

THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

FAMILY & COMMUNITY SERVICE

Background Information

Family Structure

- According to 2001 Population Census results, the total number of Hong Kong resident population was 6,708,389, while the number of domestic households was 2,133,000. Average household size in 1991 was 3.4 persons, which had dropped to 3.2 in 2002. The birth rate had dropped from 11.9% in 1994 to 7.1% in 2002¹.
- From 1981 to 2002, the crude marriage rates of male and female had been dropping. In 1991, the number of marriages per 1,000 males was 13.6, and that of females was 14.1. In 2002, the crude marriage rates of male and female had dropped to 9.7 and 9.1 respectively².
- The number of divorce or separation had been increasing. The proportion of divorce or separation for males in 1991 was 1.1%, which was increased to 2.1% in 2001. The proportion of that for females in 1991 was 1.4%, which was increased to 3.3% in 2001. It also reflected that the number of single parent family has been increasing.

Family Solidarity and Resilience

- According to the Social Development Index released by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, the sub-index of family solidarity in 2000 was already -72, which was further dropped to -124³ in 2001.
- The increase of family violence cases: In 2002, the number of new child abuse cases was 520⁴, which was decreased by 2.8% when compared with the figure in 2001. The number of battered spouse cases in 2002 was 3,034⁵, which was increased by 25.2% when compared with 2423 cases in 2001.
- The number of suicide cases in 1990s was around 600 to 700 on average per annum. The number in 1998 was 868, which was increased by 45% when compared to the 597 cases in 1997⁶. Whilst, in 2001 Hong Kong had around 1000 people committing suicide, the suicide rate has increased by more than 25% for the past three years with the rate of 16 per 100,000⁷. It reflects that the resilience of individual and family is low and their support network is weak.

¹ 2001 Population Census, Census and Statistics Department of HKSAR, 2002.

² Women and Men in Hong Kong Key Statistics, 2003 Edition, Census and Statistics Department of HKSAR, 2003.

³ Social Development Index 2002, The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 2002.

⁴ Child Protection Registry, Social Welfare Department of HKSAR, 2002.

⁵ Battered Spouse Registry, Social Welfare Department of HKSAR, 2001.

⁶ Report of Coroner's Court, Judiciary 1996-1998, HKSAR.

⁷ The HK JC Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention. (<http://www.hku.hk/csrrp/>)

Poverty

- In Hong Kong, the Gini coefficient has been increasing in the past twenty years. The figure in 1981, 1991 and 2001 were 0.451, 0.476 and 0.525⁸ respectively. In addition, the increase from 1991 to 2001 was even more rapid than in the years from 1981 to 1991. It reflects that poverty issue in Hong Kong is getting more serious in the past ten years.
- The unemployment rate in Hong Kong has been increasing since 1997. In the most recent quarter of May to July 2003, it hits the historic record of 8.7%⁹. The number of low-income families also increases accordingly.
- The number of homeless people has also been increasing in recent years. There is a trend that homeless people are getting younger and with higher education attainment. The number of homeless people in January 2000 was 819. It increased to 1,399 in February 2001, which was increased by 70.8%. Among the newly registered cases, 59% were aged 20 to 49, and 73% had received formal education¹⁰.

New Arrivals

At present, there are 55,000 persons on average each year coming from the Mainland to stay in Hong Kong. According to the statistics released by the Home Affairs Department and Immigration Department¹¹, there were 317,370 new arrivals had come to stay in Hong Kong in the years from 1997 to 2002. The statistics in 2002 reflected that 52.7% of the new arrivals aged 25 to 44, and 66.3% had received secondary and even higher education. In addition, a study conducted by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service in 2001¹² and 2003¹³ respectively, revealed that adults in Hong Kong were having lower acceptance than children towards new arrivals. Owing to cultural difference, the effort on enhancing mutual understanding and acceptance among local people and the new arrivals has to be strengthened.

Community Health

- The number of people infected with HIV/AIDS had increased from 776 to 2,116 from the 4th quarter of 1996 to June 2003. It had increased by 2.7 times¹⁴.
- As for substance abuse, the number of newly reported substance abusers in 2002 was 5,182, which was increased by 65.3% by comparing to the figures in 1999, i.e. 3,135. The number of substance abusers aged below 21 had also increased by 8.7%, from 1,969 in 1999 to 2,140¹⁵ in 2002. Thus, the prevention of the youth from misusing drugs has the urgent need.

⁸ Ming Pao (2001) (www.mingpaonews.com/20011027/27gbk.gif)

⁹ Government Information Services (2003) (http://www.info.gov.hk/censtatd/chinese/press/labour1/lb1_latest_index.html)

¹⁰ Project on Helping Street Sleepers - Paper of LegCo Welfare Panel (2001)

¹¹ Home Affairs Department and Immigration Department (2003). Statistics on New Arrivals from the Mainland (1st Quarter 2003).

¹² HKCSS (2001). A Study on Cross-Cultural Impression and Acceptance between Local People and New Arrivals in Hong Kong. HK:HKCSS.

¹³ HKCSS (2003). A Study on Cross-Cultural Impression and Acceptance between Local People and New Arrivals in Hong Kong. HK:HKCSS.

¹⁴ Surveillance Reports of Department of Health (www.info.gov.hk/aids/chinese/surveillance/index.htm)

¹⁵ Report no 51 of Central Registry of Drug Abuse 1992-2001, Narcotics Division 2003

Future Trends and Challenges

▪ **Family Problems due to Low Family Solidarity**

Under the economic downturn, Hong Kong families face enormous pressures. Besides, owing to family disintegration, family solidarity and capability of solving problems are decreasing and hence bring forth a series of family problems, e.g. juvenile delinquency, divorce, family violence...etc. To rebuild family solidarity, the Government and NGOs both stress on family education. Both parties aim at assisting needy family in developing their problem solving ability through public education and outreaching effort so as to enhance family solidarity.

▪ **Enhance Social Integration and Develop Social Capital**

In view of the formation of nuclear families, urbanization and acute unemployment, the adverse impact on the disadvantaged groups, such as new arrivals, low income groups, persons with low qualification and skills, middle aged persons, women and minority race groups are much worse. It is necessary to strengthen the support network at neighbourhood, individual, family as well as community levels so as to raise the residents' sense of belonging to the community and their ability in facing adversity, and promote mutual trust and their never yielding spirit. This would enhance social integration and empower individual, family and community to become valuable social capital.

▪ **Service Integration and Service Diversification**

Due to the trend of service integration and diversification, continuous improvement are required in aspects of programme design, work approach and skills of workers so as to provide more flexible and effective one-stop service for users. In addition to the provision of developmental/educational group activities, mutual help group, therapy group and casework services, service providers will also have close contact with the residents proactively so as to bring services to the needy individuals and families. Besides, the existing services stress on community need with an aim to cater for the needs of different target groups of the community and promote self-help and mutual help among themselves. The ultimate objective of the above effort is to build up solidarity in the community.

Besides, Pilot Project on Integrated Family Service Centre was launched in April 2002. These pilot projects strengthen the cooperation between family service center and community-based service such as community center, children and youth center and breakthrough the boundary between the two types of service, which further promote formation of community-based integrated service.

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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	No. Of Service Unit
Integrated Family Service Centre (IFSC)	IFSC provides educational, developmental and remedial groups and casework counselling to families. Besides, IFSC also provides outreaching service to reach the needy families.	15 Pilot Integrated Family Service Centres have been set up since April 2002 (for 2 years)
Family Service Centre	Family casework service is provided and 82,064 cases have been handled during the year 2000-2001.	66 Family Service Centres/Integrated Family Service Centres
Family Life Education	Family Life Education Officer is responsible for providing education programme to adolescents, couple-to-be, parents, parents-to-be and married couples to promote the importance of family life. Each officer is responsible for providing service for 1,200 target service users.	51.5 Family Life Education Officers (2002-2003)
Family and Child Protection Service Unit	To address the problems of family violence and child abuse, the Government has set up these special units to handle related cases. There are 55 caseworkers and 3,012 cases have been handled during the year 2000-2001.	5 regional specialized units (FCPSUs)
Single Parent Centres	The number of single parent rises significantly due to the breaking down of family. Five Single Parent Centres have been set up to provide group and casework services and facilitate the formation of mutual help groups for individuals and families in need.	5 Single Parent Centres since 2001 (for 3 years from 2001 onwards)
Post-Migration Centre	Since there are 150 new arrivals coming to Hong Kong from the Mainland everyday, the Government has set up Post-migration Centres in new arrivals densely populated districts to provide one-stop service to assist new arrivals to integrate into the local community.	8 Post-migration Centres (for 3 years from 2001 onwards)

Services for Victims of Family Violence and Sexual Assault	Four refuge centres provide temporary accommodation to females and their children in face of family violence. The Family Crisis Support Centre provides crises intervention with overnight accommodation, temporary retreat and other support services. For victims of sexual assault, there are 2 agencies providing counselling and medical services and one-stop crisis intervention service respectively.	4 shelters for women; 1 Family Crisis Centre; 2 programmes for victims of sexual assault
Community Centre	Community Centres serve people of all ages to gather, to meet and to interact with the one another in the community. 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	14 Community Centres
Neighbourhood Level Community Development Project (NLCDP)	NLCDPs were introduced to provide community development service to the deprived and transient communities where the provision of welfare services and facilities was inadequate or non-existent.	22 NLCDPs (2003-2004)
Integrated Neighbourhood Project (INP)	INPs provide intensive outreaching work in old urban area. They reach out to the target client and assist them to integrate into the community, access to mainstream service, enhance their ability in mutual help and self-help and cultivate their sense of belonging. During the year 2001-2002, 12 INPs have reached 12,500 target clients.	4 Integrated Neighbourhood Project Teams (2003-2004)
Urban Renewal Social Service Team	To provide residents who are affected by urban renewal projects with individual and family counselling services and facilitate the disadvantaged groups to rebuild their support network so as to strengthen self-help and mutual help among themselves.	4 service teams since 2002 & 2003 (for 1 year)
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 since February 2002

Service for the Street Sleepers	To solve the housing and other problems of the homeless and facilitate their re-integration into society, outreaching service team for street sleepers has been set up and NGOs are subvented to provide day relief service, short-term accommodation and night outreaching service to the homeless.	4 Day Relief Centres; 7 Temporary Centres; 10 Hostel for Single Person; 3 night Outreaching Teams (since 2001, for 3 years)
Services for people infected with HIV/AIDS	To promote community education on the prevention of AIDS, provide HIV antibody test, as well as counselling and support services for people with AIDS/HIV and their family members.	10 NGOs / Government Departments providing preventive, supportive and counseling services on people infected with AIDS/HIV and their family members.
Services for the Substance Abusers	To promote community education on prevention of substance abuse and to provide counselling, treatment, rehabilitation and employment services for substance abusers so as to facilitate their re-integration into society.	25 NGOs / Government Departments providing preventive, supportive and counseling services on substance abuse.

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