

(Translation)
**Hearing of Public Accounts Committee
of the Legislative Council on 22 April 2008**

Report No. 50 of the Director of Audit
Chapter 5 - The Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers

Opening Remarks by the Secretary for Security

Thank you, Chairman.

2. First of all, the Security Bureau welcomes the valuable comments and recommendations made by the Director of Audit in his Report No. 50 on the Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA), as well as certain matters relating to drug treatment and rehabilitation services in Hong Kong.

3. We accept the Audit recommendations. We will continue to coordinate and promote the efforts of the Department of Health (DH) and SARDA in following up the recommendations in the report, with a view to improving the services and the administrative management of SARDA.

Anti-drug Policy

4. The current anti-drug policy is embodied in the five-pronged approach i.e. law enforcement and legislation, treatment and rehabilitation, preventive education and publicity, research, and external cooperation. It has been drawn up on the advice of the Action Committee Against Narcotics, its sub-committees and the Research Advisory Group, with members coming from various fields including youth, social work, medicine, academia and the Legislative Council. The Fight Crime Committee and the District Fight Crime Committees also discuss the drug abuse problem from time to time.

5. We also maintain close contact with anti-drug workers from subvented and non-subvented treatment and rehabilitation centres, youth groups, social welfare organisations and drug education experts through the Drug Liaison Committee. They have played a very important role in shaping the anti-drug policy and measures, and made useful contribution towards the anti-drug cause.

Treatment and Rehabilitation Services for Drug Abusers

6. Treatment and rehabilitation services for drug abusers are an integral part of the overall anti-drug policy. In this regard, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are our important partners. At present, over 20 NGOs offer various modes of treatment and rehabilitation services tailored to the needs of drug abusers from different backgrounds. Some of these NGOs receive Government subvention, which accounts for about 70% of the Government expenditure on the voluntary treatment and rehabilitation programmes for drug abusers.

7. To provide a platform for drug treatment agencies, subvented or non-subvented, to develop complementing strategies in the light of the latest drug abuse situation, and facilitate appropriate allocation of resources and re-engineering of services by the Government, we draw up the Plan on Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Services in Hong Kong every three years. The Plan maps out the strategies and future direction which drug treatment and rehabilitation services in Hong Kong should take and the formulation of the Plan is in itself a consensus building process among various stakeholders. The next Three-year Plan will cover 2009 to 2011. The Narcotics Division will continue to take a leading and coordinating role in preparing the Plan and overseeing its implementation.

8. We will continue to keep a close watch over the situation to make appropriate allocation of resources, notably through the preparation and implementation of the Three-year Plan to reinvigorate our efforts in the coordination and training of anti-drug personnel. Controlling Officers will also discuss with subvented agencies on updating their drug treatment programmes and performance targets as appropriate.

SARDA

9. Among the NGOs, SARDA, established in 1961, is a pioneer in providing treatment and rehabilitation services for drug abusers in the territory, and is also one of our key partners. Over the years, SARDA has provided services to tens of thousands of drug abusers by helping them to abstain from drugs, make up with their families, start a new life and re-integrate into society. The contribution of SARDA in the provision of drug treatment and rehabilitation services in Hong Kong is beyond doubt. Although the local drug scene is changing with the number of heroin abusers dropping and the number of psychotropic substance abusers on the rise, there still remains a considerable

number of heroin abusers. At present, SARDA provides a range of services which include operating four residential treatment and rehabilitation centres, five halfway houses, four social service centres and one out-patient clinic, and providing counselling services to patients of methadone clinics operated by DH. All these show that SARDA continues to play a key role in providing treatment and rehabilitation services for drug abusers, in particular heroin abusers, in Hong Kong.

10. In recent years, SARDA has been actively venturing new services. These include the Jockey Club Anti-Drug Preventive Education Centre project on Shek Kwu Chau, which aims at raising the awareness of visitors on the drug abuse problem, the harmful effects of drugs and the importance of developing a positive and healthy lifestyle. SARDA has also proposed to establish a Centre for Anti-drug Education and Disciplinary Training. In this connection, we have maintained close liaison with SARDA, and are now examining with DH the latest proposal submitted by SARDA in January 2008 with a view to arriving at an early decision.

11. The Administration will keep in close touch with SARDA on following up the progress of improvement of its administrative management and implementation of enhanced measures. DH also aims at concluding a funding and service agreement with SARDA in this financial year.

Conclusion

12. The Audit Report has provided very useful reference for improving the services of SARDA. We understand that SARDA has also responded positively to the recommendations. We will join hands with DH to take advice from and maintain close partnership with SARDA and other local anti-drug organisations, with a view to enhancing the drug treatment and rehabilitation services in Hong Kong to combat the drug problem.

13. Thank you. We will be glad to take questions from Members.