

**Commission on Poverty  
Task Force on Children and Youth**

**Progress report on the trial project  
My STEP - Special Training and Enhancement Programme**

**Purpose**

This paper briefs Members of the Task Force on Children and Youth of Commission on Poverty (CoP) on the progress of the My STEP for the young able-bodied unemployed Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients.

**Background**

2. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) introduced the Support for Self-reliance Scheme in June 1999 and intensified its measures in June 2003 to help the CSSA able-bodied unemployed recipients rejoin workforce and become self-reliant. SWD also commissioned non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to run Intensive Employment Assistance Projects (IEAPs) to provide intensive employment assistance services to the needy employable CSSA recipients and unemployed 'near-CSSA' recipients and help them secure gainful employment as early as possible.

3. CoP Paper 17/2005 'Training and Employment Opportunities for Youth' noted that there were noticeable increases in CSSA able-bodied unemployed youths aged 15 to 24 in past years albeit the absolute number was not substantial. While the Task Force on Children and Youth of CoP agreed that measures to help the unemployed 'from welfare to self-reliance' should emphasis on early intervention and prevention and using staged approach to cater different needs of the unemployed (CoP Paper 21/2005), Members supported in its meeting held on 7 October 2005 to launch a trial project, the My STEP, which would focus on motivating the unemployed youths with low readiness for employment through disciplinary training, job placement and other employment assistance services (CoP TFCY Paper 3/2005).

4. It was proposed that the trial My STEP would help strengthen the assistance to those most in needs, i.e. the 'hard-to-assist' unemployed youths who have been on CSSA for a long period and are failed to be motivated to work through the other employment assistance programmes such as IEAPs. NGOs would be involved to deliver the programme with a view to ensuring transfer of efficacy from adventure to work, leading eventually job placement and job retention. The trial project would interface with other existing employment assistance provided to unemployed youths by Labour Department (LD) to enable successful transfer of experience to induce motivation to work.

### **Implementation of the My STEP**

5. With the additional funding allocated by the Government in 2006-07, SWD commissioned two NGOs with experiences in youth unemployment and motivation work, namely, the Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church Social Service Hong Kong (ELCSSHK), to implement the programme, on a trial basis, for one year from October 2006 to September 2007.

### ***Service delivery***

6. The trial project, My STEP, will serve no less than 50 participants. The operating NGOs will provide the participants the following services to help them overcome work barriers and motivate them to take up employment or where appropriate, return to mainstream schooling:

- (a) structured motivational/disciplinary training;
- (b) pre-training counseling/guidance,
- (c) job search guidance and intensive post-training support;
- (d) job attachment/placement services; and
- (e) job matching services in addition to LD's placement services.

### ***Target participants***

7. The My STEP is district-based in principle. All target participants are CSSA unemployed youths aged 15 to 24, residing in Tin Shui Wai/Yuen Long districts, having been on CSSA for more than one year or/and not moved into work by other employment assistance programmes like IEAPs.

### ***Interface with other employment assistance programmes***

8. To enable the optimal transfer of experience from the motivational programme and ensure the best possible chances of successful job placement, My STEP will interface with the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme (YWETS) including the Action S4 Project currently administered by the LD to provide participants with opportunities to gain work experience through job attachment.

### ***Performance measurements***

9. My STEP is an outcome-based project. Each operating NGO shall during the implementation period assist at least 25 participants to enhance their self-image, confidence, sense of responsibility and commitment; assist them to complete the whole range of activities and take up **full time gainful employment**<sup>1</sup> or **return to the mainstream schooling**<sup>2</sup> for one month or more continuously.

### ***Temporary Financial Aid (TFA)***

10. There is a provision of TFA under the My STEP to help the participants meet short-term employment-related expenses when seeking jobs/taking up gainful employment or necessary expenses on finding a school place.

### **Achievements / Feedback of My STEP**

11. During the past four months of implementation, the operating NGOs had achieved the following:

- recruited a total of 62 participants;
- held kick-off ceremony to strengthen participants' motivation to join and stay in the programme;
- visited the participants to understand their family background and individual circumstances;
- conducted motivational/disciplinary training;
- provided soft-skill and counseling to participants.

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<sup>1</sup> Refers to employment in open labour market, entailing at least 120 working hours and earnings of \$1,435 (\$1450 w.e.f. 1 February 2007) per month.

<sup>2</sup> Refers to the attendance of a full-time education entailing no less than 13.75 hours per week in the secondary level in a grammar school, vocational school, technical training school or Project Yi Jin (Full-time) by a participant aged under 22.

12. As at end of December 2006, there were
- 12 participants having secured employment;
  - one participant having returned to mainstream schooling;
  - 38 participants arranged to join YWETS of LD and among them, 10 to commence the Action S4 Project placement on 8 February 2007.

### **Publicity**

13. SWD had publicised the programme through three electronic media, namely, ATV, TVB and Cable TV on 20 January 2007. An interview with the project supervisor of YWCA and a female participant aged 17 was conducted by the media in the adventure training camp site at Sai Kung. Positive feedback regarding the trial programme was given by the media and the programme participants.

### **Evaluation study**

14. A Research Team from the Chinese University of Hong Kong was commissioned to conduct an evaluation study on the effectiveness of the trial My STEP in September 2006.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

15. The study will address the following objectives:
- (a) Analyze the underlying reasons for the My STEP participants to stay in the CSSA net;
  - (b) Study the characteristics, socioeconomic background, psychological profiles and views of the programme participants, who have not been moved into work by IEAPs, and/or other employment assistance programme, and to compare them with other CSSA recipients of similar background (i.e the control group) to understand any latent employment barriers to them;
  - (c) Evaluate and analyze the programme's effectiveness against laid down benchmarks, critical success factors, and consequent needs either to improve the success rate or adjust the benchmarks;
  - (d) Compare the cost-effectiveness of My STEP with existing employment assistance to various other groups of CSSA unemployed recipients;
  - (e) Consider and advise to what extent, if any, My STEP concepts might

be used and developed to offer enhanced employment assistance to various other groups of CSSA unemployed recipients;

- (f) Advise on measures that (i) help participants leave the CSSA net permanently or not to enter it at all, and (ii) make long-term improvement to social development capacity and development of their potential;
- (g) Research into the effectiveness of similar overseas programmes to identify success factors that can be of useful reference for local adaptation.

### ***Scope of the Study***

16. The evaluation study will conduct baseline and follow-up survey to collect data from all programme participants, a control group of 100 young participants (aged 15 to 24) of IEAPs and other personnel of My STEP including staff of the operating NGOs and SWD. The data will be gathered through personal interviews, questionnaire survey and focus groups.

### ***Updated progress***

17. The Research Team had finished the study design, literature review, preparation for data collection and pilot test in early November 2006 as planned. Data collection from the core group (programme participants) and control group for baseline survey commenced in late November 2006 and is still underway.

### ***Completion of the study***

18. The mid-term evaluation is scheduled to be started in February 2007. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> mid-term evaluation reports will be submitted by the research team in June 2007. A full evaluation report will be finalised by November 2007.

### **The way forward**

19. SWD will continue to monitor the progress of the My STEP and work closely with the operating NGOs and LD to provide a continuum of assistance to help the unemployed youths back to employment. Members will be informed of the findings of the evaluation study upon receipt of the evaluation reports.

**Advice sought**

20. Members are invited to take note the contents of this progress report.

Social Welfare Department

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