

For discussion on
20 March 2009

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs

Implementation of measures to address gambling-related problems

Purpose

This paper gives members an update on the progress of measures implemented to address gambling-related problems.

The Ping Wo Fund

2. Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) established the Ping Wo Fund (“the Fund”) in September 2003 to finance preventive and remedial measures to address gambling-related problems. The main objects of the Fund are to finance the following measures -

- (a) research and studies into problems and issues relating to gambling;
- (b) public education and other measures to prevent or alleviate problems relating to gambling; and
- (c) counselling, treatment and other remedial or support services for problem and pathological gamblers and those affected by them.

3. The use and application of the Fund are determined by the Secretary for Home Affairs (SHA). The Ping Wo Fund Advisory Committee (PWFAC) was set up in September 2003 to advise SHA on the management and use of the Fund.

Progress of measures

4. HAB and the PWFAC have been implementing various preventive and remedial measures. Major work undertaken is highlighted in paragraphs 5 to 17 below.

A. *Research on gambling-related issues*

5. In December 2007, we commissioned the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) to conduct an “Evaluation Study on the Impacts of Gambling Liberalization in Nearby Cities on Hong Kong People’s Participation in Gambling Activities and Development of Counselling and Treatment Services for Problem Gamblers”.

6. Through multiple means of a telephone survey, documentary analysis, interviews with members of the four counselling and treatment centres funded by the Fund (“four Centres”) and focus group discussions with users of the four Centres, the Study -

- (a) examined the pattern of Hong Kong people taking part in gambling activities, and the prevalence of problem and pathological gambling in Hong Kong; and
- (b) evaluated the effectiveness of the four Centres.

7. PolyU has completed the Study and briefed the PWFAC on the findings. Since the service provision of the four Centres constitutes part of the Study Report and the remaining finding of the Study Report may shed light on the most needed remedial measures for gamblers in Hong Kong, we have shared the Study Report with the counselling and treatment centres for problem and pathological gamblers. The Study Report has also been uploaded onto the website of HAB for public information. The Executive Summary of the Study Report is at **Annex** for members’ easy reference.

8. On Hong Kong people’s pattern in gambling, the Study has pointed out, amongst other things, the percentage of Hong Kong people involved in gambling has declined as compared to the figures obtained from two previous studies in 2001 and 2005. The prevalence rates of possible problem and possible pathological gambler have also declined slightly when compared with the previous rates. Mark Six Lottery is the most popular gambling activity among Hong Kong people, followed by social gambling such as playing mahjong or poker with friends or relatives. Amongst different types of gambling activities, football betting is more popular among working male who are aged between 20 and 39.

9. After considering the Study Report, the PWFAC has agreed in-principle that it should formulate in 2010 a comprehensive framework on research work to be undertaken. The aim is to conduct studies on focused areas related to gambling, with a view to enabling PWFAC to recommend more strategic measures to prevent or alleviate gambling-related problems in Hong Kong.

10. With the re-assurance of the Study Report, the PWFAC also re-affirmed the importance of public education and the need to continue its funding support to four counselling and treatment centres. Details in these aspects are provided in paragraphs 13 to 17 below.

B. Public education campaign for preventing gambling-related problems

11. We commissioned Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) to organize a series of education campaign in 2007 and 2008 on gambling-related issues. The campaign, known as “Do Not Gamble” campaign, included a T-shirt design competition, inter-school football matches and a TV Announcement of Public Interest (“API”) design competition. All these activities aimed at arousing the awareness of school students and young people of the negative impact of gambling. On the recommendation of the PWFAC, we will commission RTHK to organize a new series of public education campaign in 2009 – 2010 to sustain the publicity effort.

12. In December 2008, the PWFAC launched a Ping Wo Fund Sponsorship Scheme for sponsoring non-government organizations (“NGOs”) to conduct public education programmes and activities which aim at preventing and/or alleviating gambling-related problems. Priority will be given to projects/activities whose targets are young people. The Sponsorship Scheme is receiving applications.

13. We agree with the recommendation of the PWFAC that public education constitutes an important aspect of our anti-gambling work. We will continue to make use of the Fund to support other suitable publicity and public education campaigns to arouse the awareness of the public, in particular young people, the negative impact of gambling.

C. Counselling and treatment services for problem and pathological gamblers

14. With funding support from the Fund, Caritas-Hong Kong, Tung Wah Group of Hospital, Zion Social Services Limited and Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups operate four counselling and treatment centres for problem and pathological gamblers. The former two centres, located in Tsuen Wan and Wan Chai, commenced operation in October 2003 and the latter two, located in Tseung Kwan O and Tuen Mun, in February 2007.

15. The four Centres provide specialized counselling and treatment services for problem and pathological gamblers and their family members. The four Centres also provide training programmes to help concerned professionals build up expertise in working with problem and pathological gamblers, organize education programme for the general public on problem and pathological gambling and how to prevent and cope with gambling-related problems.

16. From January to December 2008, the four Centres have received a total of 5 460 calls which require telephone counselling or follow-up actions, a total of 1 325 new cases which require face-to-face counselling or other referral services, organized some 140 staff and professional training sessions and over 230 public education programmes attended by around 39 000 people.

17. The service contracts of the four Centres will end on 31 December 2009. Considering that the Study referred to in paragraph 5 above has confirmed the need of continued provision of gambling counselling and treatment services, we will continue to make use of the Fund to fund the operation of four counselling and treatment centres. To ensure that the centres will provide services that are most required by the community, we are conducting a review of the scope and scale of services, amount of annual funding, etc. We will take into account the findings of the Study and views of the existing operators and relevant stakeholders in the process. Our preliminary proposal is to introduce, amongst other things, service contracts of a longer duration so as to facilitate better service and manpower planning by the Centre operators; and to extend the service hour of the gambling counselling hotline to 24 hours a day to strengthen support for service recipients. Our plan is to seek the advice of the PWFAC and complete the tender and award of new service contracts in the second half of 2009 so that the selected operators would have sufficient preparation time to start operation according to the new terms and conditions starting from January 2010.

18. We will make on-going efforts to review, improve and implement measures to tackle gambling-related problems, and consult the PWFAC and other stakeholders from time to time.

Home Affairs Bureau
March 2009



THE HONG KONG
POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
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**Evaluation Study on the Impacts of
Gambling Liberalization in Nearby Cities on Hong
Kong Peoples' Participation in Gambling Activities
and Development of Counselling and Treatment
Services for Problem Gamblers**

Final Report (2008)

**Department of Applied Social Sciences
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

**Comissioned by
Home Affairs Bureau
Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region**

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**Evaluation Study on the Impacts of
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Executive Summary

1 Background of the study

1.1 At the beginning of the millennium, Macau had released its monopoly system on the operation of the gaming industry and started to gear towards a wholesome development in this field. Singapore followed suit and casinos were formally coming into beings. The gaming industries in districts around Hong Kong are growing in high speed. Basing on this fact and the demands from the community, the Home Affairs Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region Government had commissioned, respectively in 2001 and 2005, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and then the University of Hong Kong to carry out two major public research studies to better understand the situation of Hong Kong people taking part in gambling activities, and to trace changes of the prevalence rate on problem or pathological gambling. Besides, in 2003 the SAR government had also financed, through the Ping Wo Fund, the establishment of two counselling and treatment centres designated in providing supportive service to people and their family members perplexed by problem gambling, namely the Caritas Addicted Gamblers Counselling Centre and the Even Centre of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals. In 2007 two similar but smaller scale counselling and treatment centres, also financed by the Ping Wo Fund, were put into service. They are the Yuk Lai Hin of the Zion Social Service and the Gambling Counselling Centre of the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups.

1.2 In 2007, the Home Affairs Bureau commissioned the Hong Kong Polytechnic University to carry out an evaluation study aiming to

- examine the pattern of Hong Kong people taking part in gambling activities within the past year under the rapid growth of the gaming industries in districts nearby, and their knowledge on the preventive treatment measures for problem gambling;
- examine and analyse the service development situation of the four counselling and treatment centres (the four centres) financed by the Ping Wo Fund especially on the roles they played and the challenges met relating to the preventive treatment on problem gambling aspect; and
- probe into the ways ahead for gambling policies in Hong Kong, in

particular those concerning the preventive treatment on problem gambling.

1.3 Study Methods

- Telephone Survey – Telephone Poll on “Hong Kong People’s Participation in Gambling Activities 2008” was aimed at obtaining a clear view on the situation of Hong Kong people taking part in gambling activities during the past year. On the other side, it was also meant to examine the advertising effect on the promotion of preventive treatment on problem gambling. 2,088 randomly sampled Hong Kong citizens aged at 15 or above were being successfully interviewed via the telephone lines between 19 and 28 March 2008. (Please refer to Chapter 1.)
- Documentary Analysis – To examine the past year performance of the four centres by means of the outcome indicators through the service data handed in to the Home Affairs Bureau by the four centres themselves. The research team also took into reference the respective assessment progress reports handed in to the Home Affairs Bureau by the four centres to sum up the service encounters and propose developments ahead. (Please refer to Chapter 2.)
- Individual Face-to-face Interviews – The research team had organised in-depth individual face to face interviews with core members of the four centres, namely a total of 17 centre organizers and professional counsellors, to gain a better understanding and interpretation on the challenges and restrictions faced by the four centres during their process of development. (Please refer to Chapter 3.)
- Focus Groups – The research team had held a total of ten focus group discussion sessions, about two to three sessions held respectively in each of the four centres, with a total attendance of 66 service users. It was aimed, through these focus group discussions, to obtain feedbacks from the service users on the services provided by the four centres. (Please refer to Chapter 4.)

2 Trend of Hong Kong People Taking Part in Gambling Activities

2.1 Profiles of Hong Kong Peoples’ Participation in Gambling Activities

2.1.1 The telephone poll revealed that although the percentage had decreased when compared with the two previous similar studies, it was still a common practice in the past year for those being interviewed to take part in gambling activities. **There were 7 out of every 10 being interviewed indicated their participation in gambling activities during the past year.**

2.1.2 Placing bets on the Mark 6 Lottery was the most popular gambling activity among Hong Kong citizens (61.8%), followed by the taking part in social gambings (34.2%), horse racings (17.1%), gaming activities in Macau casinos (10.8%) and football bettings (7.7%).

- 2.1.3 The statistical analysis reflected that those being interviewed tended to take part in different kinds of gambling activities according to their individual social and economic backgrounds. For example, those taking part in horse racings mainly involved males aged 40 or above, employed with an education level at junior secondary or below. As with football bettings, the younger males aged at 20-39, employed with senior secondary or tertiary education level, took up a larger percentage. As for those who participated in Macau casino gaming activities also involved mainly younger males aged 20-39, employed with a higher educational background.
- 2.1.4 The monthly average spending on those regulated gambling activities amounted to \$732.7 per each of those being interviewed. The placing of bets on horse racings took up the largest percentage.
- 2.1.5 **More than one third (34.2%) of those being interviewed indicated that they first took part in gambling activities before the age of 18.** More than half (53.5%) indicated that their first participation in gambling activities was at the age of 18 to 29.
- 2.1.6 **The prevalence rates of “possible problem gambler” and “possible pathological gambler” obtained in this study are 2.8% and 1.7% respectively.** These show a slightly downward trend when compared with the percentages obtained from the two previous similar studies (respectively 4.0% and 1.8% in 2001 and 3.1% and 2.2% in 2005).
- 2.1.7 The statistical analysis indicated that if other conditions remained unchanged, **males who had taken part in football bettings, horse racings and gaming activities in Macau casinos bore the biggest possibility of becoming “problem or pathological gamblers”.**
- 2.2 Effectiveness of Advertisements on Preventive Measures against Problem Gambling
- 2.2.1 Since 2003 upon the passing of the Bill to regulate football bettings in Hong Kong, the SAR government had at the same time been strengthening the publicity on promoting the prevention of or solution to gambling problems within the community. Yet after 5 years' time, only 37.8% of those being interviewed indicated they took notice of such publicities.
- 2.2.2 In addition, most of those being interviewed (93.5%) indicated that they had not heard of, or could not tell exactly the names of, those counselling and treatment service centres designated for people and their family members perplexed by problem gambling.
- 2.2.3 **Most of those being interviewed revealed that when they encountered with gambling problems, they would approach the gambling counselling centres which were specially designed for gamblers and their family**

members, yet 31.4% of those being interviewed refused to do so. Among those who were willing to seek assistance, younger females with higher educational background and those who were not “possible problem or pathological gamblers” were the majority. Those who indicated they would not seek assistance distinctly involved mainly elder males at lower education level and those “possible problem or pathological gamblers”.

2.3 Rampant Increase of Gambling Outlets in Nearby Cities and its Impacts

2.3.1 Although there were not too many of those being interviewed indicated their notice on the opening of mega casinos in districts nearby and the increase of their desire to visit these casinos to take part in the gambling activities, **yet further statistical analysis revealed that the higher educational level of those being interviewed were more inclined to participate in such. While in every four of the “possible problem or pathological gamblers”, there was one (23.9%) who indicated that the coming into business of such mega casinos did increase their desire to personally take part in gambling activities.**

2.3.2 It is becoming a trend in recent years to promote gambling activities through the launching of advertisements in the mass media in Hong Kong. Nearly two-third (64.2%) of those being interviewed showed an interest on these advertisements. Among them, young people aged 15 to 19, employed with secondary or tertiary education, and those “possible problem or pathological gamblers”, were the majority. Apart from this, it is worth to take note on the contrasting data that 5.2% and 6.8% of the respondents had indicated respectively that such advertisements made them “more willing to” and “more unwilling to” take part in gambling activities.

3 **Challenges and Constraints Faced by Existing Treatment Centres Currently**

3.1 As reflected by the figures handed in to the Home Affairs Bureau by the four centres in areas concerning the tendering of assistance to service users in self-controlling their desire to participate in gambling activities, or in the strengthening of the resistant effort of service users against problem gambling, up to the degree of satisfaction on the part of the service users in relation to aims and effects over the services provided to them, **the work performance of the four centres achieved in the past year went more better than those targetted in their performance pledges.**

3.2 While processing to attain the encouraging effectiveness, the four centres had come across challenges and restrictions in the meantime at various levels in important areas such as **the counselling and treatment, research, and community education.**

A. Counselling and Treatment – Providing suitable and effective counselling and treatment to gamblers and their family members

- (i) The missions and service contents declared by the four centres showed a trend towards the offering of **“one-stop” multi services**. Such a service centre usually requires a large resource network to support the provision of the relevant multi services concerned in order to fulfill the operation of the one-stop service model because problem gambling often brings along problems relating to individual emotion and problem behaviour, broken family relationships as well as financial difficulties. Thus in the case of smaller scale service centres which were short of resources, many of the cases had to be referred to the other bodies concerned.
- (ii) In order to maintain the service quality with the increase of new cases in huge numbers, the four centres had adopted **a policy of priority**. It had been the prime objective of the four centres to provide gambling counselling and treatment, i.e. the responding to the major needs of the help seekers in time, and the fulfilling of the requirements on effective targets emphasized in the performance pledge of the Home Affairs Bureau. As a result of this most of the resources were placed on the handling of individual cases. Counsellors could only offer referral service to the help seekers or provide them with a limited follow-up through a telephone call. **The present method of calculation which counted solely the number of help seeking cases could not really reflect on the whole the enormous additional resources actually put in by the four centres.** To be selective some specialties of counsellors would be forfeitted, or other needs of service users perplexed by problem gambling would be overlooked, or ways on how to further assist family members of help seekers to relax from the anxieties would be put aside.
- (iii) The formation of a professional team is indispensable in order to put into practice the mission and performance pledge of a service centre. As gambling counselling is of a special service nature, the well-stocked experience in the relevant field is an important asset of a capable gambling counsellor. Thus most counsellors weighted heavily the exchange and sharing of experiences with co-workers in this same field through seminars and discussions so as to better equip one self. Yet the wish to keep on with further studies was not that easy to accomplish. **It was a common headache for gambling counsellors to squeeze out time and get a balance between the huge workload and continuous studies.**
- (iv) On the part of the funding mechanism and the opening up of services, the four centres received a yearly grant of \$3,500,000 and \$1,300,000 respectively from the Ping Wo Fund as the revenue for operation. The duration of the grant varied from two to three years. The four centres had to exercise extreme care on the allocation of this limited resources. First of all it was the problem with the centre site. Even the centres were willing to pay high rents the spaces that could be rented were relevantly small. When service users of the centre accumulated to a certain number, spaces available to be put into use were running short, then the quality of service was compromised. Under the circumstances that function rooms were all time occupied, the only way out was the reduction of service sessions or the activities be convened at outside borrowed locations.

- (v) Apart from the existence of a cap charge, the grant was also for a certain period only which affected negatively the service centres in the planning of long term service developments. The four centres were seriously disturbed by the uncertainty of future grant as it depended solely on the results of the evaluation of service effectiveness and the centres were not certain if the services could be continued. This funding mechanism had indirectly caused a loss of manpower resources. The cost of employing suitable staff for the service was one of the fixed expenditures of the service centres. The short-term contract and the incapability of the centres to offer market standard salaries had increased staff turn-over rate thus resulting in the lack of working hands.
- (vi) It was pointed out by people perplexed by problem gambling that quitting gambling is a harsh and long lasting fight. Although most of the service users agreed to the importance of self-controlling, they could hardly resist the temptations at every corner. All of them stressed that the hard wares (e.g. sites) and soft wares (e.g. counselling methods) provided by the service centres on their gambling treatment were of tremendous help to them. However the present funding model limited the service centres in their resource allocation to the steady keeping of a team of professional counsellors, the provision of better sites for activities, and having more counselling group sessions.
- (vii) Most of the service users revealed that they were directly or indirectly influenced by their family members in approaching counselling and treatment centres to help solve their various problems brought about by gambling. **Hong Kong is a community which mainly consists of Chinese people with family as the base. Family members of service users had been playing an important role in encouraging the latter to quit gambling. From this it can be observed that collaboration with family members of people perplexed by problem gambling, or the tendering of supportive services to family members of people concerned are worthy to push forward.**
- (viii) Pinpointing at the inadequate gambling counselling service, it was suggested by service users that the service centres should maintain a time to time follow up on their cases and that counsellors should keep contact with those who had already accomplished the counselling treatment by telephone, or that they be allowed to continually taking part in mutual help group activities. The closing of service centres on Sundays and holidays caused inconvenience to those service users who had to attend to work during the weekdays. Therefore they suggested **the setting up of a "24-hour gambling counselling hotline" and the opening of the service centres on Sundays and holidays.** These supportive measures would enhance the effect of the services tendered. The increase in the number of mutual help groups and the expansion of site spaces were also requested by the service users for an improved service.

- (ix) The four centres unanimously agreed that it was insufficient to depend solely on the organizations to provide gambling counselling service in that the government should help break the walls and actively promote the services. In the process of opening up various kinds of preventive treatment service on damages brought by problem gambling, the service centres often had to double their efforts to proceed or had to shelve the relevant activities or programs due to the bureaucratic attitude of some of the government departments. Redundant hindrances were simply there when, for example, applying to the Lands Department for the hanging up and displaying of advertisement banners for promotional purposes, or conducting liaison and seeking co-operation respectively with district police stations and the education bodies.

B. Research and Development – To help develop local, professional methods to handle problem or pathological gambling behaviour

- (i) The four centres had been building up relevant data from help seeking cases since their inception. Such included the individual “socio-economic characteristics” of service users, the pattern and duration of their participation in gambling activities, the seriousness of perplexity brought by problem gambling. These materials provided valuable reference to the further knowledge and understanding on the causes of problem gambling, and for the local service development. By allowing and pushing forward co-operation between the four centres and research bodies and universities to compile and analyse the data and materials collected, an important base for current and future development of the service could be founded. Besides, Hong Kong as a beginner, the borrowing of overseas experience to integrate with the actual local conditions in helping develop local professional methods to handle problem gambling had been a principal work target of the four centres. For example in the past, various kinds of seminars were held putting together local and overseas academics with professionals concerned to exchange opinions and share experience on topics relating to the causes and treatment of problem gambling and its cultural specialties; intensifying the reliability of the screening tools; evaluating the problem gambling counselling approaches and the training effect of local professional gambling counsellors, etc.
- (ii) Data revealed that the four centres had done a good job in the training of local professional gambling counsellors. This was especially so with the longer standing service centres. The professional training sessions and number of people trained were well above the set targets.
- (iii) **Many of the centre organizers and counsellors being interviewed expressed regrets on the situation that the relevant stakeholders were not discharging the appropriate synergy due to the lack of a precise policy relating to the preventive treatment on problem gambling. They felt the government should not tie itself up in only supporting and approving the grant of funds by the Ping Wo Fund but to take up a positive attitude in promoting the co-operation across different fields.** Among these relevant stakeholders, apart from the four centres and certain non-government organizations, the

Hong Kong Jockey Club is the only body authorized by the government to operate in the lottery, football and horse bettings. The government was supposed to take up a more active role in pushing the operator to pay pro-rata tax revenue for the preventive treatment on problem gambling. At the same time the government should take the lead to strengthen the preventive education and to provide high quality service for people perplexed by problem gambling hence avoiding the problem gambling being further deteriorated.

- (iv) The government could provide funds for research studies thus enabling the establishment of partnership between universities and related service centres, or finance civil organizations to organize activities such as the recent “No Gambling Festival 2008” thus enhancing a greater synergy from their collaboration. It was also proposed by gambling counsellors being interviewed that **the government should set up a data base**, abiding with Personal Data (privacy) Ordinance, to follow the practice of the Narcotics Division in regularly announcing the total number of people taking soft drugs and the number of people in different age groups receiving service etc. Through such a data base the present state of problem or pathological gamblers in Hong Kong would be ready in hand and would present a clearer picture on problem gambling thus enabling more effective service planning.

C. Public and Community Education – Providing information on the prevention of problem gambling for public and community education.

- (i) The four centres were to provide information in respect of the prevention of problem gambling for public and community education. According to the number of the educational activities organized within the communities, the four centres had all fulfilled the yearly service indicator requirement.
- (ii) There were discussions among service users with their “experienced” status on the effects of preventive treatment on problem gambling. Hong Kong has been adopting a “regulated gambling policy” and the Hong Kong Jockey Club is the major operator of the gaming industry. It was pointed out by service users that the advertising effect of vigilance on damages brought by problem gambling was inadequate and that the “wordings are too small” and “not clear” on relevant notices and promotional advertisements. Besides, contradictions were observed in the manners of adopting of a regulated gambling policy and the promoting of gambling activities by the Hong Kong Jockey Club in that there were few acts purposed for the former but the latter was served with overwhelming advertisements of attraction. Although most of the respondents were well aware of the damages that would be brought by the participation in gambling activities, many of them interpreted the damages as just the bearing of debts. Quite a number of service users suggested that the various kinds of damages brought by gambling and their seriousness should be clearly cited in the promotional activities so that the general public’s alertness in the prevention of problem gambling could be increased.
- (iii) To sum up, it was opined by service users that a correct concept on

gambling and a healthy outlook on life should be delivered to all in their childhood through education. Otherwise, whatever scale of gambling counselling or provision of treatment service would not be able to bring a radical remedy.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Gambling, or the gaming industry, is undoubtedly a knife with sharp edges on both sides. The positive and negative impact induced thereof brought up loads of studies and discussions. Whatsoever stakeholders of the society, they must attach much importance on this subject because it involves or affects a wide range of different areas such as the morals, the laws, the leisure, the family, the economy, the tourism, or even the field of sports as well.
- 4.2 As at present, there is yet a most effective treatment model to handle problem or pathological gambling in the eastern or western societies. The major counselling and treatment target of the western society rests on the theories of **“responsible gambling”** and **“harm-reduction gambling”** which are gradually becoming acceptable by all in Hong Kong too.
- 4.3 Currently, the history of Hong Kong in the provision of professional gambling counselling and treatment service is short when compared with North American countries and Australia. That said, **the four centres together with other civil bodies offering similar services had in fact provided an indispensable safety net for people and their family members perplexed by problem gambling.**
- 4.4 In the days to come, Hong Kong has to engineer for the relevant policies and services under the circumstances of the rapidly growing gaming industries in Asian countries. Perhaps the SAR government needs to adopt a more active and practical role to deal with this on one hand, while on the other the major stakeholders of the society such as the non-government organizations, churches, educational sector, families, as well as the Hong Kong Jockey Club which all possess important and unique functions should bring to their full play by working closely in coordination on top of their own respective roles, then the negative impact brought by problem gambling on the society could be cut down.

5 Recommendations

5.1 To promote actively the involvement of stakeholders in bringing a greater synergy

5.1.1 Although the number of problem gamblers and their family members only took up a small portion of participants in gambling activities, yet the provision of appropriate counselling and treatment services to them is absolutely necessary. The government should maintain a close liaison with all stakeholders, such as the Hong Kong Jockey Club, non-government organizations offering gambling counselling services, schools, civil organizations, law enforcement agencies, churches etc, to enable the effective allocation of resources and co-ordination on matters relating to treatment, advertisement, education etc. If the Home Affairs Bureau is to remain as the body taking care of gambling policies and affairs, it is proposed that the Bureau should take up a more dynamic, strategic and contextual role, balancing itself between a highly active intervening and a laissez-faire attitude.

5.2 Collaborative efforts with nearby cities for combating problem gambling

5.2.1 The fast growing of the gaming industry in Macau would be bringing undesirable impact on the Hong Kong society. This study revealed more and more young and educated middle class people were planning their family holiday tours to Macau, and would directly or indirectly contact with the grand new casinos there. In addition, the existing problem or pathological gamblers would remain the routine attendants of the Macau gaming industry. Under such circumstances, the gambling treatment centres of Hong Kong and Macau (e.g. the "Resilience Centre – Problem Gambling Prevention and Treatment Centre" of the Macau SAR Government Social Work Bureau) could strengthen the co-operation between themselves to complement each other. Therefore it is proposed to establish a case referral or service follow-up system between Hong Kong and Macau.

5.2.2 To set up a data base in relation to the prevention on problem gambling with Hong Kong as the central point involving districts around such as Macau, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan etc. Information contained in the **data base** would cover the characteristics and needs of service users, the handling methods, research study results etc, in order to facilitate local studies focusing on "gambling problems", "the handling of problem gambling", and other related social conditions to help defining long term policies in this respect.

- 5.3 Funding Model for Sustainable development
- 5.3.1 **Apart from keeping on funding the services currently provided by the four centres**, the relevant departments of the SAR government and the Ping Wo Fund should determine a set of long term operation and funding model in respect of gambling counselling and treatment to enable the continuous provision of effective services by the relevant service centres, as well as the systematic implementation of advertising, educating and preventing procedures. It is also proposed that on structure wise, **the expansion of “Ping Wo Fund” in its composition and duties or the formation of a “Central Commission on Gambling Problems” comprising officials from relevant government departments, representatives from the Hong Kong Jockey Club, representatives from the business sector, professionals and academics.** (Please refer to Chapter 5.)
- 5.3.2 The Ping Wo Fund could bring into consideration the provision of resources, or that funds be provided by the government or the Hong Kong Jockey Club, to establish an “activity fund” for non-government organizations, civil organizations, schools etc to apply for the conducting of activities relating to gambling prevention education, advertisement and training programs. The operation, evaluation and supervision of the fund are to be co-ordinated by the Ping Wo Fund.
- 5.4 Learns from successful experiences overseas
- 5.4.1 In respect of pushing forward the corporate social responsibilities of gambling activities operators, countries such as the United Kingdom, United States of America and Australia have attached much importance on the problem of pathological gambling derived from the opening up of gaming industries and they have made it a rule that operators of gambling activities must take up the social responsibility of paying part or all of the expenses incurred on the preventive treatment of pathological gambling.
- 5.4.2 In respect of the funding model for the development of preventive treatment service on problem gambling, it is proposed that a charity trust fund (such as the Gambling Industry Charitable Trust of the United Kingdom) be set up, or through the collection of certain percentage of tax returns or licence fees from operators of gambling activities, from which a persistent and steady financial income is available to cater for the operation and development of gambling counselling and treatment service.
- 5.4.3 To establish independent institution to focus study on gambling related problems, or to conduct various gambling related studies by the above suggested Central Commission on Gambling Problems.