

主旨: HKFWS Response to the Consultation on Population policy.pdf
附件: HKFWS Response to the Consultation on Population policy.pdf; Letter to Secretariat.pdf

Dear Sirs,

Please find attached the Society's view to your consideration.

Best regards,
Hong Kong Family Welfare Society

香港家庭福利會

(本會為註冊之有限公司)

HONG KONG FAMILY WELFARE SOCIETY

(Incorporated with Limited Liability)

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since 1949

Secretary of the Steering Committee on Population Policy

26/F., Central Government Offices

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Hong Kong

21st February 2014

Dear Sirs,

Hong Kong Family Welfare Society's View on Population Policy

Enclosed is the submission of our Society regarding the Population Policy. Should you have any queries, please contact the undersigned at phone number 2527 3171.

Yours sincerely,

Cecilia Kwan (Mrs.)

Executive Director

/Enclosure



香港公益金資助機構
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65th
Anniversary

Hong Kong Family Welfare Society
Response to the Consultation on Population Policy

1. **Introduction and Stance**

1.1 We acknowledge the population trends described in the consultation paper and fully recognize the needs for policies and actions to address the challenges and opportunities arisen.

1.2 Objective of Hong Kong's population policy

We agree that the objective of Hong Kong's population policy should be "To develop and nurture a population that will continuously support and drive Hong Kong's socio-economic development as Asia's world city, and to engender a socially inclusive and cohesive society that allows individuals to realize their potential, with a view to attaining quality life for all residents and families."

1.3 From "Five Way to Manage Challenges" to "people and family oriented policy"

In spite of the stated objective, the five ways proposed in the consultation paper to manage the challenges disproportionately focused on securing adequate labor force for economy productivity. Instead, we propose a "people and family oriented policy" that promotes respect, balances and sustains social and economic development, therefore, **we make our recommendations based on family, elderly and youth perspectives respectively.**

2. **Our recommendations on Fostering a Supportive Environment for Forming and Raising Families:**

- ◆ We recognize the importance of fostering a supportive environment for forming and raising families in view of the fast aging population and the alarmingly low birth rate. Yet any measures to tackle the issue should not just focus on boosting up the fertility rate. Or it will inevitably lead to a failure. The experience by Singapore clearly demonstrates that. Despite all the efforts made, the birth rate in Singapore remains low, with a slight increase from the bottom of 1.16 in 2010 to a peak of 1.29 in the Year of the Dragon in 2012, and then a return to 1.19 in 2013.
- ◆ Measures should be directed to call for a **comprehensive family policy**, with adequate efforts to enhance public recognition on the **value of the family** rather than just focusing on economic growth, provide adequate support for its caring

function, developing effective ways to promote healthy courtship, marriage and parenthood, offering sufficient support in times of troubles, and promoting family-friendly working modes and culture. **Resources to strengthen existing family services** are essential.

- ◆ The decision made by individuals to raise children depends a lot on their projection on the **social, economic and political outlook of Hong Kong**. The recent news about the difficulties and anxieties a local parent has to face over childbearing, ranging from the purchase of milk powder to the search of a school placement could make any potential parent hesitate. The government needs to review all related policies and their impacts on families so that couples can really feel being supported in their process of raising children.
- ◆ While we have no objection towards direct subsidies or allowances to raise the fertility level, we agree that policies which **reduce the opportunity costs of having children**, like subsidized childcare, family-friendly workplace practices, etc, will yield greater influence on the fertility rate than the subsidies alone.
- ◆ Listed below are specific strategies that worth consideration.

2.1 Increase the quantity and flexibility of childcare and after-school service

- ◆ Demand for childcare service is keen in view of the limited supply. Parents often have to waitlist for quite a long time before their children can be admitted. Besides, many parents may need only temporary childcare service from time to time to facilitate their works and in times of emergency, yet the existing service mode could hardly cater those needs. Consequently, more **resources to strengthen and expand present-child-care services** are needed, both to reduce the opportunity costs of raising a family as well as to free the carers, usually the female members in the family, so that they can choose to work if preferred.
- ◆ The **use of service coupons for families to purchase child-care services** can be considered as these can allow more flexibility and choice for the parents. It is also worthy to study the use of service coupons to “purchase” the services not just from organizations or corporations, but from more informal channels like relatives and neighbors. Such coupons can be used to redeem food from food bank (which have distribution spots all over Hong Kong), if cash is considered not appropriate for the time being. We may draw reference from the “Health Care Voucher” that every child under age 6 could be given a set of “child-care service coupons” regularly either through respective Maternal and Child Health Centres or kindergartens. They can be free to give out these coupons to neighbors or relatives as “returns” for their child care service. If they do not

need assistance from others, they can redeem food through these coupons themselves. This measure can also allow some home-makers to earn some “income” and engage in “economic” activities in some sense.

- ◆ The government can encourage **enterprises to incorporate child-care services** as part of their fringe benefits or family-friendly policies for employees, by giving them some tax allowance or giving them credits as family-friendly companies. Enterprises of a bigger scale may operate such services on their own, or to purchase services from NGOs.

2.2 Encourage family-friendly work modes

- ◆ Family-friendly work modes are to be encouraged: **Part-time job opportunities, home office and flexi working hours** are to be promoted. With the advancement in technology, these work modes are certainly more achievable than before.
- ◆ **Paid parental leave** and **paternity leave** are good gestures in recognizing the parental roles of employees.
- ◆ The government, as the largest employer in the city, may need to take the lead for allowing such work modes first in the civil service.

2.3 Support homemakers to join the workforce and balance their carer roles

- ◆ While we agree to offer favorable conditions so that home-makers and family carers can be free to make a choice for joining, continuing or re-joining the workforce, we recognize the importance of promoting **respect for individual’s choice** to remain as full time homemakers in their families. This is important for upholding the value of a family in relationship to economic returns. Or we may be working to achieve one goal, but at the same time jeopardizing the others.
- ◆ The fore-mentioned measures in increasing the quantity and flexibility of existing **child-care and after-school services and family-friendly work modes** can allow a better balance between work duties and carer roles for many home-makers.
- ◆ We also support the provision of suitable **re-training programs** for the homemakers so that they can meet the market’s needs and re-join the workforce. Yet more communication, involvement and liaison with potential employers are essential to help the trainees to secure their “first” job after the re-training.

3. **Our recommendations on Elderly Employment**

We agree to create favorable conditions so that elders with the capacity and interests to work can continue to work, we **respect the choice of individual elder** to choose retirement and devote their time and energy to other endeavors besides economic activities, such as voluntary work, leisure and education.

3.1 **Incentives to stay in workforce:** The Government may provide incentives, e.g. tax reduction, to encourage extension of employment beyond retirement age.

3.2 **Anti-ageism and Discrimination:** Educate employers and human resource managers in business sectors, against ageism and develop Elder Friendly Employment Practice. Hong Kong may make reference to overseas' practice to encourage elderly employment. E.g. The British government has drawn up a code of practice to raise employer awareness about the benefits of employing older workers, and Germany has introduced a gradual retirement scheme, allowing Germans to work part-time leading up to retirement.

3.3 **Government support to employers on elderly employment:** Hong Kong may make reference from Japan to set up a government unit "Organization for Employment of the Elderly, Persons with Disabilities and Job Seekers" (OEED) to encourage elderly employment, persons with disabilities and job seekers. Under this unit, subsidies can be established to stabilize employment of the elderly.

◆ **Grant to Promote the Utilization of Elderly Workers:** In order to promote utilization of the elderly, grants may be provided to employers who expand job categories of elderly workers and/or develop an elderly employment management system, thereby creating workplaces in which they can work energetically. It is suggested that the amount of the grants is proportionate to one-half of the necessary costs. This may start with employment of older adults in government units or NGOs.

◆ **Elderly Employment Stabilization Law:** Hong Kong may consider establishing Elderly Employment Stabilization Law, like Japan, that employers must implement elderly employment security measures up to the age of 65 for all persons who desire them. These measures include raising or abolishing their retirement age and introducing a continued employment system to secure employment of workers who have reached the retirement age.

- ◆ Professional Support: In order to support establishing such conditions at companies, OEED can certify specialists with professional and practical expertise in the field of elderly employment (such as management and labor consultants, small- and medium-sized enterprise management consultants, and social insurance labor consultants) as advisors on employment of the elderly.

3.4 We can promote **“gradual” retirement** after the official retirement age by means of allowing more flexible work modes and contracts, including part-time works, flexi work hours and even some changes in the job nature or workplace. This can also facilitate gradual adjustment for most elders towards their actual retirement.

3.5 **Assist elders to improve their job seeking ability and reduce the negative effects of unemployment**: NGOs may offer individually-tailored assistance to long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged job seekers to address the employment barriers. Besides, there can be more educational opportunities for older adults in tertiary education to facilitate acquirement of new skills. E.g. no age limit on entry requirement and financial subsidy.

4. Our recommendations on Enhancing Workforce in Elder Care

4.1 **Paid Family Caregivers**: Considering Chinese culture of filial duties, women have generally always been the caregivers of society, raising families, caring for elderly and disabled relatives and friends. They can be trained to provide caring service to family members. Hong Kong can make reference to the Cash & Counseling programs of United States. Family members could be paid caregivers and there are eligibility criteria on care receiver including age requirement, disabilities/health requirements/family status, financial status; assessment on whether the family member is qualified to provide paid care; amount/hours of benefit, etc.

4.2 **Foreign Domestic Worker Grant**: Set up Foreign Domestic Worker Grant to offer monthly grant to support families who need to hire a foreign domestic worker to care for the frail elderly and persons with at least moderate disability. This may help to release the family manpower and reduce early admission to residential care of elderly.

4.3 **Approved qualifications on Elder Care with promotion ladder**: Build up more educational institutes for building the professionalism and competence of the long-term care workforce. Government can provide funding support for these

institutes to conduct approved courses for family members or foreign domestic helpers who are the main caregivers to attend the courses. Besides, we suggest building up manpower capacity for intermediate and long-term care professionals and provide expansion opportunities for these staffs to upgrade their skills through training and promotion ladder. We recommend developing a profession on geriatric care manager with specialty in elderly care assessment and service coordination to arrange users for the right community care facilities/services and make good use of government granted community service vouchers.

5. Our recommendations on Establishing Elderly Policy

- 5.1 Vision, Culture and Long-term Care for the Elderly:** May consider changing from the current narrow focus on dependency and illness to a more inclusive approach of an older people-centred vision and culture which promotes quality of life and choice. The government should take the lead to cultivate new vision and culture in government and public which recognize the value of older people in society both individually and as a whole. On the other hand, there should be a Long-term Care Policy to cater the social and medical needs of the ageing population.
- 5.2 Age-friendly community:** The government should adapt its structures and services to be accessible and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities, such as age-friendly spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, and social and health services (WHO, 2007).
- 5.3 Legal Protection:** A stronger legal framework based on age equality and a rights-based approach for all older people is required, in order to address age discrimination, support the contribution which older people make to society, and underpin the rights of older people as citizens and consumers. This is important in view of the increasing risk of elder abuse in the ageing society.
- 5.4 Poverty and income in retirement:** A comprehensive review and reform is needed for the legal and financial structure which underpins income in retirement, and addresses poverty. With sufficient independent resources, older persons are more able to make their decisions and choices in their older age.
- 5.5 Information and resources for choice and control:** Improvements are needed to the provision of information, income maximization and other advice and advocacy to enable older people to have greater choice and control in older age,

especially at key points of transition in their lives. Pre-retirement planning includes providing information to older people about key transition areas, so that they can anticipate the potential impact of the transitions.

5.6 Quality of life and well-being: action is needed to promote a quality of life and well-being approach through:

- ◆ Developing Quality of Life Strategies and partnerships with older people at community level;
- ◆ Rethinking approaches in social service delivery;
 - ✧ *Social Service from traditional welfare approach on low income people to a broader approach to older people across all economic groups as customers, and which draws in the private sector as partners to develop programs meeting market needs of older people as consumers.*
 - ✧ *Public services from remedial approach to preventive approach i.e. service focus from serving the most vulnerable older people at times of crisis (smaller percentage of older population) to an approach which enables the wider older population (large percentage of older population) to remain independent for as long as possible and live their lives to the fullest e.g. adopting a preventive-health approach for pre-frail elders. Hence, more older adults are included in the universal services.*

5.7 Strategy, resourcing and commissioning at central and local levels: in order to plan successfully for an ageing society, a stronger and more comprehensive strategy, resourcing and commissioning framework is required.

- ◆ Central level: Develop a broad-based government strategy for an ageing society; a whole-system financial framework to rethink resource use and priorities. E.g. Current secondary care, tertiary care and long care health care financing are predominately taxed based. The shrinking tax-paying population will cause serious problems to the taxed-based systems. In facing aging population, tax and private health insurance are ineffective and retirement savings by Mandatory Provident Fund are grossly inadequate for low income groups. Government has to take concrete steps to think of Long-term Health Care Insurance.
- ◆ Local level: Adopt new holistic approaches which turn the planning system from the current narrow focus on managing dependency for vulnerable older people to promoting inclusion and active ageing for the older population as a whole; New local strategy and commissioning structures, with older people as partners, are needed.

6. Our recommendations on Developing Youth Potentials

To handle the labor mismatch mentioned in the consultation paper, and develop the potentials of youth, we have the following suggestions.

6.1 Competence-based development rather than knowledge-based development

We need to focus on developing the social, emotional and problem solving competence of youth to meet the rapid change on knowledge and skill set required by the society.

6.2 Diversifying Education opportunities

To facilitate young people with different level of ability and competence, it is important to provide diversifying education opportunities to youth, including those who drop out of the formal DSE curriculum. Students with special education needs, who may otherwise be genius, need special support to develop their talent and life goal planning.

6.3 Expanding of our economic base and career choices

The consultation paper mentioned that the Economic Development Commission has identified 4 industry clusters, namely, Transportation, Convention and Exhibition Industries and Tourism, Manufacturing Industries, Innovative Technology and Cultural and Creative Industries, and Professional Services. The government should conduct more elaborate manpower projection studies to assess the types of talent/skill required for the above-mentioned industry clusters, and help the public especially the young people and their families understand the career paths, job opportunities and career prospects, with resource and policy input on training and investment.

6.4 Transforming “Social Values” on Career Development

Education on how to live energetically and fruitfully in adverse situation is recommended in the present sophisticated Hong Kong environment. Besides, we suggest the government to give more support to young people to choose those "unpopular" industries with great social values, e.g. elder care. It is important for the government to take the initiatives to provide on-job-training and support to turn these skills into assets that eventually help the youth shape their career and life chance. Government can provide funding support for institutes to conduct approved courses and set up promotional ladders to care managers. Re-labeling those unpopular industries helps to remove the

hindrance from family and society on the youth upon their career options. On the other hand, it can meet the pressing needs of elder care.

6.5 Building on the competence of youth, e.g. IT and innovative competence

Young people who are innovative and growing up in the IT society already developed high competence in Information Technology. The government should facilitate them to make use of their own assets to develop their careers, by providing funding and other support.

6.6 Facilitate social integration of youth from mainland China and ethnic minorities

We suggest that the government should activate their productivity with suitable training and support, and removing the language barriers that stopping them from climbing up the social ladder. The government took a good first lead to establish a Chinese-as-second-language curriculum, but this is also important to guarantee the proper validation of this curriculum in order to facilitating them to contribute to Hong Kong.

6.7 Facilitate transition from school to work

From school to work is an important life stage, yet there is a service gap in existing social services to address related issues. Beyond school-based education/vocational training, youth required career based development and life-goal planning to identify the personal and social value of their work, and development work-related competence in their first jobs.

6.8 More collaboration between employers and education institutions

More collaboration between employers and education institutions on providing placement opportunities to youth can on one hand prepare the youth for their work life, on the other hand, help employees to choose suitable job candidates.

6.9 Establish Career Counselling and Life-goal Planning Centres

We suggest establishing Career Counselling and Life-goal Planning Centres to support and cooperate with different stakeholders of the community to carry out life-goal planning work. The centres can on the one hand increase the intensity of the community-based or/and project-based life goal planning programs to the youth, parents and teachers to accept the concept of job diversity and widen the social expectation on youth development. On the other hand, it can provide individual counselling and life-goal planning services for the needy. The centres in different districts can also uptake the role of “Integrating different cultures and values” within the locality to solve the culture conflicts and improve

the cohesion. In the long run, the Career counselling and life-goal planning centres can expand to promote elder and home-makers' life-goal planning and development.

To conclude, we promote a “people and family oriented policy” that balances and sustains social and economic development. It should improve the quality of life for all social groups, not just through economic growth, but also by providing equal opportunities for, and promoting respect and integration among all groups.

Reference

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