Commission on Poverty (CoP)

Follow-up to District Visits and Way Forward

Purpose

This paper follows up on the visits to Kwun Tong (KT) on 29 April and Sham Shui Po (SSP) on 5 May by the Commission, and sets out some pointers on the objectives in implementing the district-based approach in alleviating poverty, format of district coordination as well as the possible next steps for Members' consideration.

Background

District Visits

2. The Commission on Poverty held its first meeting on 18 February 2005. Members agreed, among other things, to adopt a district-based approach in studying and identifying the needs of the poor. Members of the Commission visited Tin Shui Wai (TSW) on 7 March, KT on 29 April and SSP on 5 May. Follow-up of the TSW visit was set out in CoP Paper 9/2005. Follow-up of the KT and SSP visits are set out in *Annexes A* and *B* respectively.

District-based Approach in Alleviating Poverty

3. At the meeting on 11 April, Members considered that adopting the district-based approach in alleviating poverty has the following ***merits*** -

(a) a district-based approach can facilitate concrete and contextualised understanding of the unique/specific needs and key challenges faced by different communities;

(b) with their local knowledge, a local forum with the involvement of relevant parties would be in the best position to identify the priorities of the district concerned in alleviating poverty;

(c) a district-based approach would be conducive to identifying specific measures focused on tackling the problems identified without entailing unintended economic distortion and rippling effects on other districts/policies; and

(d)   flexible adaptation of services provision at the district level to meet the changing demographics and needs can help prevent problems from emerging, instead of formulating strategies to tackle them afterwards.

4.   In discussing the work programme of the Commission on 11 April, Members agreed to deepen the district-based approach through further encouraging the setting up of district networks to address issues related to the characteristics of the districts, and to encourage community engagement based on the existing mechanisms/support.

5.   Besides the above visits by the Commission, the Commission Secretariat has also conducted fact-finding visits/discussions with relevant parties in Wong Tai Sin, Kwai Tsing, Islands, and North districts in the course of May.   Based on the experiences so far, the following sets out some pointers on the objectives in implementing the district-based approach in alleviating poverty, format of district coordination as well as the possible next steps in deepening the district-based approach.

Objectives of District-based Approach

6.   The objectives in pursuing a district-based approach in alleviating poverty can be divided in two main categories -

> *Task-oriented objectives*: identify the key challenges of the district, and focused resources and actions to address them.

> *Process-oriented objectives*: in the process of engaging the local community in achieving the above, build capacities of individuals, families and the communities by promoting self-reliance, mutual help, cross sectoral partnership and a more inclusive and caring community.

District-based Approach in Building Social Capital[1]

7.   While the task-oriented objectives are important in alleviating poverty, the process-oriented objectives play a key role in building **social capital** and enhancing the individual's and the community's resilience in face of vicissitudes and adversities including poverty.   Support is most efficacious when infused with human touch, more sustaining where there is mutuality in the supportive relationships, and with the processes/acts interwoven into the daily social fabrics of those involved.   Studies have demonstrated that communities with strong social capital are more cohesive, mutually supportive and hence produce better

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[1]   Social capital can be defined as the structure and quality of social networks (both formal and informal) characterized by trust, reciprocity, cohesiveness, civic consciousness and volunteerism. In policy terms, this contrasts with "human capital" strategies which are essentially about building up the skills of individuals.

social outcomes (e.g. education attainment, economic participation, health and psychological well being including a sense of belonging). Community networks can also be seen as a springboard out of poverty through improved self-esteem and nurturing soft-skills (e.g. interpersonal and problem solving skills) much valued in the workplace in a post-industrial economy, broadened outlooks, and better connections to information, resources and opportunities. Last but not least, bottom-up solutions encourage self-expression, creativity and innovation in developing localized solutions to meet localized needs and a greater sense of community, the elements that a caring society needs to develop and thrive.

A Community Based on Shared Responsibilities

8.   Building social capital in the community in fact practises the concept of ***shared responsibilities*** of the Government, the community, the private sector, and the individuals – a key theme that has emerged in the discussions during the visits conducted by the Commission -

> *Government*: the Government has responsibilities to put in place policies and systems which ensure fair access to opportunities for people to develop their potentials; provide a safety net to assist those who, despite their best efforts, are in need of basic assistance; and to create conducive conditions to encourage people and communities to broaden and deepen neighbourhood and mutual-help networks; promote integrated government solutions at the policy level, and facilitate co-ordinated implementation at local level;

> *Community*: through their presence, the wide array of community organisations (e.g. NGOs, traditional voluntary organizations, residents and other interest groups, schools etc.) provide a network to facilitate the articulation of needs; mobilization and organization of resources to address the needs identified and, in some cases, specialization among the community organizations for more focused work. With their local knowledge and expertise, they help provide the platform to match needs and aspirations with expertise and resources available so that the two are transformed into practical ideas and viable initiatives to help those in need in the districts; and

> *Private sector*: the traditional view sees the private sector mainly as a source of funding. There is now a perceptible trend towards corporate social responsibilities which move beyond business philanthropy to developing win-win solutions for the employees and their families, as well as the community. The private sector is seen as a good source to infuse managerial expertise into NGO operation and help nurture among the disadvantaged the soft-skills required for self-reliance in the post-industrial society. By rising to the challenge of shared responsibility for poverty alleviation, the business sector garners community goodwill, publicity as well as a deeper understanding of the changing attitudes and preferences of the consumers. Thus,

partnership with the private sector is now multi-dimensional. Partnership can be both at the community-wide and district-level depending on the nature of the initiatives.

Individuals: Government, NGOs and the private sector can at most provide opportunity and baseline support. Developing potential to the full and upward mobility must ultimately also hinge on whether the individuals make the best use of the opportunities and support provided. Hence, support provided should go beyond material support but should encompass the affective domain (such as building up their resilience, self-esteem and self-confidence) as well as a balanced provision of support and incentives for self-reliance. The objective is to strike a sensible and sustainable balance between public interest and private rights.

9.   The concept of shared responsibilities is not about the Government reducing its responsibilities, but rather to recognize that all people, irrespective of their socio-economic background, share a common destiny in the long-term sustainability and well being of the society as a whole. From a practical point of view, promoting a sense of shared responsibility towards poverty alleviation helps motivate people to care and to develop initiatives to meet identified needs. Experience in Hong Kong and elsewhere suggests that, these initiatives, by building upon social networks with close human ties, would often trigger energy and a sense of participation and empowerment going well beyond those developed in a top-down fashion by agencies perceived as remote.

Format of District Coordination

10.   While the exact format, modus operandi and membership of local poverty alleviation forum and how it engages the local community should be deferred to the districts, taking into account the district-specific concerns and circumstances, the following emerges as some key elements -

Enhancing integration of established networks: The basic spirit of district coordination, as mentioned in CoP Paper 9/2005, is that it should be bureaucracy-light, building on existing networks[2] and avoiding duplication. Informal networks of people sharing common values often prove to be more effective in achieving common objectives. Poverty alleviation fora at the district level should therefore have flexibilities and aim to integrate further established networks, formal or informal, and focus/re-focusing their resources towards common objectives in poverty alleviation;

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[2] There are established governmental as well as non-governmental networks in the districts, e.g. District Officers chair District Management Committees and have built up over the years networks in community building; District Social Welfare Officers chair District Coordinating Committees and have networks with welfare NGOs and other organisations in delivering services; District Education Officers have networks with education institutions etc.

Government taking the lead: while building on shared responsibilities of the Government, the community, the private sector and the individuals, it is important for the Government to take the lead in encouraging sustainable quadripartite partnerships and engaging different sectors of the communities to work towards common objectives in promoting self-reliance and mutual help. The Government should also keep policies and systems under review to facilitate the formation of sustainable partnerships and local networks; and

Prioritizing key common objectives: given limited resources, there is a need for each district forum to discuss key challenges faced by the districts and agree on a viable list of priorities for focused actions. One may also draw reference to the experience of the pilot scheme in KT ("Concourse") which involves relevant departments, District Councilors and local welfare NGOs in discussing the priorities and actions in dealing with local welfare issues. In the process, there is a need to balance interests and set key common objectives and priorities.

11.   Members may wish to note that the district networks put in place in TSW, SSP and KT have all sought to incorporate the above elements. District Officers concerned also realize the need for the networks to evolve in the light of the development of the districts, in the same way as the priorities and initiatives must be dynamic if they are to be effective.

Next Steps

12.   There is no magic success formula in mobilizing district resources towards building social capital and alleviating poverty. The key lies in enhancing the breadth and density of the informal networks of people and organizations with a view to integrating them in a purposeful manner towards focusing/re-focusing their resources towards common objectives. The process takes time to mature but is a necessary bedfellow to the task-oriented objectives.

13.   In this regard, the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) Committee under Health Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB) has been working to identify successful formulas in building up social capital in the districts. To further sustain the social capital concept in districts, the CIIF Committee also encourages replicating, extending and adapting some of the good practice models developed in some districts to date to other districts. It would be useful to further permeate the concept through the district networks under the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) and the Secretariat has already started working with HWFB and HAB in this regard . The most successful and sustainable projects are those that have energized neighborhood support to identify and meet local needs, with the Government, local community networks and private sector providing the policy/start-up support (e.g. reasonable accommodation and seed money),

organizational back-up and material/managerial assistance respectively. It is important to note that policy/start-up support should be maintained in a discreet, light-touch manner, as mutual help, sense of ownership, initiative and flexibility can easily be destroyed by attempts to incorporate/formalize/impose prescriptions.

14.　　On this basis, it is proposed that the CoP should give time and space for the district-based networks to further evolve, with the next situation report from the three districts due in six months. It is proposed that during this period, the following be pursued by District Officers of the three districts with the outcome incorporated in the report to be submitted to the Commission -

(a)　districts would consider and propose indicators to evaluate progress from both the task- and process-oriented perspectives; and

(b)　districts would review and where appropriate recommend ways to enhance conducive conditions [3] for sustainable local quadripartite networks (re. paragraph 8 above) to flourish.

The Secretariat will continue to work with HAB and HWFB and other relevant bureaux/departments on the further promotion of social capital towards the cause of poverty alleviation in other districts. . At the same time, the CPU would assist in looking into the good practices based on successful experience in implementing the district-based approach/ successful CIIF and other community projects.

15.　　As noted in earlier meetings, the Commission should refrain from undermining or duplicating the work of the other bureaux/departments and should focus on issues of a multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral nature. Should districts encounter gaps/problems in poverty alleviation, they should be first given the space and initiative to develop local solutions, and bring to the attention of the relevant bureaux and, if necessary, CoP and other relevant bureaux issues which cannot be resolved at the district level alone. Where the issues fall squarely within an existing policy, the responsible policy bureau will take the lead to address them, while keeping CoP posted as necessary. Where the issues necessitate cross-sector, cross-bureau integration of efforts, then relevant bureaux and CoP would jointly consider whether the issues pertain to specific districts or whether they are reflective of a more general need to refine existing policies and their implementation. In case of the latter, recommendations for follow up will be made to the CoP and relevant bureaux accordingly.

Advice Sought

16.　　Members are invited to -

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[3]　Such conditions may include availability of suitable seed-builders in forging community connections, funding, community venue and platform for matching private sector contribution to specific local needs etc.

(a) note the work of the task forces in KT and SSP (Annexes A and B) and offer comments, if any, to enrich the task forces' deliberation;

(b) note the objectives in implementing the district-based approach in alleviating poverty, and format of district coordination (paragraphs 6 – 11). These would continue to be refined in the implementation of the approach; and

(c) comment on the possible next steps (paragraphs 12 – 15).

Commission Secretariat
May 2005

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

Follow-up to Sham Shui Po District Visit

Purpose

This paper follows up on the visit to Sham Shui Po (SSP) by the Commission on 5 May, and outlines the key 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 SSP on 5 May after visiting Tin Shui Wai and Kwun Tong in March and April respectively.　Members met with service recipients including children from low-income families, CSSA recipients and elders.　Members also exchanged views with about 40 district personalities including representatives from the District Council, Area Committees, district committees, district organizations, religious bodies, schools and NGOs.

Key Challenges

3.　　CoP Paper 14/2005 provides an overview of the community profile of SSP, the services provided and some of the challenges faced by the community. The two key challenges faced by SSP community as set out in the above paper were further explored at the visit -

➢　Development Opportunities for Children and Youth from Low-income Families.　In 2004, there were 60,600 children and youth below 18 in SSP, many of whom come from low-income families.　In the 2004/05 school year, there were about 11,200 children and youth in CSSA households in SSP; 6,060 SSP students received full grants from Students Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA).　They should be given additional care and development opportunities.

➢　A High Concentration of the Elderly.　In 2004, 16.3% of the total population of SSP was aged 65 or above.　This was higher than the territorial average of 11.7%.　There are about 14,080 old age CSSA cases, and about 5,030 normal old age (5.6% of territorial caseload) and 27,180 higher old age (7.4% of territorial caseload) Social Security Allowance cases in SSP.　About 16,500 persons aged over 64 either live alone or live only with their spouses in SSP.

Tackling the Challenges

4.   An inter-departmental working group meeting has been convened after the visit to see how best to respond to these challenges.   The meeting has mapped out the following strategies, objectives and key actions.

Strategy 1: To provide development opportunities for children and youth from underprivileged families

Objective (1)
➢   To provide a supportive learning environment for children and youth coming from underprivileged families.

Key actions:

➢   To proactively liaise with schools to participate in the $75M School-based After School Learning and Support Programmes.   The target schools will be those with a high concentration of CSSA and full grant SFAA students.

➢   To encourage schools to extend the opening hours of their computer rooms to provide computer access for students after school.   Additional grants are being provided to schools for the purpose.

➢   To facilitate the participation of needy students in extra-curricular activities. Financial support is provided under the Jockey Club Life-wide Learning Fund to needy students of Primary 4 to Secondary 3 for such purpose.

➢   To invite schools to apply for the Quality Education Fund for projects which enhance the learning environment of students (e.g. multi-media learning classrooms) and student support (e.g. purchase of orchestral instruments).

➢   To encourage schools to organize remedial teaching programmes for academically low achievers and extend the opening hours of the school premises for their students.

➢   To provide recreation and sports activities free of charge or at low costs to needy children and youth.

Objective (2)
➢   To increase exposure of children and youth of underprivileged families and instill a sense of self-reliance in them.

Key actions:

➢   To encourage schools with a high concentration of poor students to set up mentorship schemes with the objective of providing role models.

➢ To engage community organizations in organizing mentorship schemes for children and youth from low-income families.

➢ To encourage the provision of holistic developmental programmes, leadership training and experimental learning opportunities for underprivileged youth with a view to better preparing them to meet life's challenges.

Objective (3)
➢ To provide support and parenting guidance to parents in underprivileged families.

Key actions:
➢ To facilitate successful implementation of the pilot Head Start Programme in SSP in 2005-06 in order to enable families in need to obtain appropriate services through better alignment of health, education and social services delivery.

➢ To facilitate the provision of parental support and parenting skill training for parents of students. Funding is provided by EMB for the SSP Parent Teacher Association Federation to provide training to members of PTAs in SSP.

➢ To facilitate exchange among schools in the district to learn the 'best practice' in relation to parental support and parenting guidance. School heads/teachers who have initiated successful measures will be invited to share their valuable experience with their counterparts in the district.

➢ To organize tailor-made parent education programmes for disadvantaged groups (e.g. low-income, NACs, single parents and ethnic minorities) on supporting the development of their children.

➢ To closely monitor the demand for fee-waiving places of the After School Care Programme (ASCP) with a view to providing adequate child care services to underprivileged families. To publicize the ASCP to needy parents.

Strategy 2: To meet the needs of elders, especially those who are poor, frail and living alone or with spouse only

Objective (1)
➢ To facilitate healthy and active ageing, with particular attention paid to the single and frail ones.

Key actions:
➢ To line up elderly service units, medical professionals and allied health personnel to provide fall prevention and other health related programmes for

the elderly, in particular the single and frail ones. To provide one-stop service including referrals to elders who have suffered from falls.

➢ To encourage NGOs to organize programmes under the "Opportunities for the Elderly Project" aiming at helping the elderly to acquire new knowledge, realize their potential, expand their social life and maintain physical and psychological well-being.

➢ To provide sports and recreation activities free of charge to the needy elderly to encourage them to engage in exercise and recreation.

➢ To promote elderly health through talks, medical checks, and outreach services.

Objective (2)
➢ To enhance the community support for the elderly.

Key actions:

➢ To encourage participation of the elderly in volunteer service through the Support Teams for the Elderly and other elderly service units with the key aims being to keep them connected with the community and to help nurture among them a sense of purpose and self-worth.

➢ To encourage the formation of volunteer teams to serve the needy elderly.

➢ To organize regular visits by volunteers to single or frail elderly people with a view to providing them with knowledge on basic health care and home safety knowledge as well as household cleansing services. Efforts would be made to strengthen the social network of the elderly through social and recreational activities outside their homes.

➢ To reach out to elderly people and enhance their awareness of services available to them by home visits and the establishment of information points in places frequented by them.

Cross-sector collaboration

5. Poverty alleviation requires not only Government actions but also cross-sector collaboration; indeed many of the initiatives set out in the preceding passage have built in this element. Community organizations will be encouraged to refocus their activities in helping the needy in the community; and briefings will be organized to invite local community organizations to apply for the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund to implement projects that enhance social capital.

District Coordination

6.   The Working Group on Poverty Problem under the SSP District Council comprises representatives from over 20 district NGOs and serves as a platform for NGOs to explore collaboration opportunities. A research commissioned to the Chinese University of HK is underway to study the poverty situation in SSP.

7.   SWD has been promoting cross-sector collaboration through District Coordinating Committees (DCCs) on different services in SSP, in particular the DCC on Family and Child Welfare Service, Local Committee on Service for Young People, DCC on Elderly Service and DCC on Promotion of Volunteer Service. They serve as useful forums to examine the current needs of local communities and recommend as well as implement effective measures to address the needs identified.

8.   To further galvanize efforts, the SSPDO has established a working group on poverty to enhance coordination, and monitoring of the progress, of poverty alleviation measures.

Sham Shui Po District Office
(with inputs from District Social Welfare Office (Sham Shui Po), Education and Manpower Bureau, Housing Department, Leisure and Cultural Services Department and Department of Health)

May 2005