

SOCIETY FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

香港社區組織協會

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Dr. Hou Fernando Cheung Chiu-hung
Chairman
Panel on Welfare Services
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
By fax: 2537 1851

29 March 2006

Dear Dr. Cheung,

Urgent meeting about welfare for asylum seekers

SoCO would like to invite the Panel on Welfare Services to an urgent meeting about the funding cuts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The UNHCR plans to cut funding by 1 May 2006 to those who are currently receiving welfare, including women, children, mentally ill, people with specific diseases and unaccompanied minors. At present the government does not provide any financial assistance to them and we would like to discuss with you the possibilities of solution to the problem. In fact it is not only the vulnerable groups who suffer, all along other asylum seekers, like single men or parents to children have not received any financial support from the UNHCR. The government's stand still seems to be that financial assistance will not be given.

There are currently 1,246 asylum seekers and 117 refugees in Hong Kong. Among the asylum seekers there are 52 children and among the refugees 21 children.

The cases that currently receive funding, and whom will be cut include: 15 families with young children, 2 single females, 10 persons with medical problems, 4 persons with sexual/gender based violence claims, 7 persons with mental health problems and 20 unaccompanied minors. A solution to both these vulnerable groups and street sleepers and other asylum seekers is highly important.

According to the UNHCR HK\$ 2,140,000 were spent on the vulnerable groups from Jan 2005 to February 2006 which include food, accommodation, medical care and transportation. The UNHCR has estimated that if *all* asylum seekers should be assisted the budget would be HK\$ 40,930,000 for 2006. We fear that if a solution is not found through the government within short time, the vulnerable groups will end up in the streets by 1 May 2006.

For queries, please do not hesitate to contact Miss Annie Lin, community organizer, on tel: 2713 9165 or by fax: 2761 3326.

Yours sincerely,



HO, Hei-wah
Director
Society for Community Organization

