

Commission on Poverty (CoP)

“From Welfare to Self-Reliance”

District Pilot “My STEP” - Special Training and Enhancement Programme

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on a proposed pilot project “My STEP - Special Training and Enhancement Programme” for unemployed youths to be launched in the three pilot districts, namely Yuen Long (Tin Shui Wai), Kwun Tong and Sham Shui Po.

Background

2. CoP Paper 17/2005 “Training and Employment Opportunities for Youth” noted that while the absolute number of unemployed able-bodied youth aged 15 – 24 receiving CSSA is not substantial, there were noticeable increases in the past few years. The duration of stay of unemployed youth on CSSA is also increasing (Annex).

3. Members agreed at the meeting in June 2005 that measures to help the unemployed “from welfare to self-reliance” should emphasize on early intervention and prevention, and using a staged approach in catering for the different needs of the unemployed (CoP Paper 21/2005).

Current assistance to unemployed youths

4. Currently, unemployed youths receiving CSSA are assisted by the Support for Self-reliance (SFS) Scheme of the Social Welfare Department (SWD). SWD has also commissioned NGOs to run Intensive Employment Assistance Projects (IEAPs) which extend assistance to ‘near-CSSA’ recipients¹. SWD officers and NGOs would assess the needs of the individual youth, and provide support to help them build up self-esteem and self-confidence, develop a work habit, and motivate them to take up employment. Noting the needs of the unemployed youth are quite different and require different interventions, some NGOs have developed special programmes to motivate youth on CSSA or near-CSSA cases. SWD has also secured funding to run some pilot Community Work Programmes, with at least one tailor-made for youth.

¹ Please refer to CoP 19/2005 for details of the SFS Scheme and IEAPs.

5. The Labour Department (LD) runs the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme (YPTP) and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme (YWETS), both of which aim to enhance the employability of young people². Though YPTP and YWETS do not specifically target at CSSA or near-CSSA cases, they are open for participation by youths of the relevant age groups, including youths in CSSA or near-CSSA cases.

Objective of the district pilot

6. The increasing trend and duration of stay of youths receiving CSSA is of concern albeit the absolute number is not significant. While no systematic study has been conducted on the reasons for youths to go for CSSA, frontline experience reveals that lack of good parenting and role-modeling to motivate youth to become self-reliant may be one of the key factors. There is a need to have more focused/targeted action to help these CSSA or near-CSSA cases, taking into account the particular needs of these youth with low readiness for employment (not receiving education nor in employment, low motivation, low capacity and lack of network and direction in life).

7. It is proposed that a pilot project “My STEP” be launched in the 3 pilot districts. As of end 2004, there are 1225 CSSA unemployed recipients aged 15 – 24 from the three districts, taking up about one-third of the caseload in this category. The project will target at youths with low readiness for employment and will last for one year initially. With a focus on the 15 – 24 age group, the pilot project will seek to pilot in the three districts focusing on motivating these target youths through disciplinary training, followed by mandatory job placement. An evaluation would be conducted at the end of the pilot to consider whether and how the programme should be extended to other districts.

New tailor-made youth motivation programmes

8. New tailor-made youth motivation programmes will be designed for youths on CSSA or near-CSSA cases, drawing on experience from organisations with expertise in the area. For the purpose of the pilot, these will likely be short (one to two weeks) and intensive programmes, aiming to provide an opportunity to re-orient these youths on their options and potentials.

9. The new tailor-made youth motivation programmes will be interfaced with the existing assistance provided to unemployed youth (paragraphs 4 and 5 above) to enable successful transfer of the experience to induce motivation to work/become self-reliant.

² Please refer to Annex E to CoP 19/2005 for details of YPTP and YWETS.

Dialogue among relevant stakeholder groups

10. Effective operation of the pilot must hinge on cooperation and coordination among groups now involved in delivery of youth counseling and employment services, including EDLB, HWFB, LD and SWD, as well as NGOs with experience and knowledge about youth employment both territory-wide (e.g. NGOs involved in delivery of YPTP and YWETS) and in the districts concerned (e.g. IEAP NGOs with a niche in serving the unemployed youths). We believe that a good interface among the different partners and a conscious effort to make youth counseling service more employment-oriented, enhance sharing and information exchange between welfare officers and NGOs handling youth-at-risks is key to achieving the desired objective.

11. Subject to Members' views, we shall commence the dialogue with a view to coming up with district plans within the overall framework of a well-interfaced service within and outside the Government.

Financial Implications

12. As a start, we would identify a small group of participants for the pilot. The exact financial implications of the pilot, mainly to fund the new tailor-made youth motivation programmes, would depend on the programme details which are subject to the dialogue with relevant stakeholders. We envisage that the revamping of the interface of existing programmes and services should unlikely incur any substantial additional resources.

Advice Sought

13. Members' views are sought if we should commence one-year pilot project in Yuen Long (Tin Shui Wai), Shum Shui Po and Kwun Tong with a view to piloting a new programme to tackle specifically the low motivation for employment among youths who are within CSSA or near-CSSA cases, as well as improving the interface among the current employment and related counseling and youth services; and in this connection, to commence dialogue with relevant bureaux, departments and NGOs to take the detailed formulation forward. Subject to Members' views, it is proposed the Task Force on Children and Youth be tasked to follow-up on the further development of the pilot project, and to keep the Commission informed of progress where appropriate.

14. The pilot would complement other on-going work of the Task Force on Children and Youth which aim to prevent and alleviate intergenerational poverty at different and preferably, early, stages of the life of children and youth.

Table 1 : No. of CSSA Unemployed Recipients by Age, 2000 – 2004

Age group	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
15 - 24	1 521	2 626	4 215	4 540	3 750*
15 - 19	965	1 632	2 294	2 317	1 999
20 - 24	556	994	1 921	2 223	1 751
25 and above	17 196	22 080	35 098	42 777	39 262
Overall	18 717	24 706	39 313	47 317	43 012

* There is no statistics on the number of these youths who come from families receiving CSSA.

Table 2 : Percentage distribution of CSSA unemployed recipients by duration of stay on CSSA and age, 2004

Age group	< = 1	>1 - <=2	>2 - <=3	>3 - <=4	>4 - <=5	>5
15 - 24	17.8%	13.3%	12.4%	9.2%	6.7%	40.6%
15 - 19	12.8%	11.7%	12.8%	9.8%	7%	45.9% **
20 - 24	23.4%	15.1%	12.0%	8.5%	6.4%	34.6%
25 and above	22.8%	21.5%	17.0%	9.8%	5.3%	23.6%
Overall	22.4%	20.8%	16.6%	9.7%	5.4%	25.1%

** There was a relatively large proportion of unemployed aged 15 – 19 that remained on CSSA for more than five years. The figure should be read with caution as it might be a result that some of them were students in their early years of receiving CSSA.

Source: Social Welfare Department