

For discussion on  
15 March 2012

**Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs**  
**Implementation of Measures to Address Gambling-related Problems**

**Purpose**

This paper gives Members an update on the progress of measures implemented to address gambling-related problems.

**The Ping Wo Fund**

2. The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) established the Ping Wo Fund (the Fund) in September 2003 to finance preventive and remedial measures to address gambling-related problems. The main objects of the Fund are to finance the following measures -

- (a) research and studies into problems and issues relating to gambling;
- (b) public education and other measures to prevent or alleviate problems relating to gambling; and
- (c) counselling, treatment and other remedial or support services for problem and pathological gamblers and those affected by them.

3. The use and application of the Fund are determined by the Secretary for Home Affairs Incorporated (SHAI) as the Trustee of the Fund. The Ping Wo Fund Advisory Committee (PWFAC) was set up in September 2003 to advise the SHAI on policies and procedures governing the operation of the Fund.

**Progress of Measures**

4. Various preventive and remedial measures financed by the Fund have been implemented to address gambling-related problems. Major work undertaken is highlighted in paragraphs 5 to 19 below.

### *Research on gambling-related issues*

5. In May 2011, the PolyU Technology and Consultancy Company Limited was commissioned to conduct a Study on Hong Kong People's Participation in Gambling Activities (the Study). Through a telephone survey, a self-administered questionnaire survey, focus group discussions and individual interviews, the Study aimed to gauge the gambling behaviour of Hong Kong people; the prevalence of problem and pathological gambling in Hong Kong; and the general public's knowledge and perception towards the efforts by the Fund in preventing and alleviating gambling-related problems.

6. On the advice of the PWFAC, the final report of the Study has been accepted by the Government and the findings of the Study were released on 8 March 2012. The report of the Study has been uploaded onto the website of HAB. The Executive Summary of the report is at **Annex**.

7. The Study revealed that around 62% of the respondents took part in gambling activities in the past year, which showed a significant drop as compared with the results of similar studies conducted previously. Mark Six lottery was the most popular gambling activity in Hong Kong. The prevalence rates of possible problem gamblers and possible pathological gamblers had also slightly dropped, standing at 1.9% and 1.4% respectively.

8. Among the younger generation, the prevalence rates of both possible problem gamblers and possible pathological gamblers had increased slightly as compared with those recorded in the previous study. Less than half of the young respondents first took part in gambling before the age of 18, and the most popular gambling activities among them were those of social gambling such as mahjong and poker.

9. In consultation with the PWFAC and taking into account the findings of the Study, we will continue to devise appropriate strategies to address gambling-related problems in the community.

### *TV docu-drama series for preventing gambling-related problems*

10. PWFAC has commissioned the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) to produce a new TV docu-drama series "A House of Gamblers" (the drama series) for 2012. The drama series are adapted from real-life stories, with an aim to educate the general public of the negative impact of excessive gambling. In view of the large proportion of young people

experiencing social gambling before the age of 18 as revealed in the Study, some episodes of the drama series will feature young characters who are addicted to gambling in order to enhance the impact on young viewers.

11. Announcement of the new drama series was made at a press conference on 8 March 2012 and the programme will be broadcast on a free TV channel from 11 March to 29 April 2012. Posters and souvenirs publicising the drama series have been distributed to the community, in particular to schools to enhance students' awareness of the negative impact of gambling.

*New Announcement in the Public Interest (API)*

12. The Study revealed that spending on casino betting among the general public had been increasing over the past few years, and most of the respondents considered that TV advertisement was an effective means to disseminate anti-gambling messages. In this connection, a new API was produced in early 2012. One of the key messages of the new API was to educate the general public that they should resist temptations to gamble at casinos. The new API has been broadcast starting from early March 2012.

*Sponsorship to non-government organisations and schools*

13. PWFAC has launched the Ping Wo Fund Sponsorship Scheme (the Sponsorship Scheme) and the Ping Wo Fund School Project Grants (the School Project Grants) since 2009 and 2010 respectively. The former provides sponsorship to non-government organisations to conduct public education programmes and activities, whereas the latter provides sponsorship to schools to organise education activities on prevention or alleviation of gambling-related problems among students.

14. The Sponsorship Scheme and the School Project Grants have provided around \$6.5 million of funding support to 31 projects and around \$150,000 of funding support to 64 projects respectively since their implementation.

*Counselling and treatment services for problem and pathological gamblers*

15. With funding support from the Fund, Caritas-Hong Kong, Tung Wah Group of Hospital, Zion Social Services Limited and Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service each operates a counselling and treatment centre

for problem and pathological gamblers. The former two centres, located in Tsuen Wan and Wan Chai respectively, commenced operation in 2003. The latter two, located in Kwun Tong and Tai Po, commenced operation in 2007 and 2010 respectively. With effect from 2010, the total annual funding provided to the four centres has been raised to \$11 million.

16. The four centres provide specialised counselling and treatment services for problem and pathological gamblers and their family members. The four centres also provide training programmes to help professionals build up expertise in assisting problem and pathological gamblers. Education programmes are also organised for the general public on how to prevent and cope with gambling-related problems. Furthermore, a Gambling Counselling Hotline (183 4633) operated by the four centres and supported by the Fund was established in 2003 to provide immediate assistance to gamblers and their family members who may be looking for guidance.

17. From January to December 2011, the four centres had received a total of 8 003 calls which required telephone counselling or follow-up actions and 1 313 new cases which required face-to-face counselling or other referral services. The four centres had organised 124 staff and professional training sessions and 104 school education programmes attended by 20 618 people.

18. According to the findings of the Study, over 60% of the respondents who had used the services provided by the four centres considered that the centres could help them solve their gambling-related problems. The findings had confirmed the effectiveness of the counselling and treatment services provided by the four centres. We will take into account the findings of the Study and seek the advice of the PWFAC on the way forward for further improving our support to the operation of the four centres.

#### *Public education campaigns for preventing gambling-related problems*

19. Ongoing public education campaigns will continue to be arranged to educate the general public, in particular young people, to stay away from gambling. For instance, the Fund commissioned RTHK to organise territory-wide public education campaigns over the past few years to arouse the awareness of school students and young people of the negative impact of gambling. A series of activities were held under the campaigns, e.g. mascot design competition, API design competition and inter-school football matches, etc.

## **Advice Sought**

20. We will continue to make ongoing efforts to review, improve and implement measures to tackle gambling-related problems, and consult the PWFAC and other stakeholders from time to time. Members are invited to note the efforts of the Administration and the PWFAC to address gambling-related problems.

Home Affairs Bureau

March 2012

## **The Study on Hong Kong People's Participation in Gambling Activities (2011)**

### **Executive Summary**

As a consecutive gambling study after the one commenced in 2008<sup>1</sup>, the Secretary for Home Affairs Incorporated (SHAI)<sup>2</sup> has again commissioned The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU)<sup>3</sup> to conduct another study on the gambling behaviours of Hong Kong people, with an emphasis on exploring the risk factors of problem and pathological gambling, the public awareness and perceptions of the Ping Wo Fund, the Counselling and Treatment Centres and their related efforts, and the general prevalence and gambling trends of the general public in Hong Kong. This report is mainly divided into four parts: 1) telephone survey for the general public, 2) youth study, 3) focus groups and in-depth interviews with the general public and problem and pathological gamblers (PP gamblers), and 4) with conclusions and recommendations at the end. The descriptions and major findings of the chapters are as follows:

#### **1) Quantitative Study: Summary of results from the telephone interview for the general public aged 15-64**

The sample size of the quantitative study was N = 2,024 respondents of the general public, which was generated from a modified random digit dialing technique. Major findings include the following:

- Around 62% of the respondents took part in gambling activities in the past year, which showed a significant drop as compared to the 2008 Study.
- Mark Six lottery remained as the most popular gambling activity in Hong Kong, followed by social gambling, horse racing, betting in Macau casinos and football betting.
- The average monthly expenditure on horse racing, betting in Macau casinos and Mark Six lottery all increased as compared to the 2008 Study.
- There was a decrease in monthly expenditure on football betting.
- Only 0.3% of the respondents had participated in illegal gambling activities in the past year.
- The prevalence rates of possible problem and possible pathological gamblers were 1.9% and 1.4% respectively, which were lower than those in the 2008 Study.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2008, the Secretary for Home Affairs Incorporated commissioned the Department of Applied Social Sciences of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University to conduct an evaluation study on the impact of gambling liberalization in nearby cities on Hong Kong peoples' participation in gambling activities and the development of counselling and treatment services in Hong Kong for problem gamblers.

<sup>2</sup> SHAI is the trustee of the Ping Wo Fund.

<sup>3</sup> The SHAI has commissioned the PolyU Technology and Consultancy Company Limited to conduct this study. The academic staff members of PolyU carried out the research work.

- Gamblers who had taken part in horse racing, football betting and gambling activities in Macau casinos bore the highest chance of becoming problem or pathological gamblers.
- More than 60% of the respondents indicated that they would seek help from Counselling and Treatment Centres for themselves and their families if in need, while only around 36% of the possible PP gamblers were ready to do so if in need.
- Respondents were in general quite aware of the anti-gambling measures and resources provided by the Ping Wo Fund.
- Around 76% of the respondents had heard of the Gambling Counselling Hotline, and about half of the respondents had heard of the Counselling and Treatment Centres designated for PP gamblers and their families. 98% of the respondents had heard of the Government's slogans on anti-excessive gambling, but only 6.9% of the respondents had heard of the Ping Wo Fund and less than 5% of the respondents had participated in activities in relation to the prevention of gambling-related problems.

**2) Quantitative Study: Summary of results from the youth survey on concurrent Form I to Form VI students, and those studying in Vocational Training Colleges**

The sampling frame for this targeted population was all the secondary schools in Hong Kong and Vocational Training Colleges. Stratified cluster random sampling was adopted. 21 secondary schools were included in the sample (3 from Hong Kong Island, 9 from Kowloon and 9 from the New Territories) with a total of 3,991 returned and valid questionnaires, and with an additional 645 valid questionnaires from the Vocational Training Colleges. Since the main target of this study was the underage, respondents at or over 19 were excluded from the analysis and the sample size became 3,982. Major findings include the followings:

- The prevalence rates of possible problem and possible pathological gamblers among the youth were 1.4% and 1.8% respectively, both of which increased slightly as compared to those of the previous study.
- The most popular gambling activity was social gambling, which included poker and mahjong.
- 40.4% of the respondents had participated in gambling in their lifetime.
- Among those underage who had participated in gambling in their life time, 37.5% of them first took part in gambling in the early ages between 10 and 13 years old, and another 27.9% of them first took part in gambling at an age below 10.
- Only an extremely small proportion of respondents took part in illegal gambling.
- Around 80% of the young respondents indicated that they participated in gambling for the first time under the influence of family members, friends or classmates.
- Comparing with non-gamblers and non-problem gamblers, possible PP gamblers tended to have negative emotional states, deviant behaviours, as well as lower level of satisfaction with their relationship with parents and teachers.
- Underage having characteristics including poor academic performance; higher participation in football betting, poker, and illegal gambling; had higher personal monthly disposable money; had lower family income, and being male would have a higher probability of being a problem or pathological gambler.

- The most popular service was the Gambling Counselling Hotline since about 60% of the respondents had heard about it. 26% of them knew about the Counselling and Treatment Centres, but the majority did not know what kinds of services were provided by these centres.
- 6.8% of the respondents had sought help from the Gambling Counselling Hotline or Counselling and Treatment Centres, and about 41% of the respondents would use these services in case gambling problems happened.
- Among those who had used the services (either by themselves or their family members) provided by the Counselling and Treatment Centres or the Gambling Counselling Hotline, around 65% of them reported that the services could help them to solve the problem to a large extent or absolutely.
- Most of the underage would seek help from their family members (71.0%) and schoolmates (45.8%) if in need.
- 22.2% of the respondents had participated in different kinds of anti-gambling activities offered mostly by schools.
- In terms of media channels, the main channels of obtaining gambling information were from the Internet, printed media and TV.

**3) Qualitative study: Summary of results from the focus groups with the general public and in-depth individual interviews with PP gamblers**

10 individual and 6 focus group interviews were conducted in July and August, 2011. The in-depth individual interviews consisted of 4 problem gamblers and 6 pathological gamblers of ages ranging from 38 to 64, and the focus group interviews involving a total of 38 respondents from the general public were divided into 6 groups, with each group having 6-8 persons aging 13 or above. All the respondents were referred by the four Counselling and Treatment Centres supported by the Ping Wo Fund, namely: the Caritas Addicted Gamblers Counselling Centre, the Even Centre of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, the Yuk Lai Hin of the Zion Social Service, and the Sunshine Lutheran Centre.

Major findings of the in-depth individual interviews with PP gamblers on risk factors, gambling behaviours and perceptions of gambling include the followings:

- PP gamblers exhibited positive perceptions towards gambling, such as gambling expectancy, viewing it as a form of social activity, treating it as a career and a source of income.
- They also possessed erroneous gambling beliefs such as interpretive bias and the illusion of control, which caused them to be over confident, to believe in supernatural powers in governing the winning chance of the games, as well as other forms of control.
- The above led them carry out irrational gambling behaviours such as chasing.
- They were unaware of their addicted state which was accompanied by a sense of losing self-control.
- The factor of an early win might provoke gambling behaviours and addiction later in life.
- The PP gamblers often exhibited a personality that sought sensation, engaging them in stimulating activities and having a low toleration in boredom.
- Some of them had strong affiliation needs; they liked to be accompanied by others.
- They tended to have no stand point and in the early stage of gambling, they held



neutral views towards gambling and could be easily influenced by others to participate in gambling. These influences might stem from friends, relatives, colleagues from the work setting, or even from the family members.

- The need for social acceptance, recognition from peers and colleagues, and family bonding; the lack of parental guidance, and as an escape from the disharmony in the home environment were factors provoking the PP gamblers to gamble on a frequent basis.
- Environmental factors such as stress derived from work, the easiness of getting loans and credits from cards, the increased availability and accessibility of gambling activities were other factors provoking the PP gamblers to gamble on a frequent basis.

Major findings of the focus group interviews with the general public and in-depth individual interviews with the PP gamblers on the Ping Wo Fund and its preventive and remedial measures to tackle gambling include the following:

- The four Counselling and Treatment Centres served as a remedial platform for the PP gamblers; they viewed the Centres as an important asset to their well being.
- The Centres were also a place to bond for the PP gamblers.
- The PP gamblers felt a sense of belonging and were able to rip benefits through mutual learning such as insights on overcoming the addiction, factors that triggered them back to gambling, and other potential threats to give up treatment.
- A sense of satisfaction in the PP gamblers could be achieved as they helped others in overcoming gambling addiction.
- The importance of the Ping Wo Fund and the four Counselling and Treatment Centres were acknowledged by all the respondents.
- The treatments were effective in terms of changing the PP gambler's perceptions, beliefs, values, and ultimately the attitude of gambling, which was accompanied by personal growth and progressive resilience from gambling addiction.
- There was a lack of awareness of the Ping Wo Fund among the general public – only 2 out of 38 respondents of the focus group showed knowledge of the Fund.
- Most respondents in the focus group did not acknowledge the existence of the centres. Even among those who did, they had little knowledge of the services provided there.
- The majority of the respondents of the focus group had heard of the Gambling Counselling Hotline.
- The limited funding also led to a limited range of services available for the help-seeking gamblers at the centres.
- The respondents were more inclined to remember TV adverts that were interesting, funny, informative (of the negative gambling consequences) and thought stimulating, and “賭到眾叛親離” was a good example possessing these qualities.
- Ex-gamblers should be involved in anti-gambling efforts of the Government and the Ping Wo Fund for more impacting effects.

#### **4) Conclusions and recommendations**

Conclusions are drawn and recommendations are formulated in Chapter 6 accordingly to improve the preventive and remedial measures of the Ping Wo Fund and the efforts by the Government. Recommendations include: rectify the wrong perceptions on

gambling among the general public, especially among the underage, through education and other preventive measures; impose stringent measures to tackle illegal gambling; conduct review on the gambling policy as and when necessary having regard to the changes in gambling situation in Hong Kong; monitor and evaluate the gambling prevalence rate and its impact; provide short-term funding for outreaching campaigns to the Counselling and Treatment Centres; and the Hong Kong Jockey Club should introduce more measures on responsible gambling to minimize the harm of gambling.