

(Translation)

(Submission from the Concern Group on the Future of
Community Development Services received on 5.11.98)

To: The Honourable CHAN Yuen-han, Chairman of Legislative Council
Panel on Welfare Services and
Members of Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services
via Clerk to the Panel

From: Concern Group on the Future of Community Development Services
under the Hong Kong Social Workers' General Union

Re: Request for the Panel on Welfare Services to follow-up on the
implementation of Integrated Neighbourhood Projects in Targeted Old
Urban Areas (INPs) at the meeting to be held on 9 November 1998

Latest Development of the Integrated Neighbourhood Projects (INPs)

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) is now proceeding with the plan of providing a new form of services, namely, the Integrated Neighbourhood Projects (INPs), in deprived old urban areas. Applications for the operation of the first six INPs closed on 2 November 1998. Two of the first six INPs are to be provided in Kowloon City, two in Sham Shui Po, and the other two in Tai Kok Tsui.

Having identified a lot of problems in the Brief on INPs (hereafter referred to as the Brief) attached to the application forms for the operation of INPs, we sent a letter to SWD to point out the identified problems. A copy of our letter to SWD is attached herewith for your easy reference. The major problems so identified can be summarized into the following points:

1. The definitions for service recipients are impracticable. Resources will be wasted in the screening work.

It is defined in the Brief that "New Arrivals" refer to those who arrive in Hong Kong from China and have been here for less than one year, while "Elderly" are those aged 65 or above. For Low Income Families, it refers to those families with their income lower than the recognized need under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme.

2. **An independent steering group has not been formed to oversee the implementation of INPs.**
3. **The monitoring mechanism cannot tie in with the evaluation mechanism.**
4. **The number of service areas is still limited to 12 only. It is also decided that INPs will not be provided in other old urban areas, such as Kwun Tong, Tsuen Wan, Wan Chai and Western District.**

We hold that INPs are not implemented in a manner that caters to the needs of the residents living in old urban areas. Some of the implementation details of INPs are unacceptable. If SWD insists that the implementation details of INPs are not subject to any modifications, the services for old urban areas will come to nothing.

In fact, some of the problems of INPs raised in the earlier meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services held on 27 July 1998. As it is learnt that your Panel will be holding a meeting on 9 November 1998, we write to request your Panel to follow-up on the progress of INPs. We hope that your Panel will endeavour to urge SWD to address our worries and concerns by re-defining the service recipients of INPs and addressing the problems relating to target areas and monitoring mechanism, so that our social welfare resources can be used to bring real benefits to the residents living in deprived old areas. We urge members of the Panel on Welfare Services to accede to our request.

Our letter to SWD and the Brief on INPs are attached for your reference. We will be most grateful if our representatives are given the opportunity to attend your Panel meeting to express our views. Please feel free to contact Mr YEUNG Wai-pong (楊偉邦) at 7905 5017 or Ms CHU Shuk-fan (朱淑芬) at 7220 9757 if you have any queries.

Thank you for your attention.

— END —

(Translation)

(Letter dated 2.11.98 from the Concern Group on the Future of
Community Development Services to the Social Welfare Department)

Concern Group on the Future of Community Development Services,
Hong Kong Social Workers' General Union
Flat B, 17/F,
Pak Lok Mansions,
322 Nathan Road,
Kowloon

2 November 1998

Mr Andrew LEUNG
Director of Social Welfare

Dear Mr LEUNG,

The Concern Group on the Future of Community Development Services under the Hong Kong Social Workers' General Union learns that your Department is planning to provide a new form of services, known as the Integrated Neighbourhood Projects (INPs), in deprived old urban areas, and that the first six INPs are now open for application by NGOs with the closing date for applications set for today, that is, 2 November 1998.

After thorough examination of the Brief on INPs (hereafter referred to as the Brief) attached to the application forms for the operation of INPs, we have identified a lot of problems therein. We therefore write to state our opinions and put forward some questions in connection with the implementation of INPs, in the hope that your Department can answer each and every question that we raise. We hold that before our worries are properly addressed, the implementation details as set out in the Brief should serve the purpose of reference only, and they should be revised in future.

Our Views and Questions Regarding the Implementation Details of INPs as Set Out in the Brief

1. The definitions for service recipients are impracticable.

It is defined in the Brief that "New Arrivals" refer to those who arrive in Hong Kong from China and have been here for less than one year, while "Elderly" are those aged 65 or above. For Low Income Families, it refers

to those families with their income lower than the recognized need under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme.

- (i) Are the definitions for the above three groups of service recipients too tight? Does it mean that those new arrivals who have been here for more than one year do not need to receive these services?
- (ii) The definition for low income families has a labelling effect. Is it the case that only those who are eligible for CSSA can receive INP services? Moreover, there are bound to be difficulties if such a criterion were to be put into effect. Does it mean that each and every service recipient in old urban areas has to be means-tested whenever they approach for our assistance?
- (iii) In selecting the targeted service areas at present, Professor Anthony YEH adopted eight criteria to determine the priorities of deprived neighbourhoods. These criteria include high concentrations of low income groups, elderly and new arrivals, poor living conditions, etc. Since it has been recognized that these districts should be accorded priority in receiving such services, why does your Department further tighten the criteria for service recipients? This is certainly not conducive to enhancing mutual help in the community, neither is it conducive to facilitating the integration of the vulnerable groups into the community. We could not understand and do not accept the above definitions.

2. An independent steering group has not been formed to oversee the implementation of INPs.

At the earlier meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services held on 27 July 1998, both your Department and the Honourable Members of the Legislative Council undertook to set up an independent steering group to oversee the implementation of INPs, including the delineation of target areas, the provision of services, the service recipients and the effectiveness of INPs, etc. However, the Brief has not mentioned that such an independent steering group would be set up. Has your Department forgotten to mention such a steering group in the Brief, or does it simply refuse to honour its pledge?

3. The monitoring mechanism cannot tie in with the evaluation mechanism.

It is specified in the Brief that annual inspection to examine the performance of subvented INPs will be conducted and failing which, the subvention may be terminated. However, the Brief does not point out the person or the party who will be responsible for conducting the annual inspection, neither does it mention the relationship between the monitoring mechanism and the evaluation mechanism. Will an INP be terminated before it has been evaluated?

While it is mentioned in the Brief that a review will be conducted by Professor Anthony YEH after the projects have commenced operation for 2.5 years, the Brief does not elaborate on the way in which the evaluation mechanism is to be set up. The Brief has also failed to give an account of the participation or otherwise of other persons in the evaluation exercise, the evaluation criteria and the subject areas to be included in the review.

We believe that those who work in the social welfare sector and the welfare agencies share the same concerns. It is hoped that your Department can give us a written reply within two weeks. For the sake of ensuring that the services provided in old urban areas can cater to the needs of the residents living in these areas, we would like to repeat our request that before our worries are properly addressed, the implementation details as set out in the Brief should serve the purpose of reference only, and they should be revised in future.

Thank you for your attention.

Concern Group on the Future of
Community Development Services under
the
Hong Kong Social Workers' General
Union

Brief on Integrated Neighbourhood Projects
in Targeted Old Urban Areas (INPs)

Introduction

1. Pursuant to the decision made by the Executive Council in its meeting on 21.7.98, Integrated Neighbourhood Projects in Targeted Old Urban Areas (INPs) operated by Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) would be introduced in old urban areas to strengthen the outreaching efforts of appropriate local service units run by NGOs to exclusively serve the target groups of New Arrivals, the Elderly and the Low Income Families.

Objectives of INPs

2. The objectives of the projects are:

- (i) strengthening outreaching efforts to the vulnerable groups of New Arrivals, the Elderly and Low Income Families in the target areas;
- (ii) introducing and assisting the vulnerable groups to obtain the available welfare/social services;
- (iii) enhancing linkage and interfacing through the well-established social support network to facilitate early integration of the vulnerable groups into the community;
- (iv) involving the vulnerable groups through community development programmes and services to develop self-help and mutual help abilities;
- (v) engaging and mobilising the vulnerable groups to participate in voluntary services;
and
- (vi) enhancing individual and family growth as well as civic responsibility.

Service Recipients

3. The service recipients of INP will be the vulnerable groups of New Arrivals, the Elderly and Low Income Families, particularly those who are not aware of and/or are unmotivated to receiving social or welfare services. New Arrivals refer to those who arrive in Hong Kong from China and have been here for less than 1 year while Elderly are those aged 65 or above. For Low Income Families, it refers to the families with their income lower than the recognised need under CSSA scheme.

Services to be Provided

4. Services to be provided include

- (i) outreaching to the target vulnerable groups of New Arrivals, the Elderly and Low Income Families in the target areas:
- (ii) providing necessary information on social or welfare services;
- (iii) making referral for social or welfare services;
- (iv) attracting and bringing the target vulnerable groups to join the available centre-based services and activities such as the supportive groups, educational programmes and life skill training etc. for integration with the mainstream services, and
- (v) promoting participation in voluntary community services and self-help programmes.

Population Size

5. The population for each project area is 15,000-25,000.

Areas of Service

6. Based on the recommendation of the Review Group, 12 targeted old urban areas have been identified. It is anticipated that 6 teams would commence operation in 98/99. For details of the 6 targeted areas, please refer to the

Comprehensive List of Welfare Premises and Services (5b/98).

Project Length

7. The service for a given area will initially be for a period of three years; thereafter the need for such service will be critically reviewed in the light of continuing need for such outreaching service for the target groups in the particular area.

Financial Provision

8. Each project shall be given a fixed provision of \$1.458 million (at 98/99 price level) a year. The service will be subvented under the “Lump Sum Grant” subvention mode.

Staffing Level

9. The applicant agencies can decide on the size of their teams flexibly, subject to agreement with SWD.

Criteria for Allocation

10. The service will be allocated to NGOs with priority consideration given to those NGOs

- (i) with the appropriate management and professional capability;
- (ii) relevant experience in operating community development services for vulnerable groups;
- (iii) networking ability to support the operation of INPs and familiarity with the local scene; and
- (iv) staff readily available to take up the projects.

11. The enhanced outreaching service will be based in an appropriate local service unit such as a Community Centre. It will be under the direct supervision of the Officer-in-charge of the appropriate service unit.

Allocation Mechanism

12. All NGOs can apply for the service. The proposed service plans, work approach, the service units to be based to operate the service, financial and staffing requirements, etc. shall be set out in the applications.

13. The Welfare Services Allocation Committee (WSAC) of SWD will decide on the allocation of service to individual NGOs on the basis of its existing selection criteria and the Subventions and Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee (SLFAC) will decide on the allocation of funds.

Monitoring Mechanism

14. The INPs will be subject to a specific Funding and Service Agreement, Service Quality Standards, performance indicators and output targets to be worked out by SWD with the NGO sector. Annual inspection and subvention worthiness exercise to examine the performance of the project and the service needs of the areas will be conducted on these projects, failing which the subvention may be terminated. The project teams are also required to submit half-yearly progress reports and quarterly statistical returns to SWD for monitoring purpose.

Evaluation Mechanism

15. The need for continuation of service in the targeted areas after 3 years will be hinged on the following areas:

(i) The targeted areas

Prof. Anthony YEH, Assistant Director of the Centre of Urban Planning & Environmental Management, HKU, will conduct a review of the six targeted areas after the projects have commenced operation for 2 1/2 years;

(ii) Provision of welfare services in the targeted areas

District staff of the Department would keep on updating the welfare

services provision in the targeted service areas;

(iii) Effectiveness of the project

The evaluation team of the Subvention Branch of the Department will evaluate the effectiveness of the project in consultation with the operating agencies. The effectiveness of the project will be measured by the indicators including the demographic profile of the service areas, the rate of the 3 categories of vulnerable groups in getting to know the available social and welfare services and the rate of the 3 categories of vulnerable groups in getting use of the social and welfare services.

Social Welfare Department

October 1998