

立法會
Legislative Council

LegCo Panel on Welfare Services

Background paper prepared by Legislative Council Secretariat

Review on Integrated Neighbourhood Projects in Targeted Old Urban Areas

Purpose

This paper gives an account of the past discussions held by members of the Panel on Welfare Services (the Panel) on the Integrated Neighbourhood Projects (INPs) in targeted old urban areas since July 1998.

Background

2. Neighbourhood Level Community Development Projects (NLCDPs) were introduced in the 1970s to fill gaps in welfare service provisions in deprived and transient communities where the provision of welfare services and facilities was considered inadequate or non-existent. NLCDP services are provided by subvented non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in service areas identified in accordance with a set of established selection criteria, and they include -

- (a) provision of a range of social welfare services to supplement the existing welfare service provision in the community;
- (b) supporting community groups/individuals to identify and resolve community needs, issues or crises; and
- (c) information giving, advice, facilitation and referral to other services.

3. With the substantial increase in the overall provision of welfare and community building services as well as the full implementation of the District Administration Scheme over the past 30 years, the role of NLCDPs in filling social service gaps is fast diminishing. Having considered all relevant factors

and taking into account the views of all parties concerned, including those of the welfare sector and residents' groups, the Executive Council decided on 5 December 1995 that NLCDP service should not be extended to new towns, rural areas and public housing estates (PHEs) not yet affected by redevelopment.

4. However, in response to a strong request from the welfare sector that NLCDP-type of services should be extended to old urban areas, two pilot NLCDPs were commenced in Nam Cheong and Mong Kok South in January 1995 to assess the suitability of NLCDP services in old urban areas for a trial period of three years, to be followed by a review. The Executive Council also decided in December 1995 that an independent Review Group on Pilot NLCDPs in Old Urban Areas (the Review Group) should be set up to review the two pilot NLCDPs serving the old urban areas of Nam Cheong and Mong Kok South.

5. The initial report of the Review Group was completed in January 1998. It concluded, inter alia, that NLCDP services were not suitable in old urban areas and recommended that a form of INPs for a maximum period of three years should be introduced in selected old urban areas according to a set of criteria. The Review Group observed that as the service needs in old urban areas were recognised and the Government had yet to fully meet the planning standards for the provision of certain welfare facilities in old urban areas, the proposed INP could be adopted as an interim measure in old urban areas to address the potential problems.

6. Having carefully examined the Review Group's initial report and having taken into account public views, including those of the welfare sector, the Administration suggested certain modifications to the INP proposal to make it more focused and better defined. The proposed modified INPs were aimed at strengthening the outreaching efforts of appropriate local service units run by NGOs to the target vulnerable groups of new arrivals, the elderly and low income families in the targeted areas. Proposed criteria for selecting service areas included high concentration of low income and disadvantaged groups; overcrowding living conditions; existence of long-standing social and environmental problems; an area with a population of 15 000 and 25 000 and the level of provision of welfare services in the neighbourhood according to planning standards. Detailed site investigations would be carried out to determine the actual service boundary of the services areas. The proposed modified INPs would be critically reviewed after their three-year term to determine whether they should be continued.

7. The Review Group endorsed the proposal under the modified INP scheme, which was subsequently incorporated in its final report submitted to the Secretary for Home Affairs on 2 July 1998. Based on the recommendations in the final

report, the Administration made a submission to the Executive Council on the review of pilot NLCDPs in targeted old urban areas on 21 July 1998. After deliberation, the Executive Council decided that -

- (a) the two pilot NLCDPs in Nam Cheong and Mong Kok South should not continue to operate upon completion;
- (b) a system for NGOs to undertake modified INPs should be introduced in old urban areas;
- (c) the interim practice of allowing NLCDP teams which require reprovisioning to operate new welfare projects offered to them on an exclusive basis should no longer continue; and
- (d) the existing practice to provide NLCDP services to PHEs undergoing redevelopment or temporary housing areas qualified under existing policy should continue.

8. A total of 12 INPs are being operated by NGOs on resources deployed from the phasing out of NLCDPs. To enable the operating agencies to have the maximum flexibility in managing their resources, INPs are subvented by way of lump sum grants with a fixed provision at the level of the standard cost of a NLCDP team. As one of the subvented services, INPs are also subject to the existing monitoring mechanism applicable to all welfare services subvented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD).

Past discussions

Meeting on 27 July 1998

9. The Panel discussed the issue of the introduction of INPs on 27 July 1998. Members and representatives of the Association for Fighting for Community Development Services in Old Areas (the Association) attending the meeting criticised the scope of service of INPs as being too narrow, since it would only include providing information to clients and making referrals. They were of the view that INPs should also help residents to form community groups to fight for their rights, as in the case of NLCDPs. Some of them were concerned whether the non-rendering of assistance to help residents to form community groups was a ploy by the Administration to suppress voices from the lower class. Members and representatives of the Association also considered that the INPs should not only aim at the new arrivals, the elderly and low income families in the target areas, but should be extended to cover all residents within a target area.

10. The Administration responded that apart from making referrals for welfare services, services provided by INPs would include enhancing the knowledge of the deprived groups in targeted old urban areas about the channels for gaining access to welfare services and facilitating them to develop their self-help and mutual help abilities through participation in voluntary community services and self-help programmes. The Administration disagreed that the implementation of INPs was intended to suppress the voices from the lower class, as there were many channels, such as those provided by the mass media and political parties, for people to express their views. On targeting INPs at the new arrivals, the elderly and low income families in the target areas, the Administration explained that this was to enable the delivery of more focused and defined services.

Meeting on 14 December 1998

11. The Panel discussed the issue of the implementation of INPs on 14 December 1998. Representatives of the Concern Group on the Future of Community Development Services of the Hong Kong Social Workers' General Union (the Union) attending the meeting were against the implementation of INPs because the definitions of the three target groups, namely, the new arrivals, the elderly and low income families, were impractical. For example, new arrivals were defined as those who had arrived in Hong Kong from the Mainland for less than a year, and low income families were defined as families with income lower than the recognised need under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme. The two aforesaid definitions were too narrow given that new arrivals would usually be considered as those who had resided in Hong Kong between three to six years. A case in point was that even the Housing Department would consider applications for public housing from people who had resided in Hong Kong for not less than seven years. In response, the Administration said that the definitions of the three target groups were meant to be a reference for social workers to follow. It was the Administration's plan to further refine the definitions of the three target groups in its future meetings with the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) and the operating agencies of INPs.

12. In response to members and the Union's request for the setting up of a steering committee on INPs similar to the one on NLCDPs, the Administration said that there was no such need as INP service was different from NLCDP service. NLCDPs were carried out in deprived and transient communities where the provision of social welfare facilities and services were non-existent or inadequate. Upon clearance of the service areas, the NLCDP teams concerned would have to be reprovisioned to other priority areas qualified under the existing policy. Hence, a coordinating committee would be necessary to meet regularly to discuss matters relating to the identification of service areas as well as the priority for

reprovisioning of service teams. For INPs, the scope and the eligibility criteria of the target service areas had already been established by the Review Group. Moreover, the issue of reprovisioning did not arise for INPs. The Administration further said that a task group comprising representatives from SWD, HKCSS and NGOs would be formed to work out the Funding and Service Agreements and the relevant performance indicators. Issues of concern raised by the welfare sector would be sorted out in the process to ensure the smooth implementation of INPs.

13. Some members questioned why INPs would only be implemented in 12 old urban areas in Sham Shui Po (SSP), Yau Tsim Mong (YTM) and Kowloon City (KC) Districts, having regard to the fact that other old urban areas, such as those in Wan Chai and Kwun Tong Districts, were also loaded with problems. The Administration responded that the 12 targeted old urban areas in SSP, YTM and KC Districts were selected by the Review Group according to a set of criteria. The Executive Council had endorsed them and it was incumbent upon SWD to follow the Executive Council's decision in this regard. Notwithstanding, areas which were not under the INP scheme would continue to enjoy the available welfare services within the district concerned.

Relevant Papers

14. For details of the discussions of the Panel meetings held on 27 July and 14 December 1998, members may wish to refer to the following papers which are available on both the RLIS and the web site of the Legislative Council (LegCo) (<http://www.legco.gov.hk>), with the exception of items (d) to (e) under the meeting on 14 December 1998 which are available on RLIS only -

Meeting on 27 July 1998

- (a) Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(2)198/98-99); and
- (b) Paper entitled "Review of pilot neighbourhood level community development projects in old urban areas" provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(2)91/98-99(01)).

Meeting on 14 December 1998

- (a) Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(2)1352/98-99);
- (b) Paper entitled "Implementation of Integrated Neighbourhood Projects in old urban areas" provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(2)859/98-99(02));

- (c) A submission from the Democratic Party (LC Paper No. CB(2)817/98-99(07));
- (d) A submission from the Concern Group on the Future of Community Development Services of the Hong Kong Social Workers' General Union (LC Paper No. CB(2)588/98-99(01)); and
- (e) A letter from the Administration dated 30 October 1998 (LC Paper No. CB(2)588/98-99(02)).

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Legislative Council Secretariat
2 April 2002