

Minutes of the  
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting  
Held on 18 May 2004

**Present**

Mr Wilfred Wong Ying-wai (Chairman)

Ms Vivien Chan

Mr Darwin Chen

Mrs Cheung Ang Siew-mei

Dr Miranda Chung Chan Lai-foon

Ms Christine Fang Meng-sang

Mr Wilfred Lee Chee-wah

Dr Leung Cho-bun

Mr Poon Huen-wai

Mr Aaron Wan Chi-keung

Mr Stephen Yau How-boa

Mr Silva Yeung Tak-wah

Miss Jessie Yu Sau-chu

Ms Wendy Cheung (Secretary)

**In Attendance**

**Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB)**

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| Ms Susie Ho    | Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Welfare)          |
| Mr Patrick Nip | Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Elderly Services) |

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| Miss Diane Wong    | Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Welfare)           |
| Ms Annette Lee     | Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Elderly Services)2 |
| Miss Wong Ming-lok | Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Elderly Services)4           |
| Mr Kenneth Chan    | Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Welfare) 1                   |
| Mrs Grace Ng       | Project Management Officer   |

**Social Welfare Department (SWD)**

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|---------------------|---|
| Mr Paul Tang        | Director of Social Welfare                                  |
| Mrs Agnes Allcock   | Deputy Director (Administration)                            |
| Mrs Rachel Cartland | Assistant Director (Social Security)                        |
| Miss Ann Hon        | Assistant Director (Subventions and Performance Monitoring) |
| Miss Yeung Kok-wah  | Chief Social Security Officer (Social Security) 4           |
| Mr Chow Chor-tim    | Chief Executive Officer (Lotteries Fund)                    |

**Absent with Apologies**

Prof Diana Mak Ping-see

Dr Stephen Chow Chun-kay

Mr Keith Lam Hon-keung

**(1) Progress of the Intensified Support for Self-Reliance Measures under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme**

**(SWAC Paper No. 7/04)**

This paper informed Members of the up-to-date position of the Intensified Support for Self-Reliance (SFS) Measures under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme, including the key observations before and after the implementation of the SFS measures through the Active Employment Assistance (AEA) Programme, the Enhanced Community Work (CW) Programme and the Intensive Employment Assistance Projects (IEAPs). As a preliminary indication, the intensified SFS had been effective in containing the growth of CSSA unemployment cases.

**2. Members made the following comments:**

- (a) the SFS measures were good in changing those CSSA recipients from completely relying on CSSA to being employed;
- (b) the provision of disregarded earnings would indirect subsidize the employers and encourage them to offer wage rates lower than the market price. The overall number of low-income people falling into the CSSA net would be increased as a result and hence a minimum wage rate according to the market level should be set;
- (c) the overall objective of CSSA system should be to reduce the number of CSSA recipients by encouraging them to go back to the labour market;
- (d) it was important to change the mindset of the society towards the objective of providing CSSA;

- (e) apart from sanction and job placement programmes, there might be a need for providing more tailor-made intensive counselling or other intervention programmes to those hard core CSSA families;
- (f) consideration might be given to progressively reducing the amount of assistance granted to a CSSA recipient by stages;
- (g) introduction of enhanced disregarded earnings would only further discourage people to work;
- (h) Social Welfare Department (SWD) might consider working out a plan for each CSSA recipient with a view to helping them leaving the CSSA net eventually;
- (i) consideration might be given to offering a job, instead of CSSA payment, to those employable able-bodied as an interim measure; the unemployed applicant might also be requested to attend job training to widen his/her job skills if he/she wanted to be granted CSSA;
- (j) time-limited elements should be applied to the employable able-bodied group to avoid reliance and abuse of the CSSA system;
- (k) the welfare sector should reflect on their practice to avoid turning the CSSA recipients into a privileged group in the community;
- (l) given the concept of active aging, consideration might be given to define 'elderly' as those aged over 65, instead of 60, to follow the international norm;
- (m) the Administration might consider providing incentives to encourage government contractors to employ CSSA recipients;

- (n) the above suggestion of providing incentives to encourage government contractors to employ CSSA recipients would further result in the CSSA recipients being labelled as a privileged group;
- (o) an overall review on the CSSA scheme was necessary, and that different strategies should be drawn up for different target groups;
- (p) there were inadequacies in the present CSSA system, but it might not be practical nor tactful to conduct an overall comprehensive review of the scheme to examine the various components at the same time; and
- (q) the Administration should conduct an analysis on the different target groups covered in the CSSA scheme by adopting a customer-focus approach and work out long-term and short-term strategies to tackle each group according to priorities; consideration might also be given to taking out individual target groups one by one from the CSSA Scheme with a view to disbanding the present all-embracing system in the long run.

3. The Government's response included:

- (a) the overall CSSA unemployment caseload had been dropping gradually, though at a slow pace, since last September;
- (b) efforts were mainly spent on new cases with a view to helping them leave the CSSA net as early as possible before they developed into hard core cases;
- (c) the Administration had already set out the guided market wage levels for workers employed by government contractors;
- (d) the present CSSA rate was set with reference to the level of basic needs of the recipients and there would be practical difficulties to progressively reducing the amount of assistance granted to a CSSA recipient by stages;

- (e) the self-reliance measures were now becoming more acceptable with the gradual change of mindset in the community towards “welfare to work” ;
- (f) it was particularly difficult to get single parents and ethnic minorities to go back to work;
- (g) SWD had made efforts to liaise with employers to identify jobs for the CSSA recipients but the lack of motivation on the part of the CSSA recipients was the main hurdle;
- (h) as the CSSA system developed, payment rates and support services towards the able-bodied and elderly/disabled had already been different;
- (i) there might be allegation of discrimination in the context of equal opportunity if the government contractors were encouraged to employ CSSA recipients;
- (j) the suggestion of adding time-limited elements to the CSSA system could be examined;
- (k) there was reservation on the suggestion of conducting an overhaul of the whole CSSA system as this would take a very long time. Given the resource and foreseeable political implications, it might not be realistic to conduct an overall review. It would be more realistic to deal with different issues separately according to priorities, rather than all at the same time; and
- (l) the Administration was focusing reviews on the IEAP programmes for employable able-bodied and programmes for single-parents and outcome of the reviews would be available towards the end of this year.

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

(2) **Control of Charitable Fund-raising Activities**

(SWAC paper No. 8/04)

5. The paper sought Members' advice on the Administration's recommendation to strengthen the administrative controls over charitable fund-raising activities with a view to enhancing their transparency and accountability. It was recommended that a set of Reference Guide of Best Practices for Charitable Fund-raising Activities (Reference Guide) be finalized and promulgated for voluntary compliance by charitable organisations; and a review be undertaken in a year's time to assess its effectiveness and the way forward.

6. Members made the following comments:

- (a) the drawing up of the Reference Guide to promote best practices in charitable fund-raising was appreciated; but publicity should be stepped up to to promote the awareness of the public towards monitoring charitable fund raising activities whilst promoting self-discipline amongst the fund-raising organizations;
- (b) there was concern as to whether the system being proposed would be able to govern those dubious fund-raising appeals through mail;
- (c) there was concern as to how charitable fund-raising activities on street were being monitored;
- (d) the Administration should explore the possibility of wider publicity for the flag-selling activities; and
- (e) the present maximum penalty level under the Summary Offence Ordinance on unauthorized fund-raising activities might be too low to create a deterrent effect and a review might be necessary.

9. The Government's response included:

- (a) the Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee had expressed reservation on the original proposal of establishing a public register system for all fund-raising organisations as "dubious charities" could not be readily identified since the system would be a voluntary one;
- (b) if stringent vetting procedures and regular review were introduced, there would be significant resource implications and it might also stifle the activities of charities and reduce the resources to be used to help the needy;
- (c) the proposed Reference Guide would be able to channel more information on those organizations adopting 'Best Practices' to the public to better monitor the fund-raising activities;
- (d) coupled with the "Pledge of Donors' Right" recently issued by Hong Kong Council of Social Services (HKCSS), the Reference Guide being proposed would be able to enhance the efforts in monitoring fund-raising activities together with the NGO sector;
- (e) under the Summary Offences Ordinance, any collection of money or sale or exchange for donation of badges, tokens or similar articles for charitable purposes in public places would require a permit issued by SWD; existing legislation could only govern those fund-raising activities conducted in public places;
- (f) permit holders would be required to report to SWD on the amount of funds collected and how they would make use of the funds; and
- (g) SWD would publicize each charitable fund-raising activity (including flag days) on the SWD web-site and public media and provide a hotline for the public to raise enquiry as to whether a fund-raiser had been duly approved to carry out a charitable fund-raising activity; SWD would explore the possibility of wider publicity for the flag-selling activities as suggested.

6. The Committee endorsed the recommendations in the paper and made no further comments.



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(3) **Progress on Social Investment and Tripartite Partnerships (Oral Briefing)**

7. The Administration briefed the progress as follows :

- (a) a conference on “Social Investment and Tripartite Partnerships” had been held on 3 April 2004 with around 450 participants. The welfare sector was generally supportive of the concept of social investment and supported the promotion of tripartite partnerships; and
- (b) a conference on tripartite partnerships involving the business sector might be held in the coming Autumn.

8. Members made the following comments:

- (a) it was important to solicit views from the business sector;
- (b) the Bureau should consider inviting the CEOs of business firms to participate in some round-table discussions;
- (c) it would be useful if certain companies could be identified in the coming few months to join some pilot projects lasting for a year or so;
- (d) small and medium business firms should also be willing to participate in such activities; and
- (e) consideration could be given to provide some incentives, such as tax exemption, to encourage

the business sector to form tripartite partnerships.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

September 2004