

**Information Note on Interim Report of  
Review on Integrated Neighbourhood Projects  
in Targeted Old Urban Areas**

**Purpose**

This information note summarises the findings and initial views of the Consultancy Team as contained in its Interim Report on the Review on Integrated Neighbourhood Projects (INPs) (the Review) in targeted old urban areas.

**Background**

2. Pursuant to the recommendations of the Review Group on Pilot Neighbourhood Level Community Development Projects, 12 INPs were introduced in targeted old urban areas for a period of three years; thereafter the need for such service would be critically reviewed. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has commissioned a Consultancy Team headed by Dr Joe Leung of the University of Hong Kong to undertake the review.

3. The Review consists of two stages. The first stage, from February 2002 to April 2002, is on data collection through reviewing relevant papers and documents provided by service operators and SWD, conducting familiarisation visits to INPs and other related community-based services and organising focus groups with INP stakeholders. Based on the information collected, the Consultancy Team compiled two Progress Reports and an Interim Report. The second stage, from May to July 2002, will focus on making recommendations on the future arrangements of INPs.

4. Together with the Technical Report and first Progress Report, the Review was reported and discussed at the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services on 8 April 2002. Taking into consideration the schedule of the Review, it was agreed that the Administration would circulate to Members a note on findings contained in the Interim Report in June/July 2002 and present the Final Report to the Panel in October/November 2002.

**The Interim Report**

5. The draft Interim Report was discussed by members of the Steering Group for Consultancy Study on the Review of INPs (the Steering Group) at its meeting on 9 May 2002. Composing of representatives from the Home Affairs

Bureau (HAB), SWD, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) operating INPs, Hong Kong Council of Social Service and a secondary school principal as lay member, the Steering Group agreed in general that the observations and findings of the Interim Report were objective and realistic.

6. On the whole, the Consultancy Team finds INPs effective in achieving the requirements as prescribed by the Funding and Service Agreement (FSA) as agreed with SWD. The services are considered to be user-friendly, individually tailored, flexible and accessible, and therefore welcomed by users. The Consultancy Team however highlights some observations crucial for its consideration for the future of INPs.

#### *Outreaching Mode*

7. The INP's outreaching mode of door-to-door visit and street stall is labour-intensive and time-consuming. The effectiveness of these outreaching approaches is not apparent as they usually can only locate a limited number of target users.

8. While target users of INP are specific, the outreaching approaches of INP are non-discriminatory. Accordingly, the INP workers have to spend quite some time in providing assistance to those non-target users. For instance, according to a business plan of an INP, only 42.9% of the households contacted for six months were INP targets.

#### *Target Users*

9. According to FSA, the three target groups of INP service are low-income families, elderly and new arrivals. However, according to figures and data available, the number of new elderly and new arrivals cases that can be identified by INPs within the districts is declining. As for low-income families, it is difficult to collect accurate information about the income and capital assets to determine whether the users are genuinely low-income persons. Hence, the number of low-income target groups identified in general cannot be an exact figure.

10. By nature of INP's open and extensive outreaching strategy, it would be difficult for INP workers to be "selective" in offering service. INPs also provide services to non-INP targets. According to statistics, the total number of other vulnerable individuals identified constitutes 34.4% of the total number of vulnerable persons identified by INPs.

#### *Services and Programmes*

11. INPs can offer a wide diversity of assistance to the vulnerable persons. Being very responsive to all the requests put forward by the users, INPs seem to

have no “boundary” of services. The workers can work on nitty-gritty matters such as arranging household removal and assisting in paying electricity charges. As a result, service users look to INP workers as friends to provide them with comprehensive, friendly and prompt assistance, with practically no eligibility requirement and restrictions for services. This user-centred service mode of INPs characterized by flexibility, special attention and accessibility may be a reason accounting for the difficulties in re-directing the users to mainstream services, which in fact should be one of the major service objectives of INPs.

12. The dominant types of referrals to other mainstream services for all the target groups are public housing and Comprehensive Social Security Assistance; for elderly: senior citizen card; for new arrivals: public housing; and for low-income families: public housing. It seems that the major obvious achievement of INP is to assist in public housing applications.

#### *Interfacing with Mainstream Services*

13. In practice, co-ordination work has been carried out by the District Social Welfare Officers of the districts. INPs seem to be varied in their degree of collaboration with other programmes and district organisations. Such collaboration seems to depend on the type of mainstream service that a particular INP is more acquainted with or attached to and whether that service is located in the serving areas.

14. At present, there are no lack of welfare services adopting a similar outreaching approach and working with similar vulnerable populations in the areas, particularly with the introduction of a number of new initiatives such as the Family Support Networking Teams of SWD and the Social Service Teams of the Urban Renewal Authority.

#### *Implications for the Future*

15. Reflecting from focus group discussions, a sense of “dependency” among users being continuously assisted by INPs can be found. While the sense of dependency on professional workers is a common feature of the vulnerable groups with low self-esteem and frustrating life experience, the Consultancy Team considers that all social welfare projects should take maximizing user independence instead of encouraging dependency as their overriding concern.

16. The existing outreaching approaches involve two major issues of concern. Firstly, INPs have to be more vigorous in order to further identify new targets after years of operation. Secondly, being difficult to separate INP targets from non-targets, INPs simply cannot refuse service requests from non-INP targets. This may suggest that INPs can afford to serve a larger population with the given resources.

17. The Consultancy Team concludes the Interim Report by putting forward a list of questions which need to be answered when considering the future of INPs. These include -

- Can each INP further identify 1,000 new target customers each year, i.e. 3,000 new target customers if they are extended for another three years?
- Should INPs extend their working targets as well as geographical service boundaries to achieve more cost-effectiveness?
- Can the INP functions be integrated into other mainstream services?
- Given the recent development of other similar government-funded community development programmes, what would be the need for and role of INP?
- To what extent is there a continuing need for INPs to meet the confirmed needs of the three targeted groups?
- If there is a continuing need for INPs, how should INPs be re-structured to further enhance their effectiveness?

### **Way Forward**

18. The Consultancy Team will take into consideration views of the Steering Group, concerned stakeholders and related community development organisations etc. in preparing the Final Report with recommendations on the future of INPs. The Steering Group will discuss the draft report before the Consultancy Team concludes the Final Report. SWD will consult the LegCo Panel on Welfare Services in October 2002 on the recommendations of the Final Report. Together with HAB and all NGOs concerned, SWD will follow up the recommendations of the Review before the expiry of the first six INPs in December 2002. Consideration will be given to the timing for making changes to the second and third batches of INPs taking account of the Review recommendations.

Social Welfare Department

July 2002