on their responsibility for social development from the start. Those small-to-medium enterprises should be targeted for greater contribution. To encourage business sector involvement, consideration might need to be given for intangible incentives other than tax exemption such as mechanisms for recognition, branding and reputation;
- (i) the need to further develop tripartite partnerships was a necessary policy agenda nowadays internationally, but the scope should be extended beyond welfare, as different corporations have different agendas. Overseas speakers could be invited to share their experience in promoting

corporate social responsibilities for achieving sustainable impact; and

- (j) one way to address the apparent fear and concern from the welfare sector about the potential impact of introducing the concepts of social investment was to avoid over-emphasizing the 'new' elements. It was just a matter of relative emphasis and reframing some traditional values, as well as channelling society's energy and good intentions in a productive and creative manner for collective contribution for long term sustainability.

3. The Government's responses included :

- (a) as the economic situation continued to change, within a low-tax regime, it was likely that the demand from the needy would soon exceed the resources that the Government could provide. In reality, Government expenditure could not continue to expand year after year and the need to address the deficit had to be faced if we also wanted to maintain a low tax rate system. Hence we had to consider concepts such as social investment, sharing responsibilities and pooling resources from the private sector. Apart from a small number of people in extreme situations, the capacities of most people could be strengthened. A lot of people in the community who used to be services receivers could in effect be helped to become givers, contributors and be economically active. Instead of over-emphasizing the vulnerability of these groups, it was more constructive to give them a helping hand so that they could help themselves eventually. A more scientific and systematic approach to evaluation is needed to guide allocation of resources to programmes that work;
- (b) the welfare blueprint issue was brought up in a recent motion debate in LegCo. It would be important for future planning to take a more strategic and dynamic rather than static programme planning approach which had served its purpose during more stable times. Deliberation of the two strategies of social investment and tripartite partnerships provided the framework and tool for future strategy development, with priorities to be set. Before direction and priorities were established, further brainstorming and discussions would be necessary;
- (c) we needed to be cautious in communicating the message that what we were trying to do was attitude change and not some type of radical paradigm shifts that would cause worries in the sector. More frequent dialogue with all sectors was needed, in particular with the third sector;

- (d) mentality and culture change was important, and the help of every one was needed to promote the necessary attitude change. Also, we needed to consider ways to encourage business sector involvement, e.g. through recognition and tapping into their skills for mentoring rather than just focusing on business sponsorships; and
- (e) the idea about developing information exchange to tap the contribution of retirees and volunteers was noted, and further input and exploration were welcome at the April 3 Conference and subsequent dialogue.

4. The meeting concluded that what the CIIF aimed to do was to promote attitude changes and paradigm shifts. The development and enhancement of social capital involved changing values, policies and institutions to enhance human relationship and increase social inclusion. The CIIF on its own could not achieve such major task. The change process should start with the social welfare sector because it was a most suitable champion to drive further. We needed some practical examples to demonstrate the impacts and influence mindset, cultural and attitude changes. Business sector involvement was needed and this would come next. Members of the SWAC and CIIF also had to work closely to further promote this concept.

(2) Final Report on the “Three-year Action Plan to Help Street Sleepers and the Way Forward (SWAC Paper No. 6/04)

5. The paper informed Members of the progress of the Three-Year Action Plan to help street sleepers, the findings of the final report of evaluative research conducted by the City University of Hong Kong and the Social Welfare Department (SWD)’ s plan to revamp its street sleeper service by pooling the resources of individual service programmes. Three new Integrated Teams modelled after the Action Plan, to be operated by the St. James’ Settlement in Hong Kong Island (SJS), Salvation Army (SA) in Yau Tsim Mong Districts and Christian Concern for the Homeless Association (CCHA) in the rest of Kowloon and the New Territories, would continue to provide one-stop integrated services for street sleepers to cover the whole territory upon expiry of the funding grant from the Lotteries Fund for the Action Plan by the end of March 2004.

6. Members made the following comments :

- (a) the effectiveness of the Action Plan was generally appreciated;
- (b) there was concern on the future support from SWD to the three above-mentioned NGOs in covering the street sleeper service in the whole territory, in particular the support for CCHA which had to cover the largest area;
- (c) co-ordination amongst different NGOs would be required to avoid duplications of service scope and target groups in the same district;
- (d) there was concern on who would take up the future statistical work and there was doubt as to whether the projected caseload would be able to justify the demand for providing the street sleeping services by three integrated teams, in particular if most of the present remaining cases were already habitually street sleepers;
- (e) suggested that consideration should be given to extend the scope of integrated services to single persons living at urban hostels subsidized by the Home Affairs Department so as to minimize possible relapse; and
- (f) in the absence of legislative means, suggested to explore the feasibility of adopting administrative measures, e.g. to cut CSSA for those habitual sleepers who were reluctant to be accommodated.

7. The Government's responses included :

- (a) SWD would continue to provide assistance and support to the three NGOs where necessary and would co-ordinate with service providers concerned to avoid service duplication in the same district;
- (b) statistical work would continue but input would be made by both SWD and NGOs;

- (c) intake of new / reactivated cases continued. For example, for the month of January 2004, there were around 20 new and re-activated cases. These cases still required early intervention from the integrated teams so as to prevent them from becoming habitual street sleepers;
- (d) the three NGOs would mobilize their integrated resources to help the street sleepers who were arranged to stay in the urban hostels subsidized by other departments such as HAD. At present, there were around 1200 places in shelters and hostels operated by subvented and non-subvented NGOs in the territory and the occupation rate was around 80%;
- (e) there was no existing legislation that could effect compulsory removal of street sleepers unless the street sleepers were considered threatening public safety or their own health/safety;
- (f) different departments would be mobilized where necessary for joint action to remove street sleepers. However, it might be difficult to adopt drastic action, such as withholding the grant of CSSA; and
- (g) street sleeping was not common amongst ethnic minorities though figures were not available.

8. The Committee noted the paper and made no further comments.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

May 2004