

**Commission on Poverty (CoP)
Task Force on Children and Youth**

**Projects in Building Social Capital For Children and Youth
- Supplementary Information**

Introduction

As requested by Members during the last Task Force meeting, this paper sets out information supplementary to CoP/TFCY Paper 2/2005 on the two projects (*viz.* the “Mentorship Fun” Project and the “Adopt-A-School” Project) which aim to build social capital to enable sustained and effective supportive network for tackling intergenerational poverty.

General Objective - Tackling Intergenerational Poverty

2. It is well recognised that material well-being is but one of the many variables affecting the healthy and balanced development of the younger generation, and not necessarily the most important one¹. Quality of parenting and family life are often cited as the key variable, with quality education, positive role modelling and additional outside-home support supplementing² the developmental needs of children and youth. Such supplement is particularly important for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

3. Besides policy work, it is one of the Task Force’s terms of reference to promote social capital in support of the healthy and balanced development of our younger generation. However, fulfilling this task is easier said than done. Besides dialogues and publicity on general concepts, publicising successful experience of concrete projects could also help focus community attention to the need to provide care, exposure and opportunity for tackling intergenerational poverty. Towards this end, Members have

¹ Members may refer to CoP/TFCY Paper 4/2005 which sets out the framework in understanding and tackling intergenerational poverty.

² Additional support and role modelling outside home can by no means replace the essential role of the parents and family to the healthy growth and development of children and youth. Therefore, as far as possible, initiatives should incorporate a parent angle, e.g. involving parents in the delivery or carrying messages prompting reflection by parents.

contributed real life stories of children/youth from disadvantaged backgrounds gaining self-reliance through personal efforts and support by others. In addition, Members also advise on the need to demonstrate the work of the CoP in such publicity efforts³, instead of simply publicising experience of other existing projects. To contribute to the promotion of social capital and cross-sectoral participation, two projects have been developed, viz. the “Mentorship Fun” Project and the “Adopt-A-School” Project (paragraphs 5 – 17 below).

4. In assisting the Commission to fulfil this task, the Commission Secretariat is keenly aware that -

- (a) building social capital relies heavily on voluntarism of the community. Any initiative of the Commission should build on existing community efforts. The role of the Commission and the Government is not to duplicate but to further encourage such efforts;
- (b) in achieving (a) the initiatives of the Commission should either fill an existing gap or go beyond current scale or mode of delivery; and
- (c) the initiatives should be sustainable. The role of the Commission should be facilitatory in nature e.g. to foster the start-up of worthwhile initiatives instead of administering their detailed implementation. Partnerships with relevant community organisations and/or Government bureaux would be sought in implementing the initiatives and to further develop and promote them.

“Mentorship Fun” Project

Specific Objective and Approach

5. The “Mentorship Fun” Project is not intended to be just another mentorship programme currently operated by academic institutions individually and based largely on connections between the participating institutions. The Project is essentially ***networking and facilitation*** in nature and aims to further encourage, promote and facilitate mentoring programmes through -

- (a) establishing a new network among tertiary, post-secondary, secondary and primary institutions. A new infrastructure, the Voluntary Service Exchange, has been developed in partnership with the Hong Kong Education City Ltd.

³ Discussions at the CoP meeting on 26 May 2005 refer.

to provide a platform to facilitate the matching of supply and demand of voluntary mentoring services;

- (b) removing a possible disincentive to students to serve as mentors through the provision of travel allowance for mentors; and
- (c) giving recognition to committed mentors.

6. Worth highlighting is that, at an institution level, the networking envisaged would be of greatest benefit to those schools not well endowed with pre-existing connections and thus not currently benefiting from any mentorship programmes. At an individual level, the provision of a modest travelling allowance will help encourage children/youth from poor background to join as mentors and through the experience, to appreciate the strengths they possess and to further sharpen their interpersonal, organisational and communication skills, all of which are essential to future success. Lastly, the Project is deliberately means-blind in order to supplement other criteria-based programmes, to reduce class cleavage and to highlight that children/youth from disadvantaged backgrounds may also have their own areas of strengths to share as mentors. Hopefully, this will help build up among the younger generation a sense of self-efficacy, empathy of people from all walks of life and a multi-dimensional appreciation of individuals as they are (rather than what their background suggests). Such an attitude is, we believe, conducive to promoting social capital and an inclusive society.

7. Since the specific objective of the Project is to further encourage voluntarism on the part of the participating institutions and the students and institutions in fact do not benefit financially from the Project at all, we see merits in an administrative-light implementation. Only broad guidelines would be drawn up as opposed to a more prescriptive approach commonly applied to projects where participating agencies receive sizeable public funds.

Guidelines

8. The success or otherwise of an individual mentorship programme depends very much on the relationship developed between the mentor and the mentee and which in turn is affected by their own background and needs. Hence, instead of prescribing a uniform set of operational rules, universities representatives and school principals with whom we have discussed considered it desirable to allow flexibility for individual institutions to implement their mentorship programmes. After all, some academic

institutions have some good experience over the years in nurturing such mentor-mentee relationship.

9. That said, we have drawn up some general service guidelines⁴ concerning the Project, including expectations on the mentors, and basic training by the participating institutions to the mentors before they start to provide service. The guidelines would serve as a general reference for participating institutions. Details of the service guidelines are at *Annex A*. We would also facilitate sharing of experience among the participating institutions through briefings and discussion sessions.

Feedback

10. In line with the specific objective and approach set out in paragraphs 5 - 7, instead of putting in place elaborate monitoring and evaluation, we propose to request service receiving institutions (schools of the mentees) to provide annual feedback on the implementation of the Project. This will be complemented by soft qualitative assessment based on feedback from the participating institutions, as well as suggestions to improve the networking and facilitation function of the Project.

Administration

11. Since the essence of the Project is networking and facilitation (instead of the actual implementation of individual mentorship programmes), the workload to the Secretariat should be minimal after the initial stage. The Secretary of Education and Manpower has also indicated willingness to take up the Project after its full implementation, say, after one year.

“Adopt-A-School” Project

Specific Objective and Approach

12. As set out in CoP/TFCY Paper 2/2005, business offers a unique resource of support and exposure to students, and schools provide a platform to reach out to the needy students. It is worthwhile for the Commission to further promote the role of business in tackling intergenerational poverty through partnership with schools.

⁴ CoP Members have received an advance copy vide letter of 21.9.2005. In drawing up the service guidelines, reference has been drawn from a number of sources, including the Quality Education Fund's study on the mentorship training and assessment mechanism, the Mentorship Programme of the University of Hong Kong and the Volunteer Movement under the Social Welfare Department.

13. It is noted that some companies are quite active in providing funding, material support, mentoring services and advice to schools mainly on an ad hoc basis or in an activity-based manner. In order to further encourage such efforts, it is proposed that *a new partnership model* be promoted, *viz.* by encouraging companies to “adopt” schools, especially those with a significant proportion of students from disadvantaged families, and to develop a growing, longer-term and progressively deeper relationship with the adopted schools. This approach is in recognition of the fact that one of the greatest hurdles of business volunteering is the lack of line management buy-in⁵. In order to inspire and motivate business participation, it is essential to convince by examples, thus demonstrating the benefits gained by both the businesses and the schools in success cases.

14. As a result, it is proposed to start small and grow by piloting. A few pilot “adoptions” between business organisations and secondary schools would be fostered with a view to publicising their positive experience to the wider business community. Suitable companies with commitment and ownership to the Project, and schools with the right profile would be targeted with a view to produce some quality pilots⁶.

Guidelines

15. The success or otherwise of an “adoption” depends very much on the relationship developed between the Adopting Companies and the Adopted Schools. This is affected in turn by how the relationship is forged and nurtured, for example (a) preparing the leadership and management of the Adopting Companies and adopted schools, (b) identifying suitable partners, (c) aligning expectations, (d) measuring of impact and (e) providing recognition. Instead of prescribing rigid rules, a set of guidelines has been drawn up (*Annex B*). This is to facilitate the dialogue between the Adopting Companies and the Adopted Schools so that they can agree on how to form their partnership based on their needs and expectations.

Feedback

16. Like the “Mentorship Fun” Project, the “Adopt-A-School” Project relies heavily

⁵ “*Employee Volunteering – The Guide*”, Community Business, January 2005. Available at www.communitybusiness.org.hk.

⁶ Please refer paragraphs 8 – 10 of Annex B to CoP/TFCY Paper 2/2005 for details.

on voluntarism on the part of businesses. While we would encourage the Adopting Companies and the Adopted Schools to agree on how to measure the impact of the adoption, it is important that the Commission does not attempt to prescribe a one-size-fits-all elaborate evaluation mechanism. After all, appropriateness of the evaluation also hinges on the details of the partnership and which in turn would be conditioned by the evolvement of the relationship between the company and its adopted school. Therefore, an administrative-light approach is favoured. Pertinent to note is that there is no accountability element between the participating companies/schools and the Commission. The role of the Commission Secretariat is mainly to facilitate the matching and to conduct publicity, instead of funding the detailed implementation of the Project. As a result, we propose that a soft qualitative assessment through dialogues with the Adopting Companies and the Adopted Schools be conducted in order to distil the good experience from the pilots for further promotion.

Administration

17. As mentioned in paragraph 16 above, the role of the Commission Secretariat is mainly in facilitating the initial matching of a few “adoptions”, and in the subsequent publicity and promotion work. While the Commission Secretariat would keep up the dialogue with the Adopting Companies and Adopted Schools for the purpose of conducting the qualitative assessment, the Secretariat would not be involved in the actual delivery of service. No capital and recurrent cost from the Government is required. Subject to the experience of the initial few pilots, the Commission Secretariat would publicise the model to the wider community, and consider how best to further promote the Project.

Advice Sought

18. Members are invited to note the supplementary information provided concerning the two Projects above. Suggestions on how best the Task Force should fulfil its terms of reference to promote social capital for our younger generation are welcome.

Commission Secretariat
September 2005

MENTORSHIP FUN PROJECT DETAILS

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

“Mentorship Fun” is a mentoring project among tertiary, post-secondary, secondary and primary students with a view to imbuing the younger generation with a sense of community responsibility and in the long run, to build social capital.

TARGET GROUPS

2. Students of all the eight University Grants Committee (UGC) funded institutions may join the project as individuals. Students of Vocational Training Council (VTC) may join the project through the VTC. The eight UGC-funded institutions, VTC and all secondary schools and primary schools may join the project and organize voluntary services within the education sector. Secondary school students and primary school students may participate in the project through activities organized by their schools.

REGISTRATION

3. Eligible students and institutions may enrol in the project by registering at the Voluntary Service Exchange, a dedicated electronic platform developed for the project, from 20 September 2005¹. More details of the Exchange are in the section “Offer and Request Services” below. The web address of the Exchange is <http://mentorshipfun.org.hk>.

¹ Eligible students may register at the Exchange and account activation information will be sent to their university email accounts.

Institution accounts have been created for the eight UGC-funded institutions and VTC, and activation information will be sent to them direct.

Institution accounts have also been created for schools registered to the Hong Kong Education City website and account activation information will be sent to the school administrator account.

For those schools that have not been registered to the Hong Kong Education City website, they are required to do so before they can register to the Voluntary Service Exchange. The web address for registration with the Hong Kong Education City is <http://www.hkedcity.net/join>.

OFFER AND REQUEST SERVICES

4. The main purpose of the Mentorship Fun Project is to provide a platform for participating individuals and institutions to offer and request voluntary services. Conventionally, schools need to approach individual tertiary institutions for voluntary services while tertiary institutions have to use their networks to identify schools to take forward their voluntary service programmes. To facilitate the implementation of this project and to enhance access to information on the supply and demand of voluntary services for the education sector, we have developed an electronic platform - Voluntary Service Exchange.

5. Voluntary Service Exchange is a web-based platform listing out categorized voluntary service offers and demands. It will only be accessible by schools, tertiary institutions, VTC and registered tertiary students. Tertiary institutions/VTC and secondary schools will post services offered. In addition, institutions could, if they so wish, permit registered tertiary students (as individuals or in groups) to post their service/location preferences on the platform so that schools requiring voluntary services can find the most suitable offer available and approach the provider direct. Voluntary Service Exchange will also allow those who want to offer voluntary services under this project to look for voluntary service opportunities available so that they can approach schools that might need their services.

SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED UNDER THE PROJECT

6. For prudence and safety, the scheme will be school-based with the mentors providing the services on the premises of the mentees' schools. No rigid service scope will be set for the project, it could be homework support, ball games, singing songs, discussion about issues of mutual interest, etc. For safety, the mentee schools should provide a venue easily accessible and visible for the conduct of the mentoring services, e.g. covered playground, and there should be an adult around.

7. Schools requesting services should note that tertiary and senior secondary students will be more responsive to innovative and challenging programmes. They will, however, be reluctant to commit to programmes spanning over a long period of time unless they know the programmes well, find them interesting and identify with them.

FEEDBACK

8. Service receiving institutions are encouraged to provide annual feedback to the Secretariat to the Commission on Poverty on the performance of mentors, the response of mentees, the effectiveness of the project and suggestions on how to improve the project through an online form. The Secretariat will also maintain contacts with participating institutions to collect feedback on the project.

9. In addition to the above, service receiving institutions are encouraged to provide feedback on the performance of the mentors once a year by filling a simple online form. The feedback will be directed to respective service providing institutions.

10. Apart from the regular feedback, service receiving institutions may contact respective service providing institutions in exceptional circumstances when timely attention/appreciation of the institution is warranted.

SERVICE GUIDELINES

11. Service guidelines will allow participants of the project to understand better their expectations and the expectations of the other parties. Given the voluntary nature of the project and the diverse range of activities that mentors/mentees may engage in, we choose to give some general advice and lay down some basic understandings as pointers and leave participants to add further details for specific circumstances.

12. Expected conduct of the mentor and operation details of service programme should be agreed between the mentor (or the service providing institution in case the service providing institution is responsible for recruiting mentors for the voluntary service) and the service receiving institution before commencement of the voluntary service.

Who the mentors are

13. Students from tertiary institutions would serve as mentors for secondary and primary students. Secondary students could be both mentors and mentees with the discretion left to the school heads. Though belonging to the post-secondary sector, given the nature of the services rendered by the Vocational Training Council, some of its students would be mentors while others would participate as mentees.

Expectations of mentors

14. Mentors with positive attitude and responsible behaviour are most likely to get satisfaction out of their voluntary services, bring benefits to the mentees and win respect from the service receiving institutions.

Positive Attitude

15. Mentors should:

- make efforts to align their expectations with the expected outcome of the voluntary service they participate;
- be patient and complete their tasks;
- serve the best they can and learn proactively;
- treat service recipients friendly and sincerely;
- try to understand the needs of the service recipients;
- give constructive suggestions to further improve the service;
- be receptive to feedback and make constructive suggestions;
- follow the operating guides and procedures set out by the service receiving institution; and
- discuss any doubts that they may have with the service receiving institution in a sincere and friendly manner.

Responsible behaviour

16. Mentors should NOT:

- enter schools and contact mentees without the permission from the service receiving institution;
- bring mentees outside the school premises without the permission from the service receiving institution;
- dress and behave in a way not befitting their status as students;
- bring people not participating in service into school premises of the service receiving institution;
- engage mentees for activities other than those covered by the voluntary service, without consent from the service receiving institution;
- release information concerning personal details of the mentees to third

party.

Expectations of Participating Institutions

17. For a project of this nature, there could well be hiccups that might not have been foreseen. Participating institutions should tackle problems, as and when they arise, pragmatically and positively, reflective of the each other's shared responsibility for the project. Below are some suggestions that may help minimize hiccups.

18. In order to make mentors better prepared and equipped for their services, we encourage service providing institutions to provide basic training for their student-mentors before they start to provide service.

19. Service providing institutions should also ensure that their student-mentors are properly insured for taking part in activities of the project.

20. Service receiving institutions should ensure that the venue where the voluntary services take place is safe.

21. Service receiving institutions should not treat mentors as cheap labour or expect them to work with complete independence. They should be given treatment befitting of student-volunteers. The service receiving institution should assign an appropriate adult helper (eg, a teacher or a parent) to supervise the programme and assist the mentors to understand the institution, the mentees and their expectations.

22. Whether to involve school social workers in service programmes will be left to the discretion of the service receiving institution concerned.

23. We encourage service providing institutions and service receiving institutions to maintain contact and co-operate on giving assistance to mentors.

RECOGNITION

24. Mentors serving not less than 50 hours (excluding time for transport) in a year will be issued with a Certificate of Participation. A Certificate of Appreciation will be issued to those who serve not less than 100 hours in a year. For the purpose of this project, a year runs from 1 July to 30 June of the next year.

25. Participating institutions are also encouraged to factor into account students' performance in this project in assessing their eligibility for leadership and other development programmes.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

26. A \$20 per occasion travel allowance may be paid to the mentors. The disbursement of travel allowances will be subject to service providing institutions' discretion. For example, service providing institutions may choose not to disburse the allowance if the mentee school is very near to the service providing institution (say, within 10 minutes' walk) or if the service providing institution will centrally arrange transport for the mentors. If transport is arranged centrally for the mentors, the service providing institution may reimburse the transportation expenses from the funds allocated to it from the Commission Secretariat (see paragraph 30). The underlying principle is that the travel allowance is neither a monetary reward for mentors nor a funding source for organizing voluntary services. The only legitimate purpose of the travel allowance is to subsidize travelling expenses incurred to mentors or institutions for voluntary services covered by the project.

27. Voluntary services or service-learning programmes organized by tertiary institutions/schools for students in other schools, regardless of whether they are arranged through Voluntary Service Exchange, will be eligible for claiming the travel allowance and the service hours could be counted for the purpose of the award of certificates.

28. Training received by mentors can be counted as service hours with a limit of 5 hours for each service programme, up to a limit of 10 hours per mentor per year. Such training should be arranged at the service providing institutions' own discretion.

29. Students of the eight UGC-funded institutions and VTC will be given the discretion of whether or not to claim the travel allowance². Student offices of the eight UGC-funded institutions and VTC will download data regularly from the Voluntary Service Exchange and arrange reimbursement to the mentors.

30. As a start, \$200,000 will be parked with the Dean of Students Office of every

² Service receiving institutions must create a service record in Voluntary Service Exchange for all successful voluntary service matching (no matter through Voluntary Service Exchange or other channels) before the mentors can log their services and claim the travel allowance. Therefore mentors should remind the service receiving institution to create service record if it has not done so.

participating tertiary/post-secondary institution. An amount of \$50,000 will be parked with those secondary school offering voluntary services³. The ledger for the amount should be kept separately from the other accounts of the service providing institution. An income and expenditure account ended 30 June should be passed to the Commission Secretariat via the dean of students or school head on or before 31 October (the first such submission will be on or before 31 October 2006). Standard format of the income and expenditure account is attached as Annex II.

ENQUIRIES

31. Please direct general enquiries on the Mentorship Fun Project to the Secretariat to the Commission on Poverty at 2810 2090.

32. Please call 2624 1000 in respect of technical support for the electronic platform Voluntary Service Exchange.

Secretariat to the Commission on Poverty
September 2005

³ Secondary schools offering voluntary services have to submit an application form at Annex I for fund allocation.

‘ADOPT-A-SCHOOL’

DEVELOPING A LONGER-TERM BUSINESS-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP MODEL: GUIDELINES FOR REFERENCE

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

“Adopt-A-School” is a project which promotes business engagement in tackling intergenerational poverty through encouraging formation of a growing and longer-term relationship with schools, in particular those with a higher proportion of students from disadvantaged families.

MISSION

2. It is well recognised that material well-being is but one of the many variables to the healthy and balanced development of the younger generation, and not necessarily the most important one¹. While quality of parenting and family life are key to the balanced development of the younger generation, quality education, support and positive role modelling supplement² the need of children and youth, particularly the disadvantaged ones, for opportunities to develop and grow. Business offers a unique resource of support and exposure to students, and schools provide a platform to reach out to the needy students

3. The following serves as general guidelines for companies and schools interested in adopting this partnership model. Given the volunteering nature of the initiative, flexibility and an outcome-oriented approach should be adopted. The key to success is not a prescribed formula but rather respect for autonomy and promotion of a caring spirit. In short, the guidelines are for reference only.

¹ For more details, please refer to CoP/TFCY Paper 4/2005 “Tackling Intergenerational Poverty – Concept Paper” which sets out the framework in understanding and tackling intergenerational poverty.

² Additional support and role modelling outside home can by no means replace the essential role of the parents and family to the healthy growth and development of children and youth. Therefore, as far as possible, initiatives should incorporate a parent angle, e.g. involving parents in the delivery or carrying messages prompting reflection by parents.

ROLE OF THE ADOPTING COMPANY

4. Through participation in the Project, the Adopting Company will become the “godparent” of a school. Similar to business volunteering programmes in schools, the Adopting Company will, following common understandings reached with the Adopted School, provide services to the Adopted School, which may include, for instance, the following³ -

- (a) provision of funding and material donations;
- (b) after-school care, including organisation of extra-curricular activities;
- (c) mentoring, sharing of experience, advice on personal and career development;
- (d) provision of training, workshops, placement/internship opportunities, etc.; and/or
- (e) joint participation in worthy community/philanthropic projects such as helping other needy groups.

5. The main difference of the Project from a regular business-school volunteering programme is the adoption of a long-term partnership model between the Adopting Company and the Adopted School for a sustained period. The initial period of “adoption” is to be agreed between the two parties, e.g. for one academic year, and hopefully may be extended in order to reap benefits from a longer-term and growing relationship.

HOW DOES A COMPANY ADOPT A SCHOOL

6. There are five key steps for a company to consider adopting a school -
- (a) Preparing the leadership and management of the company;
 - (b) Identifying suitable partners;
 - (c) Aligning expectations of the Adopting Company and the Adopted School;
 - (d) Measuring impact of the “adoption” against expectations; and
 - (e) Providing recognition.

³ Support and role modelling outside home by no means replace the essential role of the parents and family to the growth and development of children and youth. School-based initiatives should thus try to involve parents as far as possible.

(a) Preparing the leadership and management of the company

7. Before having an “adoption”, it is key that the leadership and line management of the company share the mission of the Project. Since nurturing a longer-term relationship is a developmental process, companies interested in adopting a school should be prepared to have key personnel who are committed to managing the implementation and keeping dialogue with the school management to review progress from time to time.

8. While the Adopting Company may already have corporate volunteering experience and programmes, we encourage them to draw reference to relevant resources⁴ and experiences⁵. While the project envisages fostering a one-on-one relationship between a company and a school, the parties involved may also draw in expertise/project partners from other community organisations/NGOs for advice and additional support (e.g. training of employees or counselling of students).

(b) Identification of suitable partners

9. During the matching stage, it is important for the Adopting Company and the Adopted School to understand the background and profile of each other, and to find out if there may be some initial common grounds in terms of their objectives, interests and needs.

10. For the school, it is important that the school management understands the corporate policy and business objectives of the Adopting Company, and ensure that they are not in conflict with the philosophy of the school. The school should also focus, at least initially, on programmes which are not incongruent with the previous corporate volunteering record and programmes that the company has organised or participated, as well as the interests, resources and skills of its employee volunteers. For the company, it should try to understand the education philosophy of the school management, its approach towards assisting students in particular those from disadvantaged background,

⁴ In this respect, the Adopting Companies may draw reference to the criteria of a Caring Company recognised by the Hong Kong Council of Social Services, e.g. “volunteering”, “employing vulnerable”, “partnering”, “mentoring” and “giving”; as well as guides on employee volunteering, e.g. “*Employee Volunteering – The Guide*”, Community Business, January 2005. Available at www.communitybusiness.org.hk.

⁵ Well documented experience from successful programmes involving business-school partnership is limited. The School-Company Partnership organised by the Young Entrepreneurs Development Council (YDC), with the support of the Education and Manpower Bureau, has accumulated some good experience of the impact of business-school partnerships (though the focus is not on schools with a higher proportion of students from disadvantaged background).

the profile and interests of its students, the existing resources and development opportunities currently available to its students etc.

(c) Aligning expectations

11. During the formative stage of the “adoption”, the company and the school should explore candidly their expectations, and to be psychologically prepared for some hiccups and run-in gearing before the relationship warms up and starts to flourish. Since management personalities on the part of the company and the school may change with time, they may also wish to consider putting down, in writing in very brief terms, mutually agreed expectations for reference and to facilitate discussions on future development.

12. Drawing analogy to the development of a new relationship between godparents and adopted children, we encourage the Adopting Company to start small in terms of provision of services. It is better to start small and grow with experience and enhanced understanding of the Adopted School and its students, rather than to start ambitiously but leaving most initiatives half-finished. The Adopting Company may start off by providing some basic service, e.g. seminars/advice on career development, while exploring areas of further collaboration. For the relationship to be sustainable, mobilisation is important. We encourage the Adopting Company to progressively engage its employee-volunteers in programmes which promote the healthy and sound development of the students of the Adopted School.

13. While we encourage the “adoptions” to be targeted at schools with particular needs, e.g. with a higher proportion of children from disadvantaged background, it is important for the Adopting Company and the Adopted School to build a partnership not based on a simple “give-and-take” or monetary-sponsorship relationship. Only a relationship based on mutual benefits to the students, employees as well as the school and the company will grow over time.

(d) Measuring impact against expectations

14. Since the partnership model emphasizes a longer-term and growing relationship, it is important to try to gauge the impact of the “adoption” so as to ensure that the partnership can deliver the expected benefits and that stakeholders (e.g. students, employees, the school and the company management) find the activities worthwhile, meaningful and beneficial to their personal growth.

15. Such assessment needs not be very formal or mechanical. In fact, its modality would probably depend on the nature of the activities being gauged. For those who wish to adopt more elaborate assessment tools, there are a wide array of possible quantitative and qualitative indicators that they can draw reference from (e.g. number of volunteers involved, number of hours of volunteering involved, number of activities done, number of students benefited and any quantifiable impact) as well as qualitative feedback against the initial expectations towards the Project⁶. It must be emphasised that given the volunteering nature of the project, the assessment mode should, like the activities to be launched, arise from a shared understanding between the Adopting Company and the Adopted School.

16. Insofar as the pilots are concerned, the Commission Secretariat will liaise with the Adopting Companies and the Adopted Schools to gauge if the project is bringing the envisaged benefits, its growth potential, whether it should be continued and if so, how it may be improved and adapted.

(e) Providing recognition

17. Companies would be encouraged to consider given internal recognition to staff who contribute to the Project. As for external recognition, for the purpose of the pilot, the Commission Secretariat would publicise good experience gathered from the initial handful of “adoptions”. We would also encourage the Adopting Company to consider other existing public award schemes for outstanding business volunteering activities organised by the organisations with which they are associated with, e.g. the Caring Company Awards run by the Hong Kong Council of Social Services. In addition, the Secretariat would also, in its liaison with the business sector (e.g. chamber of commerce) encourage business bodies to give credit to such civic-spirited activities. Lastly, schools

⁶ “*Employee Volunteering – The Guide*”, Community Business, January 2005, pp. 31 – 34 provides some useful reference.

should also use various occasions to express appreciation to the Adopting Companies and its employee-volunteers (e.g. recognition on Speech Days and in publications by the school).

ENQUIRIES

18. Please direct enquiries on the “Adopt-A-School” Project to the Secretariat to the Commission on Poverty at 2810 2090.

Secretariat to the Commission on Poverty
September 2005