

LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

**Subcommittee on review of the
Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme**

**Evaluation Study of the Intensive Employment Assistance Projects for
Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA)
and Near-CSSA Recipients**

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the evaluation study of the Intensive Employment Assistance Projects (IEAPs) for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) and Near-CSSA recipients.

BACKGROUND

2. As one of the intensified measures to strengthen the promotion of 'welfare-to-work' and 'self-reliance' in 2003, Social Welfare Department (SWD) secured \$200 million from the Lotteries Fund and the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust to commission non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to launch IEAPs for employable CSSA recipients and other near-CSSA recipients to assist them to remove work barriers, enhance their employability and get back to work through a range of activities such as job matching, job skills training, employment counselling and post-employment support. 'Temporary Financial Aid' was provided to needy participants to tide them over short-term financial hardship or to meet employment-related expenses. SWD's plan is to launch 105 projects over four years by three annual batches of 40, 30 and 35 from October 2003. Outcome-based performance indicators (Annex I) have been set to monitor the performance of each project.

TREND AND ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

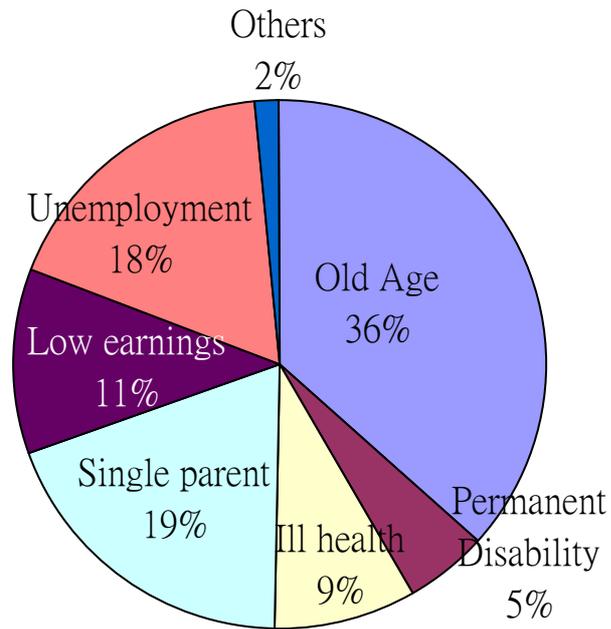
3. In the first implementation year (i.e. from October 2003 to October 2004), 40 projects were implemented involving over 6 000 participants. As at May 2005, a total of 70 IEAPs have been rolled out enrolling a total of 12 236 CSSA participants and 3 213 near-CSSA participants. 3 990 (32.6%) of the CSSA participants who have joined the projects could either get out of the CSSA net or reduce their dependence on CSSA as a result of having secured paid employment. Details are set out in the following table:

	Indicator	40 Projects (10/03-9/04)	70 Projects (10/04-4/05)	70 Projects (10/03-4/05)
1	No. of participants	6245 (40.4%)	9204 (59.6%)	15449
2	No. of CSSA participants	4778 (39%)	7458 (61%)	12236
3	No. of CSSA participants left CSSA net or changed unemployment status to CSSA 'low-earners' due to paid employment	1761 (44.1%)	2229 (55.9%)	3990
	• left CSSA net	625 (57.9%)	455 (42.1%)	1 080
	• changed status to CSSA 'low-earners'	1 136 (39%)	1 774 (61%)	2 910
4	No. of 'Near-CSSA' participants secured full-time employment	852 (53.2%)	749 (46.8%)	1601
5	No. of participants completed full range of activities	3657 (64.2%)	2038 (35.8%)	5695

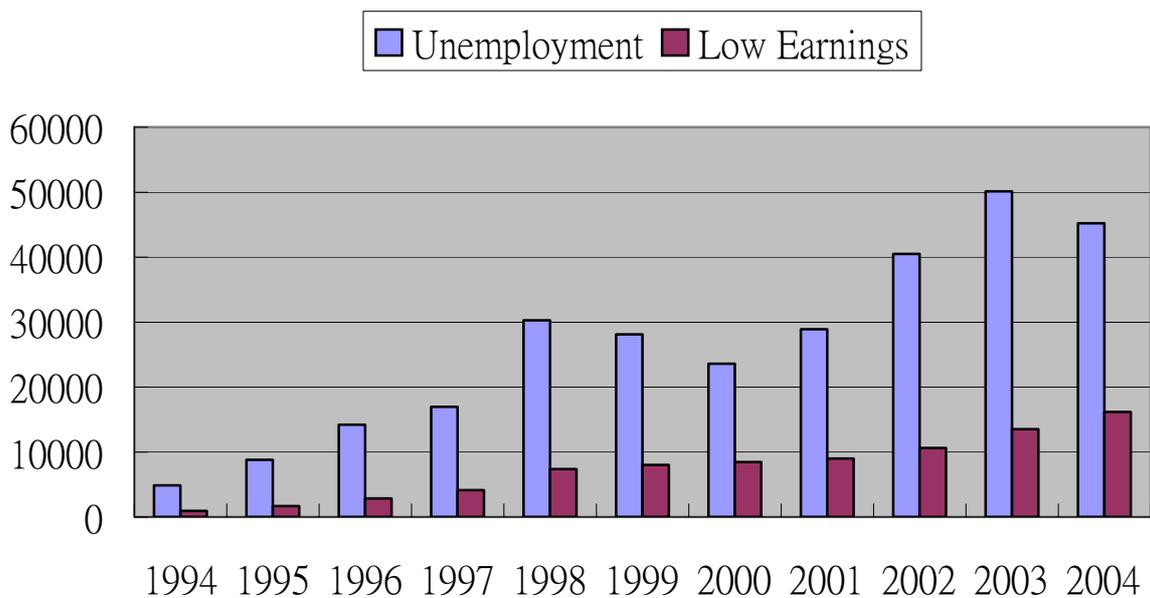
4. Overall, CSSA unemployment cases have increased over 9 times from 4 866 at the end of 1994 to 45 231 at the end of 2004, while the number of low earnings cases have increased 17 times from 947 to 16 176 during the same period. As at May 2005, 93 956 recipients¹ are in the unemployment category and 63 842 are in the low earnings category.

¹ A CSSA case may involve more than one recipient as CSSA is paid on a household basis.

CSSA Recipients by Case Nature



Unemployment and Low Earnings CSSA Caseload, 1994-2004



EVALUATION STUDY ON IEAPS

Objective

5. To evaluate the effectiveness and suggest measures to improve the implementations of the IEAPs, SWD has commissioned a research team from the Chinese University of Hong Kong to conduct a qualitative evaluation study of the IEAPs. The team has also been tasked to look into other Support-for-self-reliance (SFS) measures including the Active Employment Assistance (AEA) Programme, Community Work (CW) Programme and Disregarded Earnings (DE) that are intended to enhance the capacity/incentive to work among people receiving CSSA and likely to receive CSSA.

6. The objectives of the Study are as follows:

- (i) To evaluate the progress, including the success to date of the IEAPs against the benchmarks of the targets originally set for the programme;
- (ii) To analyse the success factors of the IEAPs and advise on any possible measures to improve the success rate and to advise whether there is a need to revise the benchmarks, drawing reference from similar overseas programmes;
- (iii) To advise on what measures, if any, might be taken to strengthen the IEAPs in this respect;
- (iv) To consider and advise to what extent, if any, the IEAPs might be used and developed to offer enhanced assistance to:
 - (a) single parents receiving CSSA taking into account also the findings of the evaluation of the Ending Exclusion Project; and
 - (b) long-term unemployed CSSA recipients (defined as those who have joined the SFS Scheme for no less than 12 months);
- (v) To evaluate the impact of DE on welfare dependency; and
- (vi) To advise on measures to help participants achieve self-reliance without resorting to CSSA, and also to make

long-term improvements to their potential and social development capacity, taking into account previous studies and data, other ongoing employment assistance programmes and measures (e.g. DE).

DATA COLLECTION

7. To ensure that the Study is objective and comprehensive, 14 target groups (Annex II) were identified comprising CSSA recipients, ex-CSSA recipients, low income people not on CSSA, and service practitioners. The data were collected through survey interviews, in-depth interviews and focus groups during the period from September 2004 to April 2005.

KEY FINDINGS

8. The study is near completion and the findings to date are summed up below :

(i) Impacts of IEAPs

Compared with other non-IEAP participants or CSSA recipients, IEAP and ex-IEAP participants were generally higher in self-reliance and less inclined to depend on CSSA. They were more motivated to find jobs and possessed higher human and social capital. The more help and satisfaction a participant derived from the IEAP, the more the participant's commitment to self-reliance and work improved.

(ii) Success factors of IEAPs

IEAP participants who received temporary financial assistance (TFA) were more supportive of self-reliance and they regarded traveling expenses as less of an obstacle to employment. Besides, certain services provided by NGOs such as counselling related/not directly related to employment, job seeking skill training and other training not directly related to employment, as well as post-employment support had positive impacts on participants' motivation and commitment to work.

(iii) Acceptance of requiring CSSA single parent recipients with youngest child below 15 to work

In general, both the low-income persons and service practitioners regarded requirements for CSSA single parents to work as modestly to rather reasonable.

(iv) Impact of DE

The initial finding was that DE did not significantly increase low-income people's motivation to work, self-reliance and willingness to exit from CSSA. The effectiveness of DE is in need of further verification.

(v) Impact of CW Programme

Participation in CW Programme did not have the effect of encouraging job-seeking but had a deterrent effect on those who prefer to leave CSSA upon the arrangement of CW. The effectiveness of the CW Programme is in need of further investigation, principally because the sample of potential CW participants and ex-CSSA persons surveyed was not large enough for adequate analysis.

(vi) Impact of time limiting CSSA

CSSA recipients who had received CSSA for a shorter time were generally more supportive of self-reliance while those who had received CSSA for a longer time tended to be more inclined to depend on assistance in future. Owing to the lack of direct evidence on the impact of time limiting CSSA since the time limit policy has not been in place, further investigation is needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. There are 10 main areas of recommendations as follows:

(i) Funding for IEAPs continuously

To continue the tripartite (government, private and NGOs) co-operation of IEAPs for an extended period in response to changing economic conditions in Hong Kong, with the following services strengthened:

- (a) administration of TFA;
 - (b) counselling not related to employment (e.g. personal and family life);
 - (c) job-seeking skills training;
 - (d) training not directly related to employment (e.g. social skills), and
 - (e) post-employment support.
- (ii) Improving the IEAPs

To better IEAPs in the following aspects:

- (a) the IEAPs should be flexible enough to adjust to changes required due to expected changing conditions of the economy;
- (b) restructured job-skill training to meet the expected increasing demand for service and tourist jobs;
- (c) matching jobs according to assessments of participants' conditions;
- (d) improved job attachment services;
- (e) NGOs be prepared for rigorous evaluation and review so that their participants are accessible for research purposes;
- (f) intermediate goals of development such as promoting service satisfaction, raising job skills, and building up supportive friendships be targeted.

(iii) Requiring CSSA single parent recipients with youngest child below 15 to work²

To introduce requirements for CSSA single-parent recipients with youngest child preferably aged six or above to work and suggested having a pilot project to assist CSSA single parent recipients to work.

(iv) Further review on arrangement of DE

To promote CSSA recipients' knowledge about DE, and make alternative arrangements for DE.

(v) Improving the CW Programme

To better the CW Programme by introducing training and counselling elements to lower participants' hesitation about work, and lengthen the frequency and duration of the long-term CSSA recipients' participation.

(vi) Reviewing CSSA Programme for the Able-bodied

- (a) To further examine the feasibility, effectiveness and possible implications of imposing time limits for receiving CSSA.
- (b) To tighten the regulations on able-bodied long-term CSSA recipients including requiring them to find jobs actively; requiring them to take up jobs created in government and NGOs sectors; enhancing their employability and self-reliance through training and counseling; and imposing sanctions if they violate the requirements.

(vii) Enhancing AEA Programme

To continue providing job information and imposing sanctions to encourage able-bodied CSSA recipients to take up employment. It was also suggested that the AEA Programme should be enhanced by incorporating the good practices of IEAPs like employment counselling and post-employment support to facilitate job-seeking.

² A proposal has been put forward by the Administration and is being considered in the light of comments received.

(viii) Adjusting welfare policy to changing economy

To synchronize the welfare policy with the needs of the growing and restructuring economy so as to facilitate the employment of CSSA recipients in the burgeoning service sectors like the tourist industry.

(ix) Supporting programme integration

To integrate the programme with the work of the Commission on Poverty, Community Investment and Inclusion Fund and Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged for funding support for building social capital to help promote CSSA recipients' and low income people's motivation to work and self-reliance.

(x) Adoption of social investment approach

To adopt the social investment approach to promote the capabilities of individuals, families and community through tripartite partnerships to relieve the burden on welfare.

CONCLUSION

10. The Administration is now studying the recommendations made by the research team and will draw up a response later on. In the meantime, Members may wish to note that:

- (a) review of DE is being conducted. We aim to complete this within 2005;
- (b) two pilot projects to enhance the CW Programme to make it more interesting and beneficial to participants are being implemented. These two projects are the Community Work Experience Training Programme and the Mosaic Public Art Project run by the Hong Kong Employment Development Service Limited and the Hong Kong Youth Arts Festival Association Limited respectively; and

- (c) there has been recent community discussion on the possibility of setting a time-limit on CSSA entitlement for able-bodied recipients, taking into account the steady increase in the median stay on CSSA of unemployed recipients from 1.9 years of three years ago, to 2.6 years at end of 2004-05. We will take into account these views when we formulate the way forward.

11. Members are invited to note and comment on the findings of the evaluation study.

**Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Social Welfare Department
June 2005**

Performance Standards of IEAPs

The minimum performance standards for each project per implementation year:

- (i) Render service to no fewer than 100 participants of whom at least 70% must be CSSA participants

- (ii) Assist at least 63 CSSA participants to complete the range of activities organized

- (iii) Assist at least 28 CSSA and 12 Near-CSSA participants to take up full-time employment

- (iv) Assist at least 21 CSSA participants to sustain full-time paid employment for at least three months with their status changed to either 'off CSSA' or 'CSSA low-earners'

Sampling Groups identified for the Survey

Sample	Target	Number
1	Participants in IEAPs	473
2	Ex-participants in IEAPs	118
3	Single parents receiving CSSA	214
4	Long-term unemployed CSSA recipients	154
5	Intermittent CSSA recipients	55
6	Participants in the CW Programme	227
7	Low-earnings CSSA recipients	84
8	Ex-CSSA unemployed / low-earners	165
9	Low-income single parents who are not CSSA recipients	51
10	Other low-income people who are not CSSA recipients	241
11	Practitioners of IEAPs	81
12	Practitioners of AEA Programme	50
13	Practitioners of CW Programme	48
14	Practitioners handling CSSA single parent cases	41
TOTAL		2002