



**Statement in Response to the Child Development Fund on 14th January 2008
at the Welfare Panel of the Legco by The Hong Kong Paediatric Foundation**

Hong Kong Paediatric Foundation is a charitable organization wholly owned by the Hong Kong Paediatric Society for advancement of knowledge of paediatrics, betterment of child health services, provision of public health education and promotion of child advocacy in Hong Kong. It was established in 1994 by a special resolution of the Annual General Meeting of the Hong Kong Paediatric Society. It is made up by professionals from transdisciplinary areas and intersectoral domains consisting of paediatricians, health professionals, lawyers, business executives, accountants, industrialists and others all dedicated to the child health in Hong Kong.

We at the Hong Kong Paediatric Foundation **APPLAUDS** the Hong Kong SAR Government for proposing the Child Development Fund as measure to break inter-generation poverty to disadvantaged children with 300 million Hong Kong Dollars reserved in 2007 appropriations bill. It target on students aged 12 to 16 from low income families. This is going to be an asset building model to be realized in seven pioneer projects in seven regions with the project components of *targeted savings programmes, mentorship* and *personal development plans*.

However we do have the following **CONCERNS** with reasons on the current Proposals:

- 1) **The Target Group:** 12 to 16 years at low income families
 - a) For maximal effect, it would be best to target a younger age with multiple exit points at which children can withdraw funds for personal development
 - b) This will better encourage future planning and better development of attitude and skills at younger age which is more cost-effective
 - c) Children with Special Needs (formerly known as handicapped children) are also disadvantaged and the programme can also help equipping them with better planning
- 2) **Allowable Use of Funds:**
 - a) Only for education, vocational training and skill enhancement that will improve employability may be too limited
 - b) Fund should be allowed to develop other areas such as
 - Qualities – leadership, coping, stress reduction and other life skills
 - Skills in arts, creativity and sports etc
 - Opportunities to widen scope of experiences – travel, overseas training, attachment
 - Seed money for business
 - There is definite need to develop guidelines on allowable use of fund to be best interest of the child concerned

3) Target Saving

- a) Families need to contribute HK\$200 a month
- b) May not be feasible for many low income families
- c) Cultivate self-responsibility and shared responsibility is good in principle but basic needs of the families must be met first before we can talk about saving or else will induce other hardship within the family and the child as a whole
- d) NGOs to solicit 1:1 matching from business sector or individual – may not be reliable source and \$400 a month may not be enough to achieve the mission as postulated by the Proposal.
- e) Should organize plans for investment or benefits from banks or commercial sectors for those joining the plan to increase revenue

4) Individual Developing Plan

- a) Should aim to help develop full potentials of the child in all aspects – need holistic life course developmental approach in development of social and vocational competencies and healthy life skills
- b) Just focusing on education, vocational training would be too restrictive and inadequate
- c) Healthy defined as “a state of physical, social, emotional and moral well-being” is foundation for effective learning, optimal development and productivity. Inputs from paediatricians are essential in the formulation of individual development plan at planning and operation stage.

5) Mentorship

- a) Success depends on quality and intensity of mentorship
- b) Recruitment of motivated and high quality volunteer mentors is essential
- c) Mentorship should be stable and consistent – not changing every year – at least 3 years each and ideally till the child reaching 18 years of age
- d) They should form partnership with family in co-planning for the child and family as a unit.
- e) Training and long term support with close supervision is essential.
- f) Paediatricians should be vital in providing input on health and developmental needs of children from birth to young adulthoods. They are ready to recommend and advise factors which are beneficial or detrimental for optimal growth and development as well as vital attributes to attain their high potentials of achievement in life.

6) Mentorship and Service Organizations

- a) “Child Right”-based-approach needed – poverty reduction is more than charity, more than moral obligation but is a legal obligation from ratification of the United Nations Convention for the Right of the Child (UNCRC)

- b) Programme basics – governance, accountability, principle of non-discrimination and equality and principle of participatory decision making process
- c) Programme must support participation of child in context of family at large supported by local community with agreed upon outcome
- d) Operated on 1-1 basis but supported by mass and group programming for long-term building up of intergeneration relationship with an extra-familial, resource-bearing mentor through a period of years with transition arrangement to informal mentoring from either competent and responsible parents or other professionals

Paediatrician being specialized and trained in child health, child growth and child development are in the best position to **SUPPORT** this Child Development Fund by virtue of our Professional Knowledge, Experience, Clinical Skills, Expertise and Role as Advocates serving as:

- a) Expert advisors to the Mentorship Group in formulating principles and guidelines for the mentors in their counseling and guidance
- b) Mentors for the Programme
- c) Counselors for the Personal Development Plans

The Foundation would also like to see the following **EVALUATION SYSTEM** being consolidated before launching the Proposal:

- a) Developmental outcome of child
 - Health
 - Economic success
 - Constructive citizen
- b) Programme success
 - Targeted saving account - sponsorship
 - Recruitment and retention of mentors
 - Quality of mentors-child-family relationship
 - Utilization of local / available resources

We wish the Proposal every success in achieving its missions.

For and on behalf of the Foundation



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