

Minutes of the
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting
held on 7 September 2004

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

Dr Leung Cho-bun

Mr Poon Huen-wai

Mr Aaron Wan

Ms Marina Wong Yu-pok

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)

Dr E K Yeoh	Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food
Mrs Carrie Yau	Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food
Ms Susie Ho	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Health)
Ms Salina Yan	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Elderly Services)
Miss Diane Wong	Acting Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Welfare)
Mrs Grace Ng	Project Manager Officer, Community Investment and Inclusion Fund

Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Mrs Agnes Allcock	Acting Director of Social Welfare
Mrs Y Y Tang	Chief Social Welfare Officer (Strategic Planning)

Absent with Apologies

Mr Keith Lam Hon-keung

Prof Diana Mak Ping-see

(1) Strategic Framework for Social Welfare (SWAC Paper No. 10/04)

This paper sought Members' views on a draft strategic framework for social welfare for further discussions with the relevant stakeholders, as part of an evolving process. The strategic framework highlighted how we intended to address social problems at a more strategic level by building social capital through tripartite partnerships in social investment, while providing a safety net and a springboard for greater self-reliance and to assist people to rebound. The strategic framework set out our vision, mission, values and an overview of our social and economic landscapes, strategic responses and possible policy implications. We recognized that the implications of building human capital and social capital would go

beyond social welfare policies and require the collaboration of other bureaux, departments and sectors. Members were invited to give their views on how to enhance the conceptual framework, identify critical issues requiring further attention, identify the policy implications and advise on the way forward.

2. Members supported the broad direction of the strategic framework laid down in the paper and made the following specific comments :

- (a) the framework set an important step to change the perceptions on social welfare which would be guiding future policy and service planning. There ought to be more consultations and focus group discussions, involving not just SWAC, but also various sectors of the society to facilitate exchanges of ideas, clear any misconceptions and reach general consensus on the key concepts and the future direction of social policies. Sharing sessions for board members and executives of NGOs should be arranged to communicate the new ideas and concepts. The Government should also recruit leaders of chambers of commerce, who had extensive network and strong influence in the business community, to form an advisory committee for better promotion of the concepts. Workshops with international speakers should also be organized to facilitate exchanges with overseas experiences;
- (b) the concepts in the paper should be put in simpler language for easier understanding by the business sector and the general public;
- (c) a more concrete implementation plan on how to translate the new concepts into policy options and servicing/programme planning should be worked out;
- (d) the base of tripartite partnership should be expanded as the service-users and other sectors were also involved rather than just the business community, the Third Sector and the Government. It was suggested that the term 'tripartite partnership' be renamed as 'social partnership' or 'multi-sector partnership' ;
- (e) while safety net should be designed as a springboard for helping people to rebound, we should not overlook that there were some groups at the society that required long-term support. The old and new models could co-exist and supplement each other;

- (f) the concept of corporate social responsibility should be regarded as social capital investment in staff. Researches from overseas indicated that sending staff to participate in volunteering work was more effective in building up human capital and changing their mindset than traditional training courses. On the other hand, it was considered that ‘social protection’ was a more acceptable term by international standard in comparison with ‘safety net’ which was more remedial in nature. In addition, the whole exercise was a co-production process in which contributions by all relevant parties, especially the service user themselves, were crucial in the success of the implementation of the framework;
- (g) big business corporations had all along played an active part in making contributions in cash to the wider community, which was probably an easier and more efficient way of support. Since the business sector was good at making profits, we should leave their time and energy to make money so that they could fund social services. If they were asked actively participate in volunteering work, the results might not be satisfactory;
- (h) corporate volunteerism in the business sector was a new culture which would take a long time to take root given the tight resources and practical constraints of many business enterprises in recent years. To promote their corporate social responsibilities and role as creators of social values, the driving force should come from the companies’ top management. It was also important to let the middle level of the business sector understand the strategic framework and the practical benefits for their contributions to the society by support in cash or in kind. More sharing sessions for those enterprises which had participated in corporate volunteerism should be organized. To further engage the participation of small and medium enterprises, more practical benefits and incentives should be given, such as further tax deduction;
- (i) Government should not resort to raising the tax rate to cope with the increasing welfare expenditure because a low tax regime was the key to maintaining our competitiveness;
- (j) while the Third Sector should play a more proactive role under the proposed framework, the Government should provide basic administrative funding for them to operate and sustain;
- (k) as the implications of the new approaches on social policies set out in the strategic framework would go beyond welfare policies such as health, education, employment, housing and so on,

collaboration and interfacing with other bureaux, departments and sectors would be required;

- (l) the proposed strategic framework should take a more macro perspective and further expand its coverage. While collaboration and joint efforts with other parties was necessary, the overall review of the existing Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) was one of the most important issues to be tackled;
- (m) while the quality of the society was getting better, the value of people seemed to have eroded. People forgot their own responsibilities towards the society and became too reliant. More social education should be done and focus groups should be formed to build up consensus on the new direction of social responsibility; and
- (n) it was most important that the new approach started to revisit some of our core values such as self-reliance, mutual concern of families and communities, etc. which seemed to have eroded in recent years and led to many social problems as a result. To take the framework forward, we might need to have a matrix system. Horizontally, the system would provide a platform with all the core social values. Vertically, there would be specific programme areas.

3. In response, the Government said that the draft strategic framework on social welfare would be refined taking into account of Members' valuable views. The paper, with further details to be developed, would be put to SWAC and the welfare sector for further consultation as appropriate.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

October 2004