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## Chapter 3

# Poverty Alleviation and Support for the Disadvantaged

## Preamble

In December 2012 the Commission on Poverty (CoP) was reinstated to consider policies and measures to prevent and ease poverty and social exclusion, as well as to promote social mobility. Six Task Forces have been established, covering improving the social security and retirement protection systems; supporting the underprivileged who have special needs; promoting education, employment and training to encourage self-reliance and better social mobility; engaging the community and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration among the Government, businesses and the community; and implementation of poverty alleviation and prevention measures and social innovation initiatives funded by the Community Care Fund (CCF) and the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund respectively.

At the first CoP Summit on 28 September 2013, the Government announced a poverty line and provided analysis of the population below that line to guide future work. The working poor have been identified as deserving Government's priority attention. Through the proposed Low Income Working Family Allowance, low-income families, particularly those with children, will receive strengthened financial support.

To help address intergenerational poverty, we will ensure that children and young people enjoy equal opportunities to quality education and training irrespective of background.

For those disadvantaged members of the community who cannot support themselves, we will continue to meet their basic living needs through the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme (CSSA) acting as a safety net of last resort. For those who can work, education, training and employment support will be further developed to enable them to share the benefits of economic growth.

We will strengthen support for persons with special needs, including persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities (EMs), single parents and families at risk. We will seek to remove the barriers that hold them back from realising and fulfilling their aspirations. Client-centred, family-focused and community-based services that provide integrated, cross-sectoral support will continue to be developed.

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## New Initiatives

*We will:*

### **Poverty Alleviation**

#### (a) Supporting Low-income Working Families

- Make arrangements to introduce a pro-employment and pro-child allowance for low-income working families. (LWB)
- Invite CCF to continue to provide a living subsidy for low-income households not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA. (HAB)

#### (b) Enhancing Upward Mobility

- Invite CCF to consider to provide hostel subsidy for needy undergraduate students who reside in hostel so as not to deprive them of hostel life due to a lack of means. (EDB)
- Invite CCF to consider to increase the academic expenses grant for needy students pursuing eligible self-financing post-secondary programmes. (EDB)
- Subsidise needy post-secondary students to participate in overseas exchange programmes. (EDB)
- Give all student loan borrowers the option to start repaying their loans one year after completion of studies. (EDB)

- Implement the “Future Stars Programme” in collaboration with businesses and the non-governmental sector to provide corporate visits and short-term workplace training and internship opportunities for young people of low-income families. (CSO)
- Provide greater flexibility and incentive funding for schools under the School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes to benefit more needy primary and secondary students. (EDB)
- Enhance the After School Care Programme organised by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for children aged 6 to 12 by extending the service hours of some centres and providing additional fee-waiving and fee-reduction quotas. (LWB)
- Earmark \$300 million for the Child Development Fund. (LWB)

(c) Regularisation of CCF Programmes

- Incorporate the following CCF programmes into the Government’s regular assistance programme from 2014-15 –
  - provision of free lunch at schools for primary students receiving full grant assistance under the Student Financial Assistance Schemes through the schools; (EDB)
  - enhancement of the flat rate grant for primary and secondary students under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme; (EDB)
  - enhancement of the financial assistance for needy students pursuing eligible programmes below sub-degree level; (EDB)

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- provision of rent allowance to recipients of CSSA who have been Tenants Purchase Scheme flat owners for more than five years; (LWB)
  - provision of subsidy for pre-school children from low-income families to pay for self-financing rehabilitation services run by the NGO sector while wait-listing for subvented services; (LWB) and
  - provision of subsidy for needy persons with severe physical disabilities living in the community and requiring constant care to cover their expenses for renting medical equipment and purchase of medical consumables. (LWB)

(d) Social Security and Retirement Protection

- Include post-secondary students of CSSA families in the calculation of rent allowance so that the families' entitlement to rent allowance will not be affected when their family members are receiving post-secondary education. (LWB)
- Increase the grants for selected items of school-related expenses for primary and secondary students of CSSA families. (LWB)
- Implement a pilot incentive scheme under CCF to encourage CSSA able-bodied recipients to leave the safety net through employment. (LWB)
- Invite CCF to continue to provide a one-off subsidy to CSSA households living in rented private housing and paying rent which exceeds the maximum rent allowance under the CSSA Scheme. (LWB)

- Consider the way forward for retirement protection after completion of the study commissioned by CoP. (CSO)

## **Supporting the Disadvantaged**

### (a) Supporting Families

- Enhance the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project by extending the age limit of children receiving the service from aged under six to aged under nine, increasing funding to operators to enhance social work support to the service, and providing additional places for home-based child care service under the Project. (LWB)

### (b) Enhancing Services for Persons with Disabilities

- Upgrade the Commissioner for Rehabilitation's ranking and strengthen the establishment of his team with a view to enhancing co-ordination among various bureaux and departments. (LWB)
- Regularise the Pilot Bought Place Scheme for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities, with the cap of subsidised places in each home raised from 55% to 70%. (LWB)
- Launch an integrated support service programme using a case management approach to provide one-stop support service for persons with severe physical disabilities who are in need of constant care. (LWB)
- Increase the manpower of District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities to introduce a case management service approach. (LWB)

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- Enhance the short-term day and residential care services for persons with disabilities, in particular those aged 6 to 14, to relieve the stress of their families/carers. (LWB)
  - Increase the manpower of day training centres for persons with disabilities to strengthen the care and support for ageing service users. (LWB)
  - Strengthen the manpower of Multi-service Centres for Hearing Impaired Persons and relevant Social and Recreational Centres for the Disabled to enhance sign language interpretation services for persons with hearing impairment. (LWB)
  - Increase funding to better support the operation and development of the Financial Support Scheme for Self-help Organisations for Persons with Disabilities/Chronic Illnesses. (LWB)
  - Inject \$200 million into the Hong Kong Paralympians Fund to strengthen the support for athletes with disabilities. (LWB/HAB)
  - Promote the Talent-Wise Employment Charter and Inclusive Organisations Recognition Scheme to mobilise employers in the territory to actively participate in promoting the employment of persons with disabilities. (LWB)
  - Raise the daily rate of incentive payment in Sheltered Workshops and Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services Centres to further encourage persons with disabilities to participate in vocational rehabilitation training. (LWB)

- Extend the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities to green minibuses by phases starting from the first quarter of 2015. (LWB)
- (c) Improving Services for Ethnic Minorities
- Introduce a package of measures to enhance education support for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students, notably EM students, in learning Chinese language, by –
    - providing a “Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework” for NCS primary and secondary students with supporting learning and teaching materials to facilitate their effective learning of Chinese as a second language with a view to enabling them to bridge over to mainstream Chinese language classes;
    - providing an Applied Learning (Chinese Language) subject at senior secondary levels to be pegged at Levels 1 to 3 of the Qualifications Framework as an alternative qualification for NCS students in order to enhance their employability;
    - developing Vocational Chinese Language courses recognised under the Qualifications Framework for NCS school leavers;



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- providing enhanced funding support to schools to facilitate implementation of the “Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework” with effect from the 2014/15 school year. The additional funding can enable schools to regularise effective modes of support for Chinese language learning of NCS students, including provision of intensive support and adoption of split-class teaching mode, to help NCS students bridge over to mainstream Chinese classes. Besides, schools may employ EM teaching assistants for better communication with NCS parents so as to enhance home-school co-operation;
  - stepping up school-based professional support to assist schools in adapting school-based curriculum and learning and teaching materials as well as enhancing the professional capacity of teachers in teaching Chinese as a second language;
  - setting up a dedicated team in EDB for implementation and monitoring of the enhanced funding support for schools in Chinese language learning of NCS students;
  - formulating a research framework to facilitate the evaluation of the effectiveness of various support measures for NCS students, including the development of a systematic Chinese language learning progression pathway for NCS students; and

- strengthening support for kindergartens to promote NCS children’s early adaptation to mainstream schools by building a more inclusive, friendly and Chinese-rich learning environment in kindergartens. (EDB)
- Enhance support services to help EMs integrate into the community through –
  - setting up a new support service centre for EMs (the sixth centre) in Kwai Tsing district;
  - establishing youth units in all support service centres and sub-centres for EMs to provide dedicated programmes for EM youths;
  - implementing an Ambassador Scheme for EM youths to reach out to them, understand their needs and difficulties, and make referrals where necessary; and
  - strengthening manpower support for support services for EMs by recruiting additional staff who are familiar with the culture of EMs and fluent in their languages. (HAB)
- Strengthen the engagement with EMs by promoting police services and fight crime initiatives to them, and encouraging EM youths to participate in Junior Police Call with the aim of increasing the number of EM Junior Police Call members to 2 500 in five years. (SB)

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(d) Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs

- Further enhance the support for students with special educational needs in ordinary schools by increasing the grant rates of the Learning Support Grant by 30% in the 2014/15 school year, and thereafter adjusting the grant rates and its ceiling annually according to the change in the Composite Consumer Price Index. (EDB)
- Launch a number of measures to improve special education services in special schools with effect from the 2014/15 school year, including –
  - providing an additional grant for the boarding section of special schools to enhance the support for boarders with medical complexity;
  - improving the manpower for boarding services;
  - providing additional teacher assistants for schools for children with intellectual disability, physical disability, and visual impairment cum intellectual disability as well as the psychiatric classes of the hospital school; and
  - reducing progressively the class size in the school for children with visual impairment and schools for social development. (EDB)

(e) Strengthening Cross-sectoral Collaboration

- Inject \$400 million into the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged to encourage further cross-sectoral collaboration to launch projects that can cater for the various needs of the disadvantaged and benefit more people. Of this sum, \$200 million will be dedicated to provide more after-school learning and support initiatives for primary and secondary school students from a disadvantaged background through matching grants via the Fund. (LWB)
- Launch the “Bless HK” campaign under CoP in the first half of 2014 to promote caring towards the underprivileged and the spirit of mutual help, and to foster collaboration among businesses, the non-governmental sector and Government in poverty alleviation. (CSO)

**Social Welfare Planning and Administration**

- Launch in collaboration with NGOs the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses with the aim of providing diversified services and self-financed facilities, in particular facilities for elderly and rehabilitation services, by optimising the use of land owned by social welfare organisations through in-situ expansion or redevelopment. (LWB)
- Inject \$10 billion into the Lotteries Fund to provide sufficient resources to implement the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses and other welfare projects within the remit of the Lotteries Fund. (LWB)

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- Enhance the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System by allowing NGOs more flexibility in using the Provident Fund reserve, and by increasing provision to strengthen central administrative and supervisory support for NGOs; to enhance “Other Charges” that cover other operating expenses such as food costs; and to assist NGOs in recruiting and retaining paramedical staff more effectively or in hiring paramedical services. (LWB)
  - Undertake a consultancy study on the feasibility of setting up a centralised platform to provide a one-stop, user-friendly administrative service to receive, process and approve applications for public benefits. (EU)

## On-going Initiatives

*We are:*

### **Work of the Commission on Poverty**

- Updating the poverty line annually to monitor Hong Kong's poverty situation on an on-going basis, assist policy formulation and assess policy effectiveness. (CSO)
- Combating poverty by exploring issues including education, employment and training, special needs groups, social security and retirement protection, and societal engagement through relevant Task Forces under CoP. (CSO)
- Continuing to draw up more new pilot programmes under CCF in collaboration with other Task Forces under CoP to further assist the underprivileged and low-income families. (CSO)
- Making preparations to invite applications for the \$500 million Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund to support innovative projects to address social needs through entrepreneurship. (CSO)

### **Poverty Alleviation**

#### (a) Helping Low-income Families

- Implementing the enhanced Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme and commencing a comprehensive review in 2014. The aim is to strengthen support for workers at grassroots level by providing relief for their work-related travelling expenses. (LWB)

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- Implementing the short-term food assistance services. (LWB)

(b) Enhancing Upward Mobility

- Continuing to roll out projects under the Child Development Fund and piloting the school-based approach to promote the longer-term development of children aged between 10 and 16 from a disadvantaged background. (LWB)
- Implementing various student financial assistance schemes to ensure that no student in Hong Kong will be denied access to education due to a lack of means. (EDB)

(c) Social Security and Retirement Protection

- Implementing the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance under the CSSA Scheme to help employable CSSA recipients secure employment and achieve self-reliance. (LWB)
- Conducting public consultation on proposals regarding the introduction of a default/core fund with fee control that is based on a long-term investment strategy to balance investment risk and return, with a view to facilitating the choice of fund by Mandatory Provident Fund scheme members. (FSTB)
- Preparing legislative amendments to –
  - facilitate the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority to perform its functions more effectively;
  - simplify certain operational requirements by trustees so as to increase their scope for fee reduction;

- allow phased withdrawal of Mandatory Provident Fund benefits; and
- allow early withdrawal of Mandatory Provident Fund benefits on the ground of terminal illness. (FSTB)

## **Supporting the Disadvantaged**

### (a) Supporting Families

- Increasing by phases the number of residential child care places to enhance support and protection for children and families in need. (LWB)
- Following up on the Law Reform Commission Report on Child Custody and Access, including preparing legislative and implementation proposals with an aim to further engage stakeholders before embarking on legislation. (LWB)
- Combating domestic violence through the provision of preventive, supportive and specialised services to victims and families in need, as well as publicity and public education. (LWB)
- Implementing the Victim Support Programme for Victims of Family Violence to enhance support services for victims, as well as the Batterer Intervention Programme and Anti-violence Programme to enhance counselling and psycho-educational services for batterers. (LWB)
- Monitoring the implementation of the Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance. (LWB)
- Providing support services for victims of sexual violence. (LWB)



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(b) Enhancing Services for Persons with Disabilities

- Promoting the spirit and core values enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in collaboration with the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee, the rehabilitation sector and the public at large. (LWB)
- Reviewing the eligibility criteria of the Disability Allowance under the Social Security Allowance Scheme. (LWB)
- Improving social rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities by providing additional day, residential and pre-school places. (LWB)
- Implementing the Transitional Care and Support Centre for Tetraplegic Patients for continued enhancement of the support for persons with severe disabilities. (LWB)
- Regularising the three-year pilot scheme launched in 2011 to provide home care services for persons with severe disabilities and extending the services to persons with severe disabilities in all districts. (LWB)
- Providing one-stop district-based support services for persons with disabilities and their families/carers in District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities. (LWB)

- Implementing the statutory licensing scheme for residential care homes for persons with disabilities and complementary measures to regulate their operation and ensure service quality. (LWB)
- Implementing the Pilot Bought Place Scheme for private residential care homes for persons with disabilities to –
  - upgrade service standards;
  - help the market develop more service options for persons with disabilities; and
  - increase the supply of subsidised residential care places. (LWB)
- Enhancing care and support services for ageing service users in rehabilitation service units. (LWB)
- Enhancing the services of Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness to provide one-stop district-based community support services for ex-mentally ill persons, persons with suspected mental health problems, their families/carers and local residents. (LWB)
- Promoting the employment of persons with disabilities through –
  - enhanced allowance to employers under (i) the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme, (ii) enhanced job attachment allowance and wage subsidy under the On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities, and (iii) the Sunnyway-On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities;

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- provision of subsidy to employers for procurement of assistive devices and/or workplace modifications; and
  - provision of financial incentive to mentors rendering workplace assistance and guidance to employees with disabilities. (LWB)
- Providing support for businesses funded under the Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise Project to create more employment opportunities. (LWB)
  - Implementing measures to ensure that persons with disabilities will have equal access, like other applicants, to job opportunities in the Government. (CSB)
  - Implementing the retrofitting programme to upgrade barrier-free facilities in Government venues and Housing Authority properties. (LWB)
  - Enhancing transport services for persons with disabilities through improvement to rebus service. We are also examining ways of further improving the accessibility of transport services. (LWB/THB)
  - Implementing the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities, and extending the Scheme to children with severe disabilities aged below 12 receiving CSSA or Disability Allowance. The extension aims at building a caring and inclusive society by encouraging these children to participate more in community activities. (LWB)

(c) Services for Ethnic Minorities

- Promoting racial equality through, inter alia, enhanced publicity and public education. (CMAB)
- Providing support services for EMs to facilitate their early integration into the community. (HAB)
- Implementing measures to ensure that EMs will have equal access, like other applicants, to job opportunities in the Government. (CSB)
- Operating a new youth college under the Vocational Training Council (VTC) starting from the 2012/13 academic year to support NCS students and students with special educational needs. The college is providing alternative progression pathways for these students. (EDB)
- Reviewing and implementing various support measures for NCS students to facilitate their adaptation to the local education system, mastery of the Chinese language and integration into the community. (EDB)

(d) Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs

- Supporting students with special educational needs in the VTC through an annual provision of \$12 million starting from 2013-14. (EDB)

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- Continuing to provide additional resources, professional support and teacher training to help primary and secondary schools cater for their students with special educational needs, including expanding the School-based Educational Psychology Service with the target of covering all public sector primary and secondary schools by the 2016/17 school year. (EDB)

(e) Promoting Social Enterprises

- Implementing various programmes and support measures in collaboration with the Social Enterprise Advisory Committee and the Advisory Committee on Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme to promote the development of social enterprises, including –
  - Social Enterprise Award Scheme;
  - Social Enterprise Training Programme; and
  - Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme. (HAB)
- Encouraging cross-sectoral support for social enterprises and promoting wider patronage of products and services of social enterprises through various programmes and measures, such as the Social Enterprise Summit, Social Enterprise Challenge, Friends of Social Enterprise Award and Social Enterprise District Carnival. (HAB)

(f) Promoting Digital Inclusion

- Implementing various digital inclusion programmes to help underprivileged groups (including the elderly, persons with special needs and students from low-income families) use ICT to enhance their opportunities and integrate with society. (CEDB)

**Social Welfare Planning and Administration**

- Overseeing the implementation of the enhanced planning mechanism endorsed by the Social Welfare Advisory Committee in its study report on long-term social welfare planning. (LWB)
- Identifying suitable sites and facilitating provision of necessary manpower resources to meet the current and future needs of social welfare services. (LWB)