

THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE FAMILY & COMMUNITY SERVICE

Background Information

FAMILY STRUCTURE

Nuclear Family

The total number of Hong Kong population is increasing. In 2006, there are 6.9 millions population, while the number of domestic households is 2,233,800. The total population increased by 13%, while the number of households increased by 30% in the last decade. The average household size in 1991 is 3.4 persons, which has dropped to 3.0 in 2006.¹

Decreasing Marriage

The crude marriage rates for both women and men exhibit a continuous decline during 1991 to 2000. In 1991, the number of marriages per 1,000 males is 13.6, and that of females is 14.1. The rates then generally increase during 2001 to 2005. The crude marriage rates for women and men increase significantly to 11.9 and 12.9 respectively in 2005².

Decreasing newborns

The total number of birth has also dropped by 16%, from 68,281 in 1991 to 57,124 in 2005, with slight rebound from 2004 onwards. Among the total number of birth, 25.9% (12,915) are born by mainland residents in HK in 2004³. In 2006, the total number of birth has increased to 65,194, 40% (26,132) is born by mainland women in HK.

Increasing cross border marriages and families

In view of increasing social and economic activities between the mainland and Hong Kong, the number of cross border marriage increases. There are 17.9% of marriages involved mainlanders in 2001, which increase to 36.3% in 2004; with increasing number of female HK residents married male residents in the mainland⁴.

Increasing Divorce

The total number of divorces increases rapidly during 1981 to 2004. In 2004, the total number of divorces further increases to a new high of 15,604. It however drops slightly by about 5% to 14,873 in 2005. The number of female single parents increases markedly by 95%, from 23,059 in 1991 to 45,072 in 2001. However, the number of male single parents rises less significantly, from 11,479 in 1991 to 13,388 (increased by 17%) in 2001⁵.

¹ Census and Statistics Department (2006). Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics 2006 Edition.

Census and Statistics Department (2006). Women and Men in Hong Kong Key Statistics.

² Census and Statistics Department (March 2007) Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics

³ Ditto.

⁴ Ditto.

⁵ Ditto.

⁵ Census and Statistics Department (2006). Women and Men in Hong Kong Key Statistics.

Increasing working hours

Either one parents and both parents with weekly working hours more than 60 hours, increases by 30% (either one) and 42%(both) respectively, making up a total number of 0.2 million families in the last decade (1996-2005). The total number of long working hour single parent also increases by 83% from 4,200 to 7,700 from 1996 to 2005.⁶ Long working hour can affect family members' and parent-child interaction.

FAMILY SOLIDARITY AND RESILIENCE

Decreasing Family Solidarity

According to the Social Development Index released by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, the sub-index of family solidarity in 2002 is -151, which has further dropped to -206⁷ in 2004.

Increasing Domestic Violence

In the last decade, the newly report child abuse cases increases by 145%, from 311 cases in 1996 to 763 cases in 2005. The battered spouse cases increases dramatically by 257%, from 1009 cases in 1998 to 3598 cases in 2005.

However, the first territory-wide prevalence survey on child abuse and battered spouse finds that the prevalence rates of spousal and child abuse are 6% and 10% respectively. It represents 60000 children and 70000 spouses suffering from severe to very severe abuse. The total number of reported cases only represents 1-2% of the total number of child abuse and spousal abuse cases⁸, which reflects only the tip of an iceberg.

Social Cohesion

Poverty

In Hong Kong, the Gini coefficient has been increasing in the past twenty years. The figure in 1981, 1991 and 2001 are 0.451, 0.476 and 0.525⁹ respectively. In addition, the increase from 1991 to 2001 is even more rapid than in the years from 1981 to 1991. It reflects that poverty disparity in Hong Kong is getting more serious in the past ten years.

There is 50% increase of low-income families / families in poverty¹⁰ in the last decade. 0.89 million are low-income families in 1995, where there is 1.25 million in 2005. Poverty rate has increased from 14.8% in 1995 to a 10-year high 18.3% in the first quarter of 2005.

Language Barrier of Ethnic Minorities

Ethnic minorities contribute to about 5%of HK's population, which makes up 40000 ethnic minority families in HK¹¹. 95% fathers, 70% mothers and 28.4% children of ethnic families

⁶ Census and Statistics Department (03/2006 Email). General Household Survey.

香港社會服務聯會(2006)。社會發展專題資料：香港家庭概況 – 變化中的家庭。

⁷ Social Development Index 2006, The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 2006.

⁸ Chan K L (2005). Study on Child Abuse and Spouse Battering: Report on findings of Household Survey. (A Consultancy Study Commissioned by SWD of HKSAR. HK: Department of Social Work & Social Administration, The University of Hong Kong.

⁹ Ming Pao (2001) (www.mingpaonews.com/20011027/27gbk.gif)

¹⁰ Poverty as those living under monthly income less than / equal to half of median household income of all other household of same size.

¹¹ Census and Statistics Department (2006) Population Census.

cannot speak Chinese¹². The language barrier greatly affects their livings and integration in the society.

Community Health

Increasing Psychotropic Substance Abuse

The total number of reported drug abusers declines by a total of 3,359 persons between 1996 and 1999, at an average annual rate of 6.1%, from 19,673 in 1996 to 16,314 in 1999. However, notably the said downward trend reverses in 2000 and 2001, with the number bouncing to 18,513 in 2001. Since 2002, it reverts back to its downward trend and drops to 13,204 in 2006, the lowest in the past ten years.¹³

The number of young drug abusers aged under 21 declines from 3,657 to 2,482 from 1996 to 1999. It then surges up to 4020 in 2000, the highest in the past ten years. During 2001 and 2004, it reverts back to its downward trend and fell to 13,204 in 2006, the lowest in the past ten years. However, the number of young drug abusers under 21 rises by 12% from 2005 to 2006, from 2,276 to 2,549¹⁴.

Ketamine is the most popular type of psychotropic substance abused. The number of abusers rises significantly by 45% to 3,045 in 2006. The second most common is Triazolam (“Ecstasy”) and “Ice”. Among the youngsters, disco/karaoke is the most popular locality to abuse drugs, with a proportion of 63.9%. It is reported that 1,371 people or 11.3% of the total reported drug abusers took drugs in Mainland China in 2006 and 39.6% of these abusers are aged under 21.

Future Trends and Challenges

Service planning, Multi-disciplinary Collaboration and Professional Development

In view of various challenges faced by HK families, a long term welfare service planning should be in placed to better plan for services in strengthening family functions. Provided with the statistics and frontline workers’ observations, the needs of family and community are obvious that proactive service planning in meeting the needs is necessary. The various welfare services are also to work hand-in-hand and to further enhance the professional service quality for the well-beings of families in the society. The welfare services are to collaborate with multi-disciplinary professionals in supporting families, for instance, the health, justice and education sectors; in family education, prevention and handling of domestic violence, substance abuse and social integration of ethnic groups.

Family Friendly Society in strengthening Family Functions

With structural family disintegration, decreasing family solidarity and resilience, series of family problems emerge. For instance, child neglect, juvenile delinquency, domestic violence and substance abuse, etc. To strengthen family solidarity, it relies not only on efforts made by individuals and parents, but also the government on nurturing a sustainable and family friendly environment to facilitate a balanced family-work life style and secure income support for the working population in Hong Kong.

Strengthening Neighborhood and Community Support

Under the effects of increasing number of nuclear families, urbanization and economic

¹² 香港社會服務聯會(2006)。社會發展專題資料：香港家庭概況 – 變化中的家庭。

¹³ Report no 55 of Central Registry of Drug Abuse 1996-2005, Narcotics Division 2003

¹⁴ Narcotics Division “What’s New” on Mar 22, 2007/3/28 R

hardship, the adverse impact on the disadvantaged groups, such as new arrivals, low-income groups and ethnic minorities are greater.

Stronger neighborhood and community support not only promote residents' sense of belonging to the community, mutual trust and support, but also strengthen their resilience. The enhanced neighborhood support network empowers individuals, families and the community in building a cohesive community.

Integrated Service and Specialization

Integrated service setting encourages all aged groups to use the service or to outreach the families in community without stigmatization. However, there are strong need of specialized service targeted for particular target groups in catering for special needs, e.g. sexual violence victims, survivors of domestic violence, batterers, ethnic minorities and new arrivals. Specialized and integrated services are to be on parallel development.

Diversified Community-based Service Strategy

The service design is now more diversified. Other than developmental, education, mutual support, therapeutic groups and case counseling, the community outreaching working approach is the key working approach. The outreaching effort can get in directly contact with residents of the community and bring the services to those needy families in the community proactively. The community-based services can provide support in meeting the special needs of individuals and families of the community in enhancing self-help and mutual-help ability for building a cohesive community.

Early Identification and Intervention

Early identification of needs and intervention prevents further deterioration of problems. Therefore, there is also a service trend on targeted preventive service for early identification of families in needs and to provide them with early supports.

Service Profile

The family and community services aim at strengthening the supportive and caring functions of family; promoting the spirit of self-help, mutual help and community participation as well as enhancing the quality of family and community through intervention at individual, family and community levels. The ultimate goal is to achieve social integration.

| Service Types | Content | Number Of Service Unit (Till April 2007) |
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| Integrated Family Service Centre (IFSC) | IFSC provides educational, developmental and remedial groups and casework counseling to families. Besides, IFSC also provides outreaching service to reach the needy families. | 61 Units (SWD: 40 NGOs: 21) |
| Family Mediation Service | Accredited Family Mediator helps family members to settle matters arising from divorce or separation. | 9 NGOs |

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| Family and Child Protection Service Unit | To address the problems of spousal abuse, child abuse and child custody issue, the SWD operates these special units to handle related cases. | 8 regional specialized units (FCPSUs) |
| Services for Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault | <p>Four refuge centres provide temporary accommodation to females and their children in face of family violence.</p> <p>The Family Crisis Support Centre provides crises intervention with overnight accommodation, temporary retreat and other support services to family members.</p> <p>One one-stop crisis intervention centre and a pool of designated social workers, formed by SWD and the Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Center provide crisis intervention service to victims of sexual violence.</p> <p>All the services are operated on 24 hours.</p> | <p>4 shelters for women, providing around 180 temporary residential bed spaces;</p> <p>1 Family Crisis Centre;</p> <p>1 one-stop crisis centre for victims of sexual assault;</p> <p>1 Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Center</p> |
| Community Centre | <p>Community Centres serve people of all ages to gather, to meet and to interact with the one another in the community.</p> <p>The community centers promote social integration, enhance social responsibility, cultivate mutual help and self help spirits, enhance one's problem solving ability in facing community problem, and improve the quality of life in the community</p> | 13 Community Centres |
| Neighborhood Level Community Development Project (NLCDP) | NLCDPs are to provide community development service to the deprived and transient communities where the provision of welfare services and facilities are inadequate or non-existent. | 20 NLCDPs (2006-2007) |
| Care Support and Networking Team | To help ex-offenders, ex-mentally ill persons and street sleepers in West Kowloon. It provides one-stop services comprising outreaching, networking, support, case and group work services with the aim of re-integration into the community. | 1 team (till 2009) |
| Urban Renewal Social Service Team | To provide residents who are affected by urban renewal projects with individual and family counseling services and facilitate the disadvantaged groups to rebuild their support network so as to strengthen self-help and mutual help among themselves. | 3 service teams |

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| Buildings Department Social Service Team | To handle the emotional and financial problems of individuals and families who are affected by maintenance and demolishing work of the Buildings Department. | 3 service teams |
| Services for the Substance Abusers | To promote community education on prevention of substance abuse and to provide counseling, treatment, rehabilitation and employment services for substance abusers so as to facilitate their re-integration into society. | 27 NGOs / Government Departments providing preventive, supportive and counseling services on substance abuse. |
| Services for Ethnic Minorities | To build up and strengthen a supportive network and mutual help groups within the ethnic minority community. Also, to facilitate social adjustment and social integration of ethnic minority residents into local communities. | 61 NGO service units |

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