

HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Community Work Team in New Town Pilot Project

INTRODUCTION

1. The Community Work Team (CWT) in New Town Pilot Project was proposed by the Community Development Division of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service with policy support from the Secretary for Home Affairs in October, 1990 and the endorsement of the Committee on Community Development chaired by CNTA.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PILOT PROJECT

2. To set up two community work teams in two public housing estates in new towns with the aim to provide more community-based support to the residents and families in the locality by using the Community-based Networking Approach to help build and strengthen the informal social support networks within the neighbourhood.

THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORT IN NEW TOWNS

3. Population Movement to New Towns

Since the new town development in the seventies, with the launching of the major public housing programme in Tsuen Wan, Shatin and Tuen Mun, there has been a massive and continuous movement of population from the urban areas in Hong Kong Island and Kowloon to the New Territories. Over the past five years, about 400,000 persons have migrated to reside in new towns from the urban complex. The population in the New Territories have increased from 1.32 million in 1981 to 2.37 million in 1991 and is expected to continue to grow to over 3 million by the year 2,000.(1) Such massive migration of population to new towns represents a significant change of lifestyle and adaptation to a new pattern of living for these new residents.

4. Needs and Characteristics of New Town Inhabitants

It is difficult to assess the needs of new town residents given that there is no central organization for monitoring the social aspects of new town development in Hong Kong, and few attempts have been made to understand the impact of migrating into new towns on the lifestyle of the new residents other than one-off surveys. A study conducted by Professor Nelson W.S. Chow in 1987 on the social adaptation in new towns using Tuen Mun residents as the sample helps to throw some light on the needs and quality of life of new town inhabitants besides the obvious improvement on their housing condition.(2) The study aims to assess the achievement of the objectives of new town development and the overall quality of life of the residents.(3) The following are observations on the needs and characteristics of new town residents based on the findings of the study:

4.1 Adjustments Arising from moving into New Towns

Despite the improvement in the housing conditions, there is increasing evidence to suggest that residents in new towns are paying a high price in adjusting to the new environment. The adjustments and adaptations required for residents moving to new towns are quite considerable. Majority (59%) of the respondents of the study in Tuen

Mun reported that they encountered adjustment difficulties after moving to Tuen Mun, and the percentage was higher for those residing in public housing than private housing. It was found that the families in Tuen Mun had to undertake adjustments in five out of the total of nine areas in basic living after they moved to the new town. the most common adaptations include: longer hours on travelling, higher transport expenses, decrease in contact with relatives, finding another school place for their children, and worrying more about crime and finding their incomes insufficient for daily expenses.(4)

4.2 Change in Family Structure and Relationships

There is an obvious change in the family structure in families in new towns as the majority of the households are young nuclear families who have moved to live independently away in new towns from their extended family. The average percentage of one nuclear family households in new towns reaches up to 80%. (5) This has resulted in the weakening and breaking up of the traditional family ties and supportive network for families in new town as they are farther away from their relatives in the urban area. The above study found that the new town environment had an adverse effect on family life and relationships as most couples had less opportunity to go out together as well as with their children since moving to the new town.(6) The adverse impact of new town environment on family life and relationships may have contributed to the higher delinquency rates, higher records of child abuse and family problems, and higher level of individual stress than residents in the urban areas. More community based support would be required to assist the families to perform their functions.

4.3 Need for Neighbourhood and Informal Support

With decreasing contact with their relatives, especially those living in their urban areas, as families move to new towns, support and help from them are not readily available and there is a greater reliance on informal assistance from neighbour. This is evidenced by the findings of the above study which show that Tuen Mun residents usually receive very little help from their relatives as few of them lived nearby and neighbours became an important source of help especially in situations which require immediate and repeated attention. The building of new relationships and social support networks and the strengthening of mutual help among neighbours in new towns become particularly important. (7)

4.4 Need for Community Building and Integration

There is the need for building the community identity and sense of belonging among residents in new towns, particularly in public housing estates which are populated by residents relocated from THAs, squatters, public housing estates affected by redevelopment, and other public/private housing from different districts. It was observed in the study in Tuen Mun that residents' participation in residents' organisations in their housing blocks were not particularly active.(9) Planned social intervention is needed in the early stage of settlement in new towns which aims at promoting interaction among residents and mobilizing them to form and participate in community organizations and building a 'caring community.'

5. In the light of the above special needs and problems, the provision of community based support service for new town residents besides the standard social services is warranted to better meet their needs.

THE COMMUNITY BASED NETWORKING APPROACH

6. Definition of Social Network

Social network can be defined as : "A set of personal contacts through which individual maintains his social identity and receives emotional support, material aid and services, information, and new social contacts." (10)

7. Importance of Social Networks

The importance of social networks in meeting the needs of the people was clearly stated in the *1991 White Paper on Social Welfare Into The 1990s and Beyond*. It noted that the objective of making social welfare services available to all who need them "... cannot be achieved without the support of an input from the community through the establishment of informal care and support provided by families, friends and neighbour. Such networks, together with the more formal services, aim at helping people to achieve maximum independence and maintain control over their lives." (11)

8. What is Community Based Networking?

Community Based Networking approach refers to the building of informal and semi-informal social networks of interpersonal relationships in a geographical community with the aims to provide community based support and promote mutual care in the community. The ultimate objective is to help build a caring and integrated community in the locality.

9. Advantages of Community Based Networking

9.1 Supplement Gaps in Existing Social Services

Community Based Networking can help to cope with the demand for formal social service and supplement gaps in existing services through the building and strengthening of informal support networks among the residents in the neighbourhood. Social support networks are an invaluable and inexpensive resources in meeting the needs of the people. Often 'on the spot' assistance could be provided to those in need through the informal support networks. The mobilization of such informal social support networks can also help to provide assistance to the special needs and deprived groups who need help but have difficulties obtaining help from and gaining access to formal social services.

9.2 Improve Responsiveness and Accessibility of Services

Community Based Networking can serve to improve the responsiveness and availability of existing services to the residents in the target community by linking the informal social support networks to the formal services and community resources. This would raise the awareness of residents of these services and increases their utilization, and would make the formal services more responsive to the special and changing needs of the community they serve.

9.3 Increase independence and participation

Self-sufficiency and community participation of residents would be increased as they depend more on the self-help groups for support and care, and as these groups become more vocal in expressing their needs to the concerned authorities.

10. Community-based Networking Strategies

10.1 Neighbourhood Helping Networks

This refers to the building and strengthening of informal social support networks or organisations among residents in their neighbourhood in the target community with the aim to promote mutual help in the residents' immediate environment.

10.2 Special Needs Groups Networks

This refers to the identification and building of self-help and informal support networks among special needs groups who share similar problems, face common tasks, or have compatible interests or ability such as the disabled, the singleton elderly, single parent families in the target community with the aim to provide support and care for these groups. Community resources and volunteers will be mobilized among the neighbours and existing networks to provide assistance to these groups. Community's awareness and acceptance of their plight will be promoted.

10.3 Building Linkages among Networks

This refers to the linking of the networks formed in each block and other self-help groups in the estate to facilitate the sharing of experiences and resources among these groups and to expand the mutual help network in the estate with the ultimate objective of promoting integration and care in the community.

10.4 Community Empowerment Networks

This refers to the identification and development of a forum for informal leaders in the community from various informal interest groups or concern groups in the community with the objective to enhance their participation and ability in solving community problems, articulating local needs and problems and advocating for policy change.

10.5 Linking the Networks with Formal Care Services

This refers to the linking of the mutual care networks in the target community with available community resources and formal care services through service mediation and referral so as to maximize the utilization of these services by the residents. Such linkages will also enable the available formal care services to become more responsive to the changing needs of the users and help promote service integration in the community.

10.6 In short, the Community-based Networking Approach emphasizes on the community perspective in network building. It aims to build an integrated and caring community and address the community concerns in a specific locality through reaching out to the groups in need in the locality, building and strengthening social support networks among the residents in the neighbourhood, and helping residents to express their needs and making the formal care services more responsive to their needs.

TARGET POPULATION

11. One Community Work Team to serve one public housing estate in a new town with a population of about 20,000. In selecting the target areas for the pilot project, priority would be accorded to estates with high percentage of special needs groups, such as elderly singletons, single parent families and geographically isolated estates.

PROPOSED FUNCTIONS OF CWT

12. To reach out and work with the residents in forming informal social support networks in their neighbourhood in the estate.
13. To identify and provide support to existing self-help groups in the locality and strengthen their mutual care functions.
14. To reach out and provide support to families and residents with special needs such as elderly singletons, young housewives, single parents, disabled persons etc. in the estate through the formation of self-help groups, mobilization of volunteers and available services, and to raise the community awareness and understanding of their problems.
15. To mobilize and mediate available social services and resources to assist residents in need so as to maximize the use of the services and resources, and to facilitate prevention and early intervention and of social and family problems.
16. To promote the community spirit and sense of belonging in the estate through education and promotion of interaction among the residents.
17. To build linkages and facilitate co-operation among the mutual help networks from different blocks of the estate through networking among these groups.
18. To help residents articulate and express their needs and advocate for more responsive formal care services in meeting the changing needs of the community.

PROPOSED SERVICE AREAS

19. Two public housing estates in different phases of settlement in two new towns were selected as the target areas for the Pilot Project, i.e. Hau Tak Estate in Tseung Kwan O, and Wah Ming Estate in North District. The rationale for selecting Hau Tak Estate in Tseung Kwah O, which has commenced settlement for less than one year, and Wah Ming Estate in the North District, which has been settled for three years, is to experiment and compare the effectiveness and impact of the community based networking approach in providing community based support to residents in public housing estates in new towns at different phases of settlement.
20. Wah Ming Estate, North District
 - 20.1 Population : about 19,150, with 7 blocks
 - 20.2 Date of Settlement : 1990

20.3 Needs and Characteristics :

- a. Wah Ming Estates is located in South of Fanling and away from other public housing estates in the area, and there is a greater need for community based support service than other public housing estates near the Fanling Town Centre.
- b. Majority of the families in the estate are young nuclear families with primary school or pre-school age children. About 20% of the households are one unextended nuclear family. The number of children aged 0-9 is 5,209 which is 27.2% of the total estate population. A large population of the women stay at home to look after their children. The percentage of home makers in the estate was about 17% of the total population. With the weakening of extended family ties and social support for these young nuclear families, there is the need for neighbourhood and community support for these families and housewives to help and cope with the problems of caring for their children and other family problems.
- c. The elderly population i.e. those aged over 60; in the estates is 1,742 (11% of the total population of estate) which is quite high. There is a total of 800 singleton units in the estates which implies that at least 4.2% of the population are singletons. There is the need for strengthening community care and support for the elderly and singletons in the estate.
- d. Most of the residents who have moved to Wah Ming Estate were affected by clearance from various parts of Kowloon. They came from different background and moved to the Estate at different phases. There is the need for strengthening neighbourhood relations and enhance their sense of belonging to the estate.

20.4 Focus of Intervention :

- a. To identify and reach out to groups with special needs such as young housewives, singletons and the elderly so as to strengthen their neighbourhood informal support network.
- b. To strengthen the community care function of existing self-help/mutual help groups in the estates, and link them together with the objective to facilitate sharing of experiences and resources in caring for the needy in the estate among these groups.
- c. To build linkage between the formal social services and the self-help groups and informal social networks in the estate, facilitate their communication so as those in need would have better access to these formal services and these services can be more response to their needs.
- d. To encourage residents' participation in community affairs/activities, increase their opportunity to contact other residents and help enhance their sense of belonging to the community.

21. Hau Tak Estate, Tseung Kwan O

21.1 Population : 15,500 (by 1994) with 6 Harmony Blocks.
As at July 1993, the population is 350.

21.2 Date of Settlement : 1993-94

21.3 Need and Characteristics :

- a. Nau Tak Estate is one of the newest public housing estates in Tseung Kwan O which has commenced settlement since the 1993. All of the residents of the Estate will come from different districts who are being affected by clearance/redevelopment in other public housing estates/THAs/squatters. Families and residents affected by redevelopment of public housing estates in East Kowloon will be resettled in the first phase of the estate while two blocks in the second phase may be reserved for households from Tiu Keng Leng.
- b. Given that the estate is in its initial phase of settlement and that all residents moving in the estates will come from areas affected by clearance, residents will experience considerable stress from relocation and encounter adjustment problems in settling and integrating into the new community such as transport, finding school places for the children etc.. This is particularly so for residents to be resettled from Tiu Keng Leng who are mostly elderly over 70 years of age, in view of the political and historical background of Tiu Keng Leng and the residents' strong attachment to the community.
- c. Majority of the families in the Nau Tak Estate will be young nuclear families, and there is a great demand for community based support services for housewives and women to help them form self-help groups so as to strengthen the neighbourhood support and care and prevent family problems.

21.4 Focus of Intervention by CHT :

- a. To help families and residents to adapt to the lifestyle in the new town, and to strengthen the informal social support and care in the neighbourhood.
- b. To help the residents from different backgrounds to build new social relationships and integrate with the other residents in the estate.
- c. To help residents in need, such as women, young housewives, elderly singletons to form self-help groups so as to help them cope with family problems and stress resulting from moving to the new town.
- d. To facilitate effective and optimal utilisation of existing community resources by residents and social services through service mediation and referral.

STAFFING

22. The staffing structure of one community work team is :

1 SWO
1 ASWO
2 SWA
1 WW
1 CA
1 Workman II

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

23. The recurrent cost of one community work team is HK\$966,938 per annum. Thus the total cost for establishing 2 community work teams in new towns over the 3-year period is : HK\$6,481,130 (at 1992/93 prices, see Appendix)
24. The Lotteries Fund is requested to finance 70% of the total cost of the Pilot Project while operating agencies will contribute about 30% of the total cost.

SUPPORT FOR THE PILOT PROJECT

25. As mentioned in the outset of this paper, the Secretary for Home Affairs had given policy support to the Pilot Project but could not provide funding support. The Committee on Community Development had therefore endorsed and recommended funding support for the Pilot Project by non-government funding bodies. Should the pilot project prove successful, funding for a full-scale project would be considered at that time.

PREMISES

26. Operating agencies are expected to provide their own premises for the pilot project with assistance from concerned government departments, including CNTA, SWD and HD.

EVALUATION

27. The pilot project will be subject to a built-in evaluation under the auspice of the Committee on Community Development. It is recommended that a steering group consisting of representatives from HKCSS, SWD and CNTA be formed under the Committee to evaluate and monitor the progress of the project.
28. The evaluation will focus on the following areas:
 - 28.1 The extent to which the two CWTs had contributed towards building a caring and integrated community in the target estate.
 - 28.2 The impact of the building of informal social support networks in the target estate on the adaptation of residents to the new town environment at different stages of their settlement in the estate.
 - 28.3 The impact of the informal social support networks in meeting the needs of the residents and their relationships with formal care services.

September 1, 1993

Notes

- (1) Hong Kong 1991 Population Census Summary Result, Census Planning Section, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, p.71, p.68.
- (2) Nelson W.S. Chow, Social Adaptation in New Towns. A Report of a Survey on the Quality of Life of Tuen Mun Inhabitants, Department of Social Work and Social Administration, University of Hong Kong, July 1988.
- (3) Ibid., p.19
- (4) Ibid., pp.6-60
- (5) Hong Kong 1991 Population Census Basic Tables for District Board Districts, Census and Statistics Department, pp.40-41.
- (6) Nelson W.S. Chow, op. cit., p.62-69.
- (7) Ibid., pp.47-51.
- (8) Ibid., pp.4-5, and pp.64. For a review of Government's new town policy, please refer to Bristow R, Hong Kong's New Towns : A Selective Review. Hong Kong, Oxford University Press, Oxford New York, 1989.
- (9) Nelson W.S. Chow, op. cit., p.49
- (10) Walker K.N. et. al. "Social Support Networking and the Crisis of Bereavement", Social Science and Medicine, Vol. II, 1977, pp. 34-41.
- (11) White paper on Social Welfare Into the 1990s and Beyond, Hong Kong Government Printer, March 1991, Chapter III, p.18.

Appendix

Financial Implication of the Community Work Team in New Town Pilot Project
(as at 1992/93 prices)

I) Estimated Total Cost Per Community Work Team for 3 Years

		<u>HK(\$)</u>
First Year	Set Up Cost :	40,000
	Salary for :	
	½ SWO + 1 ASWO + 2 SWA +	916,938
	1 WW + 1 CA + ½ Workman II	
	Other Charges :	50,000

		1,006,938
Second Year	HK\$966,938 x 10% =	1,063,632
Third Year	HK\$1,063,632 x 10% =	1,169,995
	Total :	----- 3,240,565

**II) Estimated Total Cost of the Pilot Project

HK\$3,240,565 x 2 Teams = HK\$6,481,130

* Note: 10% inflation rate was used to project the cost for 2nd and 3rd year of the Pilot Project.

**The total cost of the Project was calculated at 1992/93 prices; 10% inflationary adjustments should be added to the total costs for each year should the Project be implemented.