

Refugee Concern Network

Social welfare provisions for REF/AS/CAT: Questions for LEGCO

Assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, and torture claimants (hereafter referred to as REF/AS/CAT) has increased over the past decade. In 2006 International Social Services (ISS-HK) was commissioned by the Social Welfare Department to manage the *Assistance In-Kind to Asylum Seekers and Torture Claimants* (ASTC) project. As of January 2012, ISS-HK extended the government-funded ASTC project to Hong Kong's refugee population.

The following concerning the welfare provisions made for REF/AS/CAT are respectfully submitted to LEGCO.

1. Adjustments to in-kind assistance to changes in the cost of living

- a. *Since 2006, the overall cost of living has increased in Hong Kong by 18%, and food and housing are two main drivers of headline inflation.¹ Please give the breakdowns on how monthly rental and food assistance packages to REF/AS/CAT have kept pace with the cost of living since that time.*

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Average Monthly Rental Price								
Value of monthly rental allowance – ADULT REF/AS/CAT								
Value of monthly rental allowance – CHILD REF/AS/CAT								
Food Price Index								
Value of monthly in-kind food assistance – ADULT REF/AS/CAT								
Value of monthly in-kind food assistance – CHILD REF/AS/CAT								

2. Coverage for additional housing costs

¹ According to information from the Census & Statistics Department (C&SD) website, the Composite Consumer Price Index in 2007 was 93.8, which rose to 110.3 in 2011, see: Table052: Consumer Price Indices, <http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/showtableexcel2.jsp?tableID=052>

a. *What measures does the Government take to ensure that housing assistance provided to beneficiaries covers the totality of the housing costs necessary to secure housing, such as housing deposit and property agency commission fees?*

- i.
- ii.
- iii.
- iv.

b. *Given Hong Kong's expensive property market, what factors does the Government use in its calculations to determine the housing assistance amount?*

- i.
- ii.
- iii.
- iv.

c. *How often is the amount and type of housing assistance re-evaluated to adjust to changes in market prices?*

_____ times annually/quarterly/other (explain other: _____)

d. *Both the housing and food allowances provided to REF/AS/CAT are in-kind forms of assistance, yet social security assistance provided to other vulnerable groups in Hong Kong are granted in the form of cash transfers. Have all alternatives been fully explored, and if so, what are the justifications for providing in-kind assistance versus cash transfers in terms of housing and food over other viable forms of assistance?*

Reasons:

- i.
- ii.
- iii.
- iv.

3. Acceptability, availability, accessibility and adequacy of food provided to REF/AS/CAT

a. *In 2006 monthly food allowance for a single person was HK\$ 900; the current monthly allowance is HK\$ 1000. That means there is increase of only HK\$ 100 from 2006 coming to 2012. How do you explain in regards to the inflation rate of food price? (Note: The monthly accommodation allowance in 2006 was HK\$ 1000 and now is HK\$ 1200.)*

b. *How many REF/AS/CAT have requested changes to their food program distribution based on medical need? How many REF/AS/CAT have been granted special food assistance given medical need?*

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Requested change	REF: AS: CAT:	REF: AS: CAT:	REF: AS: CAT:	REF: AS: CAT:	REF: AS: CAT:	REF: AS: CAT:	REF: AS: CAT:	REF: AS: CAT:
Granted special food assistance	REF: AS: CAT:	REF: AS: CAT:	REF: AS: CAT:	REF: AS: CAT:	REF: AS: CAT:	REF: AS: CAT:	REF: AS: CAT:	REF: AS: CAT:
Average waiting time for granting of request								

c. *How often is the list of foods available to REF/AS/CAT updated?*

_____ times annually/bi-annually /other (explain other: _____)

d. *What procedures are in place to ensure that the food stock options are sufficient to meet the needs corresponding to the cultural and/or religious traditions of recipients?*

e. *What quality control procedures exist to ensure that food is safe and suitable for consumption?*

f. *What oversight mechanisms are in place to monitor food distribution and collection, to regulate food contractors and supervise the pricing of food to reflect market prices?*

g. *Is there a formal complaint mechanism under the food distribution program for recipients to voice any grievances they may have?*

_____ Yes _____ No

a. *If no, give rationale.*

b. *If yes, what is the timeline for response?*

c. *What is the response process?*

i.

ii.

iii.

iv.

v.

d. *If yes, how do their common concerns inform the food assistance program?*