

Follow-up to Kwun Tong District Visit

Purpose

This note follows up on the visit to Kwun Tong (KT) by the Commission on 29 April, and outlines the key poverty-related challenges faced by the community and the measures to be adopted to deal with them.

Background

2. To further study the needs of the local community, the Commission visited KT on 29 April after visiting Tin Shui Wai in March. Members met with service recipients including women and elders from low-income families. Members also exchanged views with about 20 district personalities including representatives from the District Council, Area Committees, local community organisations, schools and NGOs.

Key poverty-related challenges and concerns

3. CoP Paper 13/2005 provides an overview of the community profile of KT, the services available to the residents there that are related to poverty alleviation, and some of the challenges faced by the community. The following highlights three key concerns as reflected by figures related to the social characteristics of KT and the discussions with the local personalities on 29 April –

Community integration of low-income/deprived groups – KT has the largest elderly population and also a high concentration of New Arrivals (ranking the first in Hong Kong in 2004). There are concerns on whether more could be done to help them integrate into the community.

Support for vulnerable families - the number of domestic violence cases in KT (255 cases in 2004) is the third highest in the whole of Hong Kong in 2004 and the number of single parents living with children is also the third highest in the territory based on the 2001 Census. There have been calls to strengthen support for these families.

Cross-sector cooperation – more should be done to strengthen the local community networks and make better use of them to derive local solutions to the local poverty-related challenges.

District Coordination

4. In response to policy initiatives of the Commission on Poverty and to coordinate interdepartmental efforts, an inter-departmental task force has been set

up at the district level. The task force is chaired by the District Officer (Kwun Tong) and comprises officers of all Government departments concerned at the district level. The task force is also keeping a close dialogue with the District Council through the District Management Committee, the Working Group on Concerns on Poverty under the Kwun Tong District Council, as well as with local organisations and NGOs providing services to underprivileged groups and other informal networks.

District Strategies

5. The task force has met twice, before and after CoP visit to KT on 29 April. Taking into account the social characteristics of KT and the suggestions from the local community, the task force has initially mapped out the following directions to tackle the key challenges faced by KT -

Strategy 1: Community integration of low-income/deprived groups

6. The task force considers that to improve the conditions of the low-income/deprived groups, such as elders and New Arrivals, they should be encouraged to reach out to the community. The intention is to enable them to better understand the community resources available to help them, motivate them to contribute to the local community as well as to allow other members of the community to understand and accept them. To this end, the task force considers that local measures could be grouped under two objectives, as follows -

Objective 1: To help New Arrival/deprived groups to integrate into the local community

Key Actions:

- The six Integrated Family Services Centres operating in the district will continue to organize monthly orientation programmes, interest classes and social activities for the New Arrivals on regular basis.
- Booklets with information on the welfare services available for New Arrivals in the community will be published on a quarterly basis for distribution through NGOs and government departments.
- NGOs and local community organizations will be encouraged to reach out to the “hidden” New Arrivals that had not previously received services or joined the activities organised by NGOs. A forum will be organised for NGOs to facilitate experience sharing on New Arrival services provision.
- To encourage local schools that have a large number of Newly Arrived Children (NAC) and ethnic minorities to share experience with other schools in the community on best practices regarding how to help NAC integrate into local schools.

- NGOs and community organizations will continue to organise activities to strengthen and empower the New Arrivals, ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups of the community with an aim to achieve social cohesion.
- To encourage schools to set up volunteer teams targeting on improving care for elderly singletons through the Schools Liaison Committee in KT. A proposal being considered is to match volunteering secondary school students with elders to encourage mutual understanding between youth and elders as well as the building of personal caring relationships.
- The Area Committees in the district will put a focus on serving the elderly in all their regular activities, e.g. the committees will organise visits to elderly singletons and will organise health talks and exercise demonstration to promote healthy lifestyle among elders.
- NGOs operating Support Teams for the Elderly (STE) will organize a series of concerned visits by joining up the elder volunteers and the handicapped persons to visit the elders living alone with a view to promoting the message of community inclusion.

Objective 2: To encourage mutual help among deprived groups and between other members of the community

7. The task force considers that one of the most important challenges is to raise the self-esteem of the deprived. Though deprived in one or a few areas, the disadvantaged may have capacities to help those deprived in other areas. Experience in Hong Kong and elsewhere indicates that services and support to the others can help raise the self-worth and maintain a sense of purpose in life among the “givers” of services and support. This could help promote not only a sense of self-reliance but also a localized support network which can help identify and provide timely support to the needy in the neighborhood.

Key Actions:

- The STEs will encourage residents of the community in forming volunteer groups to visit elders living in the same buildings.
- The STEs in the district will continue to network the “hidden”/vulnerable elders in the community with a view to encouraging them to join either the social activities or participate in the volunteer programme/concerned visits to the more disadvantaged in the community.
- The District Coordinating Committee (Family & Child Welfare) under SWD will organize series of programs for the new arrivals, single parents, the unemployed youth / middle aged with a view to enhancing their functioning both as a member of the family and of the community. Programmes will also be launched to promote public understanding on the strengths of these deprived groups thereby to achieve mutual help and social cohesion of the

community.

- The Coordination Committee on Services for New Arrivals under KT District Office will network the New Arrivals in the district through the help of NGOs and local community organisations to organise mentorship schemes for those New Arrivals that have already settled well in Hong Kong to share experience and provide practical guidance to those who have newly arrived in Hong Kong.
- Schools in the district will help to identify the expertise of NAC in their schools and encourage the NAC to make good use of their expertise (e.g. Putonghua) in academic or interest classes to boost their self-confidence as well as to help other students.

Objective 3: To promote self-reliance messages

Key Actions:

- A briefing will be organised for NGOs and local community organisations on CIIF to promote the community funding available and encourage replication of successful projects on self-reliance and on building of social capital.
- Labour Department will strengthen the employment briefings with updated labour market information, job search skills, retraining materials, and self-reliant messages to encourage the unemployed to be more positive and self-reliant, so as to help them better prepared for re-entering into the labour market.
- Schools will be encouraged to apply for grant to conduct School-based After-school Learning and Support programmes for disadvantaged students, with an aim to developing their learning capacity, self-esteem and self-reliance.

Strategy 2: Support for vulnerable families

8. In view of the high number of domestic violence cases and single parent families in KT, the task force considers it a priority to strengthen support for these families –

Objective 1: To provide enhanced support for single parent families

Key Actions:

- To stock-take on existing childcare services and after school care programmes in the district and publish information leaflets.
- SWD would update and distribute the information leaflet / CD Rom on the welfare services available in the district thus to enable the single parents to tap the resources available.

- To encourage NGOs to organize after school care programmes/mutual help support groups.

Objective 2: To strengthen support for children and youth in vulnerable families

Key actions:

- To network current students and graduates of secondary schools in the district to be tutors in summer classes or after-school classes to help secondary one children to adjust into the new environment and new academic curriculum and to provide special tutoring for children in vulnerable families.
- SWD will use increased financial resources to address the developmental needs of children and youth in the district, either for the needy individuals or through projects to be implemented by NGOs.
- The Integrated Children & Youth Centres which have been modernized, would be encouraged to support the needs of the deprived children and youth in the community e.g. computer facilities etc.
- With a view to promoting the understanding on and knowledge of early sign of mental health problem identified from children and youth, SWD would organize series of briefing session/seminar to NGOs, school personnel and local community organizations in the district.

Strategy 3: Cross-sector cooperation

9. In order that poverty alleviation be effective, the task force considered that the whole community must be mobilised. To this end, the task force will organize the following to encourage cross-sector cooperation –

Objective 1: To build consensus among different sectors on the major challenges faced by the low income groups in the district

Key Action:

- To organize a district round-table meeting with the District Council involving the DC, NGOs, local organizations and the private sector in the district.

Objective 2: To engage different sectors of the community in helping the deprived groups

Key Actions:

- The Social Services Committee under Kwun Tong District Council has funded increasing number of projects initiated by NGOs and local

community organisations to help the deprived groups to integrate into the community, in particular on services for elderly and the youth.

- To organise briefing/exhibitions for local community organisations on CIIF and encourage them to apply for funds to implement projects to helping the deprived groups in the local community.
- To facilitate private companies interested in community services to partner with NGOs through a briefing session cum service exhibition on CIIF and Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged for NGOs and the district-based business sector and help them identify suitable projects and partners in serving the deprived groups through collaborative efforts.

10. The task force will meet regularly to follow-up the implementation of the actions and keep under review the specific needs of the district. It will submit a situation report to the CoP for reference in six months' time.

Kwun Tong Task Force on Poverty Alleviation
May 2005

