

**For information on
25 February 2010**

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation

Poverty Alleviation Work in Kwai Tsing and Sham Shui Po

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the specific measures adopted by the Government to address the poverty situation in Kwai Tsing and Sham Shui Po.

Background

2. Members were briefed vide LC Paper No. CB(2)756/09-10(01) that the Government has been adopting a pragmatic and multi-pronged approach to tackle poverty, including undertaking a district-based approach, as recommended by the former Commission on Poverty, to complement centrally-driven poverty alleviation measures. A district-based approach can help us better understand the challenges faced by the different communities and hence introduce more targeted measures for the needy. It can also allow adaptation of services at the district level to meet the changing district demographics and needs. Over the years, relevant Government bureaux and departments have introduced a number of district-based initiatives to meet the specific needs of local residents.

Specific measures implemented in Kwai Tsing and Sham Shui Po

Kwai Tsing

District Profile

3. In 2008, there were 511 300 people from 167 500 households living in Kwai Tsing. About 18% of the population in the district were

aged 60 and above, and about 11.3% of the households were elderly households (i.e. all household members aged 60 and above), ranking sixth among the 18 districts and first in the New Territories. The number of single-parent households with income below the average Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) payment in Kwai Tsing was also relatively large as compared to other districts.

4. In 2008, the unemployment rate in Kwai Tsing was 5.0%, higher than the territorial figure of 3.6%. The educational attainment of the labour force (excluding foreign domestic helpers) in the district was relatively low, with only 23.7% having attained post-secondary education level (ranking the third lowest among all 18 districts) as compared to 32.1% in the whole territory.

Specific measures implemented

(i) Strengthening elderly services

5. Bureaux and departments concerned have implemented a number of new initiatives to enhance elderly services in the district:

- The Integrated Discharge Support Trial Programme for Elderly Patients was launched in Kwai Tsing in August 2008 to support elderly hospital dischargees who have difficulty taking care of themselves. Under the Programme, the “Discharge Planning Team” and the “Home Support Team”, set up by the Princess Margaret Hospital and the Po Leung Kuk respectively, work together to provide support services to elderly dischargees and their carers, including pre-discharge planning, transitional rehabilitation, home care, as well as carer training, with a view to minimising the risk of unplanned hospital re-admission and helping elders stay in the community. As at the end of 2009, the Programme had served about 3 400 elders and 4 200 carers in the district.
- The District-based Scheme on Carer Training (DSCT) was implemented through a District Elderly Community Centre (DECC) in Kwai Tsing in March 2009, to provide training on basic elderly caring skills and engage those who have completed training to provide carer services for elders in the district. It is expected that at least 60 carers will be trained by the end of February 2010. In April 2010, the Scheme will be further extended to Neighbourhood Elderly Centres

(NECs). A total of 10 NECs in the district will join the extended Scheme to train 600 additional carers in a year.

- In 2008, the five-year Home Environment Improvement Scheme for the Elderly (HEISE) was launched to help those elders who lived in dilapidated homes and lack financial means improve their home conditions. Under the Scheme, DECCs provide subsidy to eligible elderly households, up to \$5,000 per household, to help them purchase essential fittings or carry out home improvement works. So far, more than 1 100 applications from Kwai Tsing have been approved.
- In December 2008, an Enhanced Home and Community Care Service Team was set up to provide home care services to frail elders in New Territories West, including Kwai Tsing.

(ii) Enhancing family and children services

6. To better assist children from a disadvantaged background, including those from single-parent families, departments concerned have implemented a number of initiatives to provide them with more developmental opportunities:

- The Comprehensive Child Development Service (CCDS) was extended to Kwai Tsing in early 2009, aiming to identify and meet, at an early stage, the varied health and social needs of children aged 0-5 and those of their families.
- The pilot Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) was launched in October 2008 in Kwai Chung to provide more flexible forms of day care services for children aged below 6 to meet the needs of parents at neighbourhood level. From November 2008 to November 2009, a total of 668 children had been served.
- In 2009-10, the District Support Scheme for Children and Youth Development (DSSCYD) under the Social Welfare Department (SWD) launched nine developmental projects and provided cash assistance to eligible children and youth aged 0-24 in disadvantaged circumstances in Kwai Tsing to address their developmental needs, benefiting some 2 300 children and youth.

- In the 2009-10 school year, the School-based After-school Learning and Support (SALS) Programmes provided funding to 71 schools in Kwai Tsing to organise suitable activities for 16 800 disadvantaged students. In addition, the SALS Programmes sponsored 19 community-based projects serving about 4 900 students.

(iii) Providing more job opportunities and enhancing employment services

7. To address the relatively high unemployment rate and training needs of residents in Kwai Tsing, departments concerned have undertaken a number of measures, including:

- The Home Affairs Department has supported four social enterprise (SE) projects in Kwai Tsing¹ under the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership (ESR) Programme. These projects, covering businesses in retail and translation services, aimed at providing job opportunities for housewives from low-income families in Kwai Tsing. In addition, Kwai Tsing District Council (K&TDC) set up an SE Working Group in 2008 to promote the development of SEs in the district.
- The Labour Department (LD) organised three large-scale job fairs in the district in 2009, attracting some 9 300 job seekers. In addition, Kwai Tsing District Office (K&TDO) and the Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong jointly organised a Recruitment Day in the district in March 2009 for the 2009 Hong Kong Food Carnival. About 200 Kwai Tsing residents were employed.
- LD set up a Youth Employment Start centre in Kwai Fong in 2008 to provide one-stop and personalised advisory and support services on employment and self-employment to young people aged 15-29.
- SWD launched the Special Training and Enhancement Programme (My STEP) in Kwai Tsing in 2007 to provide more intensified employment assistance to unemployed youth on CSSA and helped 56 participants in the district

¹ Including a cross-district SE project.

secure employment or return to mainstream schooling. The new phase of My STEP, which commenced in October 2009, will assist 60 unemployed youth on CSSA in the district.

- In 2009, the Buildings Department, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Housing Society and the Urban Renewal Authority (URA), introduced a \$2 billion “Operation Building Bright” (OBB) project to provide one-stop assistance to help owners of old buildings carry out repair and maintenance works for the common areas of their buildings. The OBB aims to achieve the dual objective of improving building safety and the cityscape as well as creating more job opportunities for the construction sector. Up to early February 2010, there were 42 target buildings under the OBB in Kwai Tsing. Owners of these buildings would receive grants for relevant maintenance works.

(iv) Promoting local economy

8. The Chief Executive announced in his 2009-10 Policy Address a package of measures to encourage redevelopment and wholesale conversion of under-utilised or vacant industrial buildings. Currently, over 90% of the industrial buildings in Kwai Tsing (i.e. 198 buildings) meet the basic criteria for wholesale conversion under the new policy initiative. With effect from April 2010, owners of these industrial buildings may apply to the Lands Department for a special waiver to convert the entire building for other uses at a nil waiver fee. In addition, the Town Planning Board (TPB) has already rezoned many of the former industrial areas in the district for non-industrial uses. These measures will stimulate local economic activities by providing readily available land and premises at an affordable price, and help upgrade and regenerate the former industrial areas in the district.

9. In addition, K&TDC and K&TDO have supported district projects to promote local economic activities and create job opportunities. They include:

- A souvenir and coffee shop, operated by the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association, at Lantau Link View Platform which provides about 20 jobs for ex-mentally ill persons.

- A café in the Kwai Tsing Theatre, which creates over 10 job opportunities for local residents.

(v) Provision of more community facilities

10. A sports centre cum indoor heated swimming pool in Tsing Yi Area 4 is under planning. Moreover, since the introduction of the District Minor Works Programme (DMWP) in 2008, 54 projects have been proposed to improve existing leisure and recreational facilities or add new leisure venues in Kwai Tsing. Of these, 33 projects have been completed, 15 projects are under construction and six are under planning. K&TDO has also implemented eight projects to improve community halls/centres and five projects to improve or add sitting-out areas in Kwai Tsing.

(vi) Enhancing community support

11. Three working groups have been set up under the Community Affairs Committee of the K&TDC to enhance community support for persons with disabilities, the elderly, low-income families and the new arrivals in the district. Since 2008, K&TDC has approved 29 community involvement projects amounting to \$880,000 to enhance social support for the disadvantaged and encourage their participation in the district. SWD has also collaborated with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to implement various community projects, including visits to district facilities for the new arrivals and activities to promote social integration for persons with disabilities.

12. In 2009-10, SWD launched the District Caring and Support Trial Scheme (DCSTS) to support district projects implemented by NGOs and district organisations which can enhance support for local disadvantaged groups and strengthen the resilience and capacities of districts in the face of the financial tsunami. By the end of 2009, three projects amounting to \$830,000 had been implemented in Kwai Tsing, benefiting some 5 300 persons, including those from low-income or new arrival families, non-engaged youths, the middle-aged unemployed, the elderly, as well as the middle class affected by the economic downturn.

Sham Shui Po

District Profile

13. In 2008, there were 361 600 people from 126 300 households

living in Sham Shui Po. About 21% of the population in the district were aged 60 and above and about 15% of the households were elderly households, ranking second among all 18 districts. More than 37% of the residents (131 400 persons) lived in public rental housing. About 8 800 residents (2.4%), including 1 700 children, lived in rooms/bedspaces/cocklofts in private permanent housing. According to the 2006 Population By-census, about 5.7% of Sham Shui Po residents were new arrivals, ranking first among 18 districts.

14. In 2008, the unemployment rate in Sham Shui Po was 4.2%. The educational attainment of the labour force (excluding foreign domestic helpers) in the district was relatively low, with only 29.6% having attained post-secondary education level (ranking twelfth among all districts).

Specific measures implemented

(i) Strengthening elderly services

15. Having regard to the relatively high proportion of elders in the district, bureaux and departments concerned have strengthened elderly services:

- The DSCT was also implemented in Sham Shui Po through two DECCs and at least 120 carers will be trained by the end of February 2010. In April 2010, four NECs in Sham Shui Po will join the extended Scheme to train 240 additional carers in a year.
- Under the HEISE, more than 1 400 applications from Sham Shui Po have been approved.
- In March 2010, the Government will provide 20 additional day care places for the elderly in the district through in-situ expansion of a Day Care Centre for the Elderly in Sham Shui Po.
- In December 2008, an Enhanced Home and Community Care Service Team was set up to provide home care services to frail elders in West Kowloon, including Sham Shui Po.

- Since April 2008, 107 community involvement projects amounting to \$3.76 million have been approved by Sham Shui Po District Council (SSPDC) for elderly services, including language classes, hair-cutting services, health talks and interest classes.

(ii) Enhancing family and children services

16. To provide more social support to children from a disadvantaged background, departments concerned have undertaken the following measures:

- The pilot CCDS was launched in Sham Shui Po in 2005 to identify and meet, at an early stage, the varied health and social needs of children aged 0-5 and those of their families.
- The pilot NSCCP was also launched in Sham Shui Po in October 2008. From November 2008 to November 2009, 438 children had been served.
- In 2009-10, SWD's DSSCYD launched 12 developmental projects and provided cash assistance to eligible children and youth aged 0-24 in disadvantaged circumstance in Sham Shui Po, benefiting some 4 600 children and youth.
- Since 2008, 162 community involvement projects for youth services amounting to \$800,000 have been approved by the Hong Kong Jockey Club and SSPDC. They include voluntary services, cultural and arts training courses, sports training programmes, interest classes, seminars and national affairs studies.
- In the 2009-10 school year, the SALS Programmes had provided funding to 55 schools in Sham Shui Po to organise suitable activities for 11 400 disadvantaged students. In addition, the SALS Programmes sponsored 20 community-based projects serving about 3 700 students.
- Since 2005, the Sham Shui Po Schools Mentorship Scheme, jointly organised by the Sham Shui Po School Liaison Committee, Sham Shui Po District Office (SSPDO) and the Education Bureau, has recruited more than 200 secondary

students every year to serve as mentors of primary students, many of whom are new arrivals.

- In 2009-10, a child-care service scheme (童學園地) was sponsored by SSPDC. With the collaboration of NGOs, local schools, SWD and SSPDO, primary school students, many of whom from new arrivals families, were provided with after-school school-based programmes. In addition, SSPDC sponsored two familiarisation workshops organised to teach the new arrivals basic English language and introduce to them the culture and history of Hong Kong.

(iii) Providing more job opportunities and enhancing employment services

17. To provide more job opportunities and support to job seekers in the district, the following measures have been introduced by departments concerned:

- Nine SE projects under the ESR Programme, covering businesses in personal care, renovation and cleansing services, recycling and catering, are being carried out in Sham Shui Po². These projects help create employment opportunities for the disadvantaged and encourage them to be self-reliant.
- In October 2008, a pilot Training cum Employment Resource Centre (TERC) was set up in Cheung Sha Wan by the Employees Retraining Board to offer multi-faceted training and employment services to people in need. As at the end of 2009, the TERC had served more than 4 800 members, including about 460 persons who were provided with case management services to help them build up self-confidence and secure employment.
- Job fairs are organised by LD in Kowloon West Job Centre regularly. In addition, the SSPDC and a number of NGOs jointly organised two job fairs in Sham Shui Po in 2008 and 2009. Over 30 companies participated, offering over 2 400 vacancies for job-seekers.

² Including a cross-district SE project.

- The new phase of My STEP was extended to Sham Shui Po in October 2009, helping 40 unemployed youth on CSSA in the district.
- Since April 2008, four household service projects funded by SSPDC were launched through SEs in the district, creating over 200 jobs for the disadvantaged. Services provided under these projects include family cleansing, home renovation and training on the safe use of electrical appliances.
- Up to early February 2010, there were 253 target buildings under the OBB in Sham Shui Po. The owners of these buildings would receive grants for relevant maintenance works.

(iv) Promoting local economy

18. To promote local economy and create job opportunities, a number of measures and projects have been introduced in the district by bureaux and departments concerned:

- Opened in September 2008, the Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre (JCCAC) in Shek Kip Mei is a multi-disciplinary artists' centre to promote arts and culture in the community, and nurture creative arts talents for Hong Kong. The JCCAC provides 124 studio units at an affordable rent for artists and arts groups and runs a Black Box Theatre and two galleries for public hire. Various activities such as open studios, exhibitions, art stalls and guided tours are organised from time to time.
- Since 2002, the Chamber of Hong Kong Computer Industry and SSPDC have been co-organising the Hong Kong Computer Festival in Sham Shui Po to promote local economy and the image of Sham Shui Po as a hub for the retail of information technology-related products.
- TPB has rezoned all former industrial areas in Sham Shui Po for non-industrial uses. Moreover, over 76% of the industrial buildings in Sham Shui Po (i.e. 89 buildings) meet the basic criteria for wholesale conversion under the new

initiative for revitalising industrial buildings. These help stimulate local economic activities and regenerate the former industrial areas in Sham Shui Po.

- Three historic buildings in Sham Shui Po, namely Lai Chi Kok Hospital, North Kowloon Magistracy and Mei Ho House, have been awarded to three non-profit-making organisations for adaptive re-use through operating SEs under Batch I of the Revitalising Historic Buildings through Partnership Scheme. Apart from creating job opportunities at the district level, the Scheme will bring about a positive impact on the local economy.
- Property development at the West Rail Nam Cheong Station is scheduled to commence shortly. The SSPDC supports its early implementation as it will bring in new economic impetus and create more job opportunities for the district. It is estimated that about 3 000 jobs would be created during construction; whilst some 1 500 jobs would be required for management of the residential and commercial developments upon their completion.
- URA has commenced 10 redevelopment projects in Sham Shui Po. Special arrangement is being made to allow character shops to rent back shop spaces at the future development at market rent.

(v) Provision of more community facilities

19. A new community hall in Mei Foo is expected to be completed in June 2010. Moreover, since the introduction of the DMWP in 2008, 88 projects have been proposed for improvement of existing facilities or addition of new facilities in existing leisure and recreational venues, out of which 51 projects have been completed, 22 are under construction and 15 are under planning.

(vi) Enhancing community support

20. Thirteen community involvement projects amounting to \$100,000 have been approved by SSPDC for new arrival services, including visits and various workshops, since April 2008.

21. By the end of 2009, ten projects under DCSTS amounting to \$1.2 million had been implemented in Sham Shui Po, benefiting some 36 000 persons, including the disadvantaged, children living in low-income families, the elderly, new arrivals, as well as those affected by the economic adversity.

Performance of the community-based poverty indicators in Kwai Tsing and Sham Shui Po

22. Community-based poverty indicators suggest that the situation in Kwai Tsing and Sham Shui Po has generally improved over the years.

23. Between 2004 and 2008, an across-the-board improvement has been observed in all six community-based indicators for Kwai Tsing. Insofar as income is concerned, the number of households with income below average CSSA payment decreased from 21 700 in 2004 to 16 000 in 2008. Among these low-income households, the number of single-parent households with income below average CSSA payment also fell from 2 300 in 2004 to 1 900 in 2008. Over the same period, the median monthly household income and median monthly employment earnings increased from \$14,000 and \$9,000 to \$15,000 and \$9,500 respectively. The employment situation in Kwai Tsing has also improved. The number of unemployed persons and unemployment rate fell from 22 900 persons and 9.0% in 2004 to 13 300 persons and 5.0% in 2008 respectively. The proportion of workless households also decreased from 10.7% (14 800 households) in 2004 to 9.1% (13 500 households) in 2008.

24. As regards Sham Shui Po, five community-based indicators have shown improvement between 2004 and 2008. Insofar as income is concerned, the number of households with income below average CSSA payment decreased from 16 400 in 2004 to 13 100 in 2008. Among these low-income households, the number of single-parent households with income below average CSSA payment also fell from 1 700 in 2004 to 1 300 in 2008. Over the same period, the median monthly household income and median monthly employment earnings increased from \$12,000 to \$13,700 and from \$9,000 to \$10,100 respectively. Both the number of unemployed persons and unemployment rate registered decreases, from 13 100 persons to 7 600 persons and from 7.6% to 4.2% respectively.

Way Forward

25. We will continue to monitor the poverty situation of the individual districts through regular updating of the set of multi-dimensional poverty indicators. Bureaux and departments concerned will continue to adopt a district-based approach to address the special needs of districts.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Home Affairs Department
February 2010