

THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

Response to SWAC's Invitation for Submission on Long Term Social Welfare Planning for Hong Kong

BACKGROUND

1. The Chief Executive in his last Election Platform agreed to study the long-term development planning for social welfare in Hong Kong, and has tasked the Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) to lead the exercise. SWAC issued an invitation for written submissions to all NGOs (subvented and non-subvented), social workers' organisations and self-help / users groups, to collect initial public views and has promised to organize consultation sessions for various stakeholders beginning the 3rd quarter of 2008.
2. In response to the invitation, the Council has organized an open forum on 2nd June, summary of the discussion, including views of key speakers like Prof, Nelson Chow could be found in the Council's website: http://www.hkcss.org.hk/LTWP/index_c.htm.
3. The following paper is drafted based on the wide consultation with the sector since 2004, encompassing the views revised in the latest forum on developing a blueprint for our welfare system, that identifies the "*core values*" that underpin our welfare services, "*addresses social issues at a strategic and holistic manner*" and proposes a "*more macro, forward-looking planning mechanism*" that can strengthen collaborative efforts to steer our social welfare development in the longer term.
4. This paper also includes recommendations to SWAC on the engagement process in planning the consultation sessions with the sector.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE LONG-TERM SOCIAL WELFARE PLANNING

5. The Long-term Social Welfare Plan should state clearly the policy objectives of social welfare, the key strategies of planning, resourcing, delivering and monitoring to meet social needs. It should be reviewed regularly so as to ensure a holistic approach in responding to the rapid social changes.
6. The scope of Long-term Social Welfare Planning should include:
 - Mission, vision and value statements
 - Strategies for overall service planning, development and delivery in meeting social needs
 - Overall resource policies (funding mechanisms, human resources, premises development)
 - Policy objectives of key programme areas (family and child care, elderly, children and youth, community development, rehabilitation and social security)

PUTTING SOCIAL WELFARE PLANNING IN CONTEXT

7. The challenges for Social Welfare in Hong Kong is to deal with complex political, social and economic consequences arising from the following:

7.1 Economic Restructuring

- ***Job and Income Insecurity*** The new mode of business operation due to technological advancement and globalization causes structural job displacement. Jobs are no longer stable and secure for all levels. Life long careers is replaced by casual and contract jobs. Fast and continuous changes in job market warrant quick alignment of job skills and retraining of workers.
- ***Poverty and Disparities of Wealth*** The number of people earning low wages is rising and the disparities between the wealthy and the poor is at its greatest. Poverty will continue to be a critical problem facing the significant population mass.
- ***Increasing Competition and Decreasing Life Chances*** For a long time, people believed that one could succeed if he/she tried hard enough. However, this belief is being challenged in this generation. Disadvantaged groups are at considerable risk under increasing competition, impairing their chances of improving their lot.

7.2 Social Changes

- ***Ageing and Radically Changing Population Structure*** The trend of ageing of the population is accelerating with the ageing of the baby-boom generation. In addition, the new arrivals from the Mainland continue to be a major factor contributing to the growth of the population and the changes in the population profile such as age and sex composition, family structure.
- ***Vaguer Border and Fluid Population*** Changes in economic structure have led to more families with members going to seek employment cross the border. Hong Kong is no longer a secluded community from our Mainland. Fluid border situation and mobile population will create a new social dimension and challenges that will affect the planning and allocation of social services.
- ***Eroding Family Solidarity and Functioning*** With the eroding family functioning and weakening family relationship, the old social support network has disappeared and few new cohesive forces are readily available to take its place.
- ***Social Exclusion and Marginalization*** The social impact of increasing disparities in the economic situation is immense. Given less opportunities, more people have been excluded for greater social and economic participation. Amongst other things, the gap between those who are able to command the information technology and those who cannot is further segregating the less educated, low skilled, aged and disabled groups in what is called the Digital Divide.

7.3 Changes in Fabric of Social Cohesion

- ***Increasing Social Stress*** Similar to the experience of many other parts of the world, economic downturn is likely to sharpen the conflict and dispute among different interest groups. In Hong Kong, the highly competitive, stressed and rapidly

changing environment inevitably produces new forms of social deprivation, alienation and distress.

- ***Greater Demands for Social and Political Accountability*** There is a growing urge for a more transparent government and a more open administrative and political system. The betterment of Hong Kong relies very much on the active participation of the people who have a strong commitment to the well being of the society and a sense of belonging to the place. There is increasing demand for efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public services that calls for enhanced productivity and refocusing of resources.
- ***Social Implications of New ICT Technology*** The growth of the “netizen” community and virtual relationship have brought in a new social phenomenon. The networking ability and information access of the individual have greatly expanded. The issue of cyber bullying, net addiction and cyber violence are some of the social problems arisen from such a new social environment, which has brought about a new form of social relationships, culture and communication.

8 These challenges are unprecedented in terms of the speed, the scope and the scale of changes that the bombard on individual and the society as a whole:

- Social problems are happening at a speed and in an immense variety of forms much faster than our capacities to find timely solutions.
- Social needs seem always increasing, raising the concern over the affordability and sustainability of social welfare provision.

9 There is the need to review the positioning and planning of social welfare to encompass

- A more systematic and objective needs identification, resource and response mapping process.
- To plan for an infrastructure that encourages and supports innovation and flexibility in service response to meet changing needs.
- A differentiation of roles and shared responsibilities between the government, the market, the civil society and the individual in addressing needs and resolving problems.
- The engagement of and building consensus among various stakeholders, so that efforts can be pooled to achieve the goals and values of social well being and development.

10 Mission of Social Welfare:

- Providing basic care and protection or safety-net for those in need – **SOCIAL PROTECTION**
- Enhancing individual, family and community capacities – **SOCIAL INVESTMENT IN HUMAN & SOCIAL CAPITAL**
- Facilitating active participation and social partnerships in jointly building a caring, inclusive, cohesive and just society – **SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

11 *The Core Values of Social Welfare:*

- **People-centered** The unique value and dignity of every human being should be respected and there should not be any discrimination of any form. Social Welfare system is conducive to the advancement of social justice and protection of basic human rights.
- **Development** Everyone has the potential to be self-reliant and succeed in different areas of their life. Realization of individuals with due regard to the interest of other should be encouraged and facilitated. Social Welfare is the process of enlarging people's choices by expanding human functions and capabilities as well as promoting mutual care and concern.
- **Equity** Everyone should have choices, opportunities, rights and responsibilities as all other members of society. Everyone should be enabled to live independently with the supports that may be required and to participate fully in the society.
- **Inclusion** Strong human relationships enhance the well being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations and communities, prevent and relieve hardship and suffering. Social Welfare builds communities based on mutual help, caring and just relationships.
- **Security** People should be protected from chronic personal, financial and health threats, as well as sudden and harmful disruptions in the daily pattern of life.

DISCUSSION OF NEW STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL WELFARE

12. *The Family Perspective* – “Supporting and consolidating the family would be the primary consideration of our social policy and social services planning, and the family would be promoted as a core social value – Chief Executive 2007 Policy Address”

- Social welfare services preserve and strengthen families. Build family capacity and develop family resilience to meet challenges of change. It cultivates a family friendly society, strengthens family solidarity and supports the caring functions of the families.
 - Restoring families at risk of disruption and building their resilience to solve problems.
 - Enhancing the family's caring functions and providing supports to carers.
 - Building up a family friendly society and promoting a more balanced attitude towards work and family.
- The objectives of social welfare provision is to enhance the family's functioning and relationships, and as far as possible not to replace or substitute the role of the family in nurturing, supporting, caring for the individuals in the family.
- The family should be engaged in the care and welfare arrangement for the individual. A family approach should be adjusted in the planning and provision of welfare, security and development, taking into account the need to balance the rights and dignity of the individual, and the diversified forms and structures of families.

13. Social Partnerships

- The rationale behind social partnerships approach is the recognition that no one party alone can effectively resolve all our social problems, and to promote our social well-being. The ownership of the problems and solutions must be shared, and the shared solutions must be more effective than individual solutions to preventing or remedying many of our social problems. The Government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the business community have all along been contributing towards the cause for the common good.
- The role of Government include:
 - Setting the strategic directions and providing the overall framework to guide operational change and development.
 - Providing leadership for policy formulation
 - Facilitating development of partnerships across sectors
 - Promoting equal opportunities for people to develop their potentials to their full, and enforcing all relevant anti-discrimination ordinances.
 - Prioritize where trade-offs are required between conflicting goals.
 - Supporting vulnerable individuals with basic protection (safety nets), by encouraging and accommodating the contributions of civil society through families, communities and business.
- The role of the third sector / NGOs:
 - For the purpose of developing these tripartite partnerships, the welfare NGO sector plays a critical role, through maximizing its strategic position within the community to get close to community need through its local memberships, local presence, and staff expertise. The proximity to the community also enables it to better articulate community values and aspirations. The non-governmental nature of the welfare NGOs means greater flexibility and potential to initiate changes, propose new ideas, and experiment with innovative solutions. The NGOs should be in the best position to provide project ideas to the business sector, provide ready-made channels and networks for private sector involvement in the community.
 - The role of non-subsidized NGOs, users/ self-help groups and other third sector organisations should also be recognized. These groups have been successful in mobilizing community resources and support to meet social needs not fulfilled by the Government and subsidized services. They should be engaged and facilitated in the overall planning and provision of welfare need and development.
- The role of the private sector:
 - Corporate, business and the private sector must take greater responsibility for the social and environmental impacts of its economic activities. Rather than “aid” or “charity” giving, CSR means business aligning its business strategies with community interests and taking a developmental approach to being involved in the community. It is to be the interest of the business sector that

social welfare should be investment oriented, seeking to enhance human capabilities to participate in the productive economy.

- There is growing awareness that the workplace has an impact on an individual's well-being (e.g. family-work balance) and a happy workforce makes a successful business. Family-friendly practices are corporate social responsibilities.
- Various forms of partnership (such as amongst NGOs, between NGOs and businesses, or public-private partnerships) have shown to be effective in taking forward innovative models of solving local problems. Corporate volunteerism, mentorship and models of social entrepreneurial ventures have also been developed, involving business and NGO partnerships offering workplace training, work experience and work opportunities, particularly in the rehabilitation area.

14. Locality and Community-based Approach

- The Social Welfare Departmental Reform initiated by the then Director, Mrs. Carrie Lam, since 2001, in “delaying” and “pushing decisions to district level” in the disbanding of the five Regional offices and the upgrading of the District Social Welfare offices, should be the direction of decentralizing decisions, making welfare services more relevant to district variations and thus more responsive to community needs.
- The partnerships and co-operation between the government and NGOs serving directly in the communities should be strengthened, in terms of:
 - i. Collection and analysis of social indicators, service needs and provision profile in the district.
 - ii. Identification of local priorities and agenda for joint efforts to meet service gaps and needs
 - iii. Building community capacities and networks, strengthen the informal network of support within the locality, linking up disadvantaged groups and volunteers, empowering their participation in community decisions, community building efforts and the arrangement of welfare provision in the community.
 - iv. Enhancing the “access”, the “connectedness” and “cross-referral of services” in the network of welfare support to the individuals and families in the community.

It should be noted that NGOs offering professional welfare services to disadvantaged groups, notwithstanding whether they receive government subsidies or not, should be included in the above partnership platform.

- Develop a protocol in aligning district planning with centralized service planning and resources allocation. Considerations could be given to decentralizing the allocation of the Community Inclusion and Investment Fund and the Partnership Fund to the District Offices under the Social Welfare Department, to allow flexibility in deployment of resources to encourage social innovation and

partnerships in the districts. Suggestions were also raised on annual or bi-annual alignment and adjustment to districts priorities in the Funding and Service Agreement of major service programmes under Lump Sum Grant.

15. Asset-based or Strength-based Approach to Welfare

- The function of social welfare is social investment, investing in strategies that recognize and build on the asset/strength of individuals, families and communities to further develop their human capital and social capital:
- Developing Human Capital – the Social Welfare empowers people through recognizing their potential, and improving their skills, personal attitudes & motivations. It also provides assistance for the disadvantaged to become self-reliant and independent, connect individuals to communities, and enables them to contribute to the economic and social development of the society.
 - Developing life skills, positive and balanced life attitudes to meet the development needs of individuals at different stages, and preparing them for life transitions.
 - Preparing individuals for lifelong learning and equipping them for the increasingly knowledge-based and technology society through informal education.
 - Providing opportunities for the less educated, low skilled, and disadvantaged groups to overcome barrier and access to employment opportunities, raising employability among them through education and training.
- Building Social Capital – the Social Welfare cultivates an enabling, inclusive and non-discriminative environment for vulnerable members and facilitates their fuller integration in the community. It fosters positive social relationship, trust and participation that enhance social harmony and solidarity. Social Welfare also encourages self-help and mutual care, ameliorating the effects of pressures on and within communities.
 - Empowering disabled and disadvantaged groups, encouraging them to voice out their opinions, and nurturing among them a feeling of trust and safety, facilitating their full integration into the community.
 - Building connections among friends, families, and neighbourhoods, developing community support networks, encouraging self help, mutual care, and promoting a sense of belonging in the community.
 - Promoting volunteering a lifestyle and integral part of our daily life.
 - Promoting acceptance and communications among different social interest groups and sectors, to build a caring and inclusive society.
- Increasing Financial Capital
 - Asset building encourages the disadvantaged to build up “assets”. The approach is based on the premise that passive income support and public assistance has its limitations in encouraging the disadvantaged to plan for their own future and escape from poverty. Overseas researches and projects have demonstrated

that developing an asset-accumulation or saving habit among the poor yields positive results, including causing behavioural change towards a more forward-planning orientation, which can help achieve the ultimate objective of assisting disadvantaged people to develop a positive attitude, an ability to learn and a sense of self-responsibility and self-worth.

16. Supporting Innovation

- We need new ideas that work to meet pressing unmet needs and improve peoples' lives. A new strategy of social welfare may be to identify and encourage innovative and pioneering social welfare solutions. To promote social innovations, entrepreneurship in finding solutions that cut across public, private and non-profit boundaries.
- The support for social innovations encompasses:
 - Encourage the generation of ideas and initiatives – this can be ways of empowering users to drive innovation themselves, creating incentives for market solutions and strengthening R&D efforts of mission-based, non-profit social entrepreneurs. The Government can take the lead in creating an environment that encourage a wider giving culture and sense of responsibility, building knowledge and ownership of social problems and development. Leaders should visibly encourage and reward successful innovation.
 - Resourcing innovative or pioneering initiatives – a Social Development Fund (similar to the Quality Education Fund) can be set up and private foundations can be aligned to support pioneering projects as well as relevant research and development activities so as to identify the most effective measures for tackling different social needs. Incubators and collaborative platforms can be formed to share resources, to link together people, ideas, money and power. Existing welfare funding can be adjusted to allow for and encourage innovation. For example the Funding and Service Agreement under the Lump Sum Grant should be make provision or leave a resource margin for innovative efforts outside the output requirements.
 - Scaling up and the sustainability of innovation – to result in more effective social outcomes, successful social innovations should follow through into the stages of scaling up, franchising, learning and institutionalizing.

17. Resourcing / Financing Social Welfare

17.1 Principles in funding policies

- The funding policy should allow certain level of flexibility so that (i) the funding level to individual service units could be adjusted so as to meet growing needs; and (ii) the output requirements could be varied to meet the variations across districts.
- The funding policy should observe principles of “stability” and “adequacy” so that (i) NGOs are provided with adequate resources to keep performing

and experience staff; and (ii) full cost of the service including supervisory and administrative support should be reflected in the funding level.

- The funding policy should also provide incentives and support to encourage innovation and non-government-funded services. The Government should consider granting welfare rent and rates discounts to non-profit making, self-financed welfare services and social enterprises to encourage the development of non-subsidized services, to expand the choice of service for users that may be able to pay part of the cost. Suitable premises should also be provided to allow NGOs to expand services to cover needs or types of target service recipients not clearly identified before.

17.2 Human resource policies

- The core services should be required to be provided qualified personnel.
- Supply of trained qualified personnel should be at least slightly more than the demand of the public and subvented sector.
- Systematic induction and in-service training should be in place to ensure and advance the quality of service.

17.3 Premises development policies

- New service unit should be provided with spare capacity to meet the growing needs projected in at least 10 ten years.
- Community centres should be built with the aim of providing premises for integrated provision of services within and across programme areas.

17.4 In view of limited resources as against increasing service demands, priority should be given to those with less means. Government funding should give priority to universal access and assessment, early identification of needs and preventive services. Fee for services could be put in place and charge according to the means of the recipient on a sliding scale.

17.5 To increase service users' choice and accountability, Government should encourage market segmentation and development of quality or tailor-made self-financing services as an option to Government funded services, that may have long waiting lists.

DISCUSSIONS OF THE WELFARE PLANNING MECHANISM

18. *The Proposed Planning Protocol*

The proposed process and mechanism of planning for Social Welfare are structured at four levels:

- The Long-term strategic Framework for Social Welfare should be formulated about every ten years.
- There should be a Programme Plan for each major programme area, namely family, childcare, elderly, Children and Youth, Community Development, Rehabilitation and Social Security.
- Annual Welfare Agenda Setting exercise jointly by the Government and NGOs to identify welfare priorities for the coming year.
- District Planning should be put in place and aligned with central planning, to ensure that the policy and programme decisions reflect local needs and are based on a wide consultation net.

Proposed Planning Protocol of Social Welfare Policy

	Policy Formulation Level (Strategic level, not dealing with planning of individual services)	Programme Planning Level	Welfare Agenda Setting	District Planning
Review period	About ten years planning horizon	Five years planning horizon	Annual	Biennial / Annual
Deliverables	Long Term Strategic Framework	Programme Plans (Family & Child Care, Elderly, Children and Youth, Community Development, Rehabilitation and Social Security)	Welfare priorities for the next year	District Strategic Plan
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Missions, Vision and Value Statements ● Strategies for overall service planning, development and delivery in meeting social needs ● Overall resource policies (funding, human resource, premises development) ● Policy objectives of key programme areas (Family & Child Care, Elderly, Children and Youth, Community Development, and Social Security) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy objective (re. White Paper) ● Service need profiles for the respective programme area. ● Strategies for service planning, development and delivery in achieving policy objectives ● Funding and Service Agreement Prototypes ● Development plan in the coming six years for services that are premises based ● Development targets in the coming six years for non-premises based. ● Resource planning (human resource, premises, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social indicators ● Service need profile ● Strategic plan to meet service need ● New initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social indicators ● Service need profile ● Service provision profile ● Strategic plan to meet service need ● New initiatives ● Coordination and collaboration plans
Responsible body	Labour and Welfare Bureau	Labour and Welfare Bureau and Social Welfare Department	Social Welfare Department	Social Welfare Department
Planning group	<p>Key participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SWD ● HKCSS ● NGOs <p>Other participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Related government bureau ● Academics ● Service user representatives ● Public representatives ● Related professional bodies ● Other related funding bodies 	<p>Key Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SWD ● HKCSS ● NGOs <p>Other participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Related government departments ● Academics ● Service user representatives ● Public representatives ● Related professional bodies 	<p>Key Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HKCSS and its services committees ● NGOs ● Users self-help groups 	<p>Key Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NGOs in the district <p>Other participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Related government departmental district branch officials ● District service users ● District representative
Planning Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Form policy planning group 2. Pre-meeting laying out: (4 months before first planning group meeting) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Schedule ● Define scope of policy paper ● Review data collection requirements ● Review consultation protocol 3. Need Assessment (Data collection and conduct consultation, 3 months) 4. Consolidate views and data collected (1 month) 5. Conduct planning group meetings to draft Consultation Paper (4 months) 6. Issue and conduct consultation on Consultation Paper (2 months) 7. Conduct planning group meetings to draft final Paper (2 months) 8. Policy endorsement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Form programme planning Group 2. Pre-meeting laying out: (est. 3 months before first planning group meeting) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Schedule ● Scope of programme plan ● Review data collection requirements ● Review consultation protocol 3. Need Assessment (Data consolidation and conduct consultation, 2 months) 4. Consolidate views and data collected (0.5 month) 5. Conduct planning group meetings to draft/revise Programme Plan (3 months) 6. Consultation on Draft/revise Programme Plan (2 month) 7. Finalize and issue Programme Plan (0.5 month) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SWD / HKCSS identify new services needs and priorities 2. Conduct sharing forum and focus group sessions to discuss proposals for new initiatives 3. HKCSS consolidates views and submits proposals to SWD and LWB 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Form district planning group 2. Need Assessment (conduct district consultation, collect district data, 1 month) 3. Conduct district planning group meetings to develop district strategic plan (1 month)

19. Need Assessment Strategies

Principle: Need-assessment should be conducted systematically and accurately ensuring that our social policy planning process is responsive to the changing needs of our society.

The nature of need assessment:

- 19.1 The process of policy planning is multidimensional, dynamic and recursive. Need assessment provides the major inputs to this process at different points of time and different stages.
- 19.2 Needs can be felt, expressed, normative or comparative.
 - 19.2.1 Felt needs are detected through dialectic processes, such as political discussion and research studies exploring into the differences between what is required and what is available to individuals, families and communities.
 - 19.2.2 Expressed needs are normally articulated in public forum, mass medium and political processes. Organized expression is articulated through community and social actions by pressure groups, self-help groups, community and political organizations.
 - 19.2.3 Normative needs are defined through either academic or political processes.
 - 19.2.4 Comparative needs arise from the comparison of the levels of resource or service provision available to different social groups or service users, e.g. redefining minimum standards of living for the poor, comparing the level of service provisions or support provided to elderly living in the community and those living in institutions, etc.
- 19.3 Need identification.
 - 19.3.1 Takes place during the day to day operation of social service delivery and research activities.
 - 19.3.2 Arises from social studies on social phenomenon that draws academic and public interests.
- 19.4 Need articulation
 - 19.4.1 Academics
 - 19.4.2 Community and political groups
 - 19.4.3 Self-help and pressure groups participated in this process.
- 19.5 Need assessment can be qualitative or quantitative. When it comes to the stage of programme planning and drawing up of individual FSA, need assessment has to be quantitative.
- 19.6 Strategic considerations
 - 19.6.1 The policy planning processes should be opened enough where different sources of information can be entered without barrier.
 - 19.6.2 The policy planning and service delivery system should be as opened as possible to allow new information from existing or new sources of information can come in at any time and at any point within the system.

- 19.6.3 Mechanisms are in place to ensure that that timely need information is channeled into the policy planning processes.
- 19.6.4 Established administrative and research procedures are meant primarily for revision of existing policies and services.
- 19.6.5 Periodical review with widespread publicity to solicit views from various parties ensures that some of the information sources are not overlooked.

	Policy	Programme Plan	District planning	Funding and service agreement
Secondary Data Census data and population projection	✓	✓	✓	
Survey Methodology Regular -general household survey Specific - purposefully designed	✓	✓	✓	
Service utilization data ● Service utilization rate ● Social indicators related to service demands ● Case inflow-outflow analysis ¹	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓
Programme and Service Evaluation	✓	✓		✓
Public opinion ● Public consultation process ● Public representative ● District level discussion forums ● District representative ● Professional Groups	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	 ✓ ✓ ✓	
Direct service contact ● Input from Service users and their families ● Service Providers	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓

19.7 The planning protocol for each level should spell out:

- 19.7.1 The mechanism of data collection
- 19.7.2 The type of information to be collected (e.g. census data, special topics in General Household survey, research findings in the past one period, service statistics and evaluation, etc.)
- 19.7.3 The type of analysis to be performed before the planning process of that level process, and prototype agenda for the discussion process.
- 19.7.4 The consultation protocol for each level of planning

20. *Issue of User Participation*

- User participation is an issue brought up from time to time during discussion in

¹ Analysis takes into account in each period new demand (number of new eligible applicants), supply of service, number of users at beginning and at end of period, number of exists, vacant capacity/length of waiting list/short fall. Such analysis is projected for the coming five years.

policy formulation, programme plan, and service delivery. Social welfare services are frequently a third party paid service. The fees, if any, paid by users are usually nominal and at most cover only the marginal cost. To ensure that services are meeting needs of the service users, policies and procedures to enhance user participation and to incorporate their views in policy and planning are important.

- User participation should be viewed at four different levels: policy, programme plan, district plan level, and service delivery. The planning protocol discussed in this paper deals with the first three levels and is summarized in the following paragraphs. Users participation at the service delivery level is incorporated into Service Quality Standards
- **Long Term Strategic Framework and Programme Plan Level** – User participation can be realized in the following processes:
 - Users surveys
 - Focus Groups or selected interviews to be conducted by appointed independent consultant
 - Response to open invitation and in open forum.
 - Mobilization by user groups or service operators to express views.
- **District Plan level** – User participation can be realized in the following processes:
 - Participation in open forum
 - Mobilization by user groups, service operator, local groups/leaders to express views.
 - Influencing District Council members.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

21. Consultation Paper on Vision, Mission, Values and the Strategic Framework of Social welfare in the next ten years. It is proposed that SWAC upon receiving the written submissions on the long-term planning for Social Welfare should prepare a Consultation Paper, identifying the key issues, strategies, and planning mechanisms for more structured and focused collection of views.
22. Open public forums on the strategic framework and focus group discussions on specific strategies, issues of development and planning like the financing of social welfare, and supporting innovation, etc. should be co-organized with the non-government sector for more in-depth discussions. In deliberating the mission, new strategies and priorities of social welfare, the participation of the society at large should be strengthened, which will help to mainstream the issue of welfare planning as a public agenda.
23. Cross bureau seminars and cross-sector forums should also be organized to discuss aspects of planning, welfare policies and service provision that involve alignment and collaboration with other policy bureaus like the Home Affair Bureau in district planning, the Health and Food Bureaus and Education Bureau in helping disadvantaged groups.