

LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF): Progress Report

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the positive outcomes of the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) and outlines the Fund's strategies in scaling up its next phase of development.

Background

2. Social capital fosters social harmony and is considered by the World Bank to be the essential social glue that strengthens the resilience of a community during times of major social and economic changes.

3. In his 2001 Policy Address, the former Chief Executive announced the setting up of the \$300 million CIIF to promote the development of social capital through encouraging mutual support in the neighbourhood, community participation and cross-sectoral partnerships.

4. We briefed Members on the progress of the CIIF at the meeting on 8 May 2006 (ref : LC Paper No. CB(2) 1874/05-06(03)). Members noted that the CIIF had yielded positive outcome in the promotion of social capital. Members were also invited to visit CIIF projects to gain a first-hand understanding of their work.

5. The year 2007 is a special milestone for the CIIF, as it marks its fifth anniversary. This provides an opportune time for the Fund to reflect on its experience accumulated in the past and map out the directions for its future development. Furthermore, with the establishment of the Labour and Welfare Bureau in July, there is a more coherent framework for implementing welfare, poverty alleviation and labour policies. This further facilitates the CIIF in promoting self-reliance through capacity building and employment support.

Updated Progress

6. As of October 2007 -
- (a) a critical mass of projects has been achieved - a total of eleven batches of applications has been processed, with funding of over \$110 million allocated to 147 proposals¹;
 - (b) the geographical coverage is wide – the projects span all 18 districts and in communities at different stages of development, including older communities such as Southern District and Sham Shui Po, new towns such as Tung Chung, Tseung Kwan O and Tin Shui Wai, and redeveloped communities such as Shek Pei Wan;
 - (c) the project scope and target groups are broadening – the projects involve over 320 000 participants from different age groups, social strata and cultural/ethnic backgrounds in a variety of capacity building, networks and community building initiatives; and
 - (d) the culture of cross-sectoral collaboration is gradually gaining roots – over 3 000 project partners, including Non-governmental Organizations, schools, businesses, professional groups, resident associations, hospitals, district councils and government departments, are jointly implementing these projects.

Evaluation

7. The CIIF attaches great importance to the effectiveness of its operation and the projects it funds. It has been collecting feedback from various sources, including reports/assessments by the project teams, site visits and review meetings with the project teams, participants and partners, as well as an independent evaluation study completed in March 2006 which was reported to Members at the last meeting.

8. Overall speaking, both academic evaluation and participants' reports have affirmed the effectiveness of the social capital building strategies promoted by the CIIF, particularly with regard to -

¹ Funding for 50 projects has expired, 84 are at different stages of implementation, and the latest batch of approved projects is ready for commencement in the next few months.

- (a) undoing negative labelling effects and focusing instead on capacity building – this is found to be effective in empowering disadvantaged groups and there is strong evidence of positive social and economic results;
- (b) bridging people from different ages, social backgrounds, or ethnicities – in terms of broadening peoples’ perspectives and motivating them to change, this is more effective than reinforcing the bond within homogenous groups; and
- (c) emphasizing sustainability - initiatives such as mentoring which build in-depth relationships are more instrumental than one-off programmes in fostering trust and reciprocity at times of need.

9. Regarding paragraph 8(c) above, CIIF generally supports projects with funding for up to three years. Project teams are required to indicate their plan for sustainability from the start, to ensure that social capital outcomes such as positive changes to participants’ attitudes, mutual help networks and shared ownership by collaborators, etc. can sustain beyond project funding. Experience tells that many successful projects do not require continued funding from the Government because of the support networks established and the changes entrenched.

10. There is also substantive evidence that CIIF projects have created differences in their hosting communities. Examples include -

- (a) transformed roles and enhanced capacity – over 20 000 participants who may otherwise remain as service recipients have been transformed into volunteers and project organizers, serving others in need and actively contributing to the development of their respective communities;
- (b) closer mutual-help relationships and stronger neighbourhood support networks – over 340 mutual help networks and 20 co-operatives have been established. They are managed by the participants themselves and support over 10 000 families in need;
- (c) social inclusion involving cross-generation and cross-strata mentorships – over 1 000 volunteer mentors from a variety of occupational backgrounds and corporate volunteers have become “life navigators” for families in need and re-connected over 3 000 marginalised youth to mainstream society;

- (d) enhanced partnership across institutions and sectors - many projects have successfully built multi-sectoral partnerships such as home/ school/ community partnerships and health/ welfare / community partnerships;
- (e) indigenous models in social capital building are emerging, such as -
 - flexible neighbourhood-based after-school care;
 - designating “floor mentors” in residential buildings as core members of neighbourhood support networks;
 - apprenticeship schemes made possible through tripartite partnership;
 - self-sustaining co-operatives; and
 - elder shops and “adopt a granny” initiatives that promote cross-generational collaboration and positive aging; and
- (f) increased social and economic participation – over 3 500 full-time or part-time, paid or volunteer jobs have been created through cross-sector partnerships.

11. Meanwhile, the public’s interest in, and awareness of, social capital has increased. For instance, the level of citation of the term “social capital” in the printed media has increased ten fold over the last five years. The CIIF has also been invited to a number of international conferences to discuss the importance of social capital in community development and social development.

Scaling up impact for the next phase of development

12. Whilst initial successes have been achieved, there is room for enhancing the impact of the CIIF. We will therefore continue the operation of the Fund to keep up the momentum and consolidate the gains.

13. The Fund is planning further action to this end, such as -

- (a) proactively engaging new partners, in particular organizations which have strong community networks and private companies which are prepared to take up corporate social responsibilities;

- (b) encouraging the development of flagship projects which can serve as models to stimulate other projects;
- (c) enhancing public relations and publicity to promote the benefits of social capital building and good practice models. The CIIF forum held on 15 November 2007, for instance, was an excellent opportunity to bring together project participants so that they can share their experiences and inspire others to join them in furthering the objectives of the CIIF;
- (d) facilitating the application of social capital concepts to regular welfare services where appropriate; and
- (e) reviewing the effectiveness of CIIF projects from time to time and seek continuous improvements.

Advice sought

14. Members are invited to note this progress report. We also welcome suggestions on how to further the objectives of the CIIF.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
December 2007