

**WoC 01/15**  
**(For information)**

**Women's Commission**

**2015 Policy Address**

**Policy Initiatives Relating to Women's Development**

**Purpose**

On 15 January and 16 January 2015, we circulated to Members our papers to the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services and to the Legislative Council Panel on Manpower respectively setting out the initiatives pertaining to the Labour and Welfare Bureau as covered by the Chief Executive in his 2015 Policy Address. The papers are attached at **Annex A** and **Annex B**. Members are invited to note particularly those initiatives pertaining to women, as set out in paragraphs 30 to 35, paragraphs 57 to 58 and paragraph 62 of Annex A and in paragraphs 22 to 27 of Annex B.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau**

**February 2015**

For discussion  
on 26 January 2015

**Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services**

**2015 Policy Address**

**Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau**

**Introduction**

The Chief Executive delivered his 2015 Policy Address on 14 January 2015. This paper sets out the new and on-going welfare initiatives pertaining to the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and Social Welfare Department (SWD), as set out in the 2015 Policy Address and Policy Agenda.

**Policy Priorities/New Initiatives**

***Poverty Alleviation***

2. Our poverty alleviation policy is to encourage young people and adults to become self-reliant through employment, while putting in place a reasonable and sustainable social security and welfare system to help those who cannot provide for themselves. The Government has set the poverty line to assess the poverty situation on an annual basis. In 2013, the overall poor population dropped below 1 million to 970 000 for the first time and the poverty rate fell to 14.5%, which was a five-year low. The Commission on Poverty (CoP) will continue to serve as the major policy platform to assist the Government in pursuing poverty alleviation initiatives. LWB will continue to work with the CoP in taking forward the initiatives.

**Preparing for the Implementation of Low-Income Working Family Allowance (LIFA)**

3. According to the analysis of poverty statistics, while the working poor households not receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) have been working hard and striving for self-reliance, they are more prone to poverty. This is because they had fewer working members, mostly engaged in lower-skill jobs and that they needed to

support more children. In view of this, the Government proposed to introduce LIFA last year. The aim is to relieve the financial burden of non-CSSA low-income working families (especially those with children), as well as to promote self-reliance and upward social mobility. Our latest estimate is that over 200 000 low-income households (involving 710 000 persons, including over 170 000 eligible children) could benefit from the LIFA Scheme. The overall poverty rate is estimated to be reduced by 2.1%, and the child poverty rate is estimated to be reduced by 4.3%.

4. We would, barring unforeseeable circumstances, implement the LIFA Scheme within 15 to 18 months after obtaining the Legislative Council (LegCo) Finance Committee's funding approval. The Government will invite the Community Care Fund (CCF) to consider providing one-off special subsidy for primary and secondary students on full grant under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme in the 2015/16 school year before the implementation of LIFA.

#### *Continuing the Short-term Food Assistance Service*

5. The Government started introducing the short-term food assistance service in February 2009 to help individuals/families having temporary difficulty cope with basic food expenditure. By the end of November 2014, the service has already served over 168 000 people, with the majority being low-income earners and unemployed persons. Over the years, a number of enhancement measures have been introduced. Since October 2011, in addition to the usual provision of dry rations normally offered for people to tide over urgent and short-term needs, food and hot meal coupons which could be redeemed at designated food stalls, supermarkets and restaurants have been provided. Since October 2013, the service period for beneficiaries has been extended from a maximum of six weeks to a maximum of eight weeks, and the allocation per meal-day for the service operators has been increased by 10%.

6. In 2013, the financial commitment for short-term food assistance service was increased from \$200 million to \$400 million, which was estimated to extend the service until end-2015. This year, the Government will further increase the commitment by another \$200 million to \$600 million, and such increase will be included and reflected in the draft Estimates of 2015-16 financial year. The additional provision is estimated to extend the service for two more years up to end-2017. We will continue to listen to the views of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating the service and other

stakeholders to explore ways to further improve the service.

*Extending the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance*

7. To integrate and improve the employment assistance services under the CSSA Scheme so as to enhance effectiveness and synergy, SWD launched the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance in January 2013. Through this integrated programme, NGOs provide employable able-bodied CSSA recipients with multifarious and one-stop employment assistance services on a family basis so as to enhance their employability according to their individual needs and help them become self-reliant. An additional \$223 million will be provided to extend the integrated programme for two years until March 2017.

*Exploring Retirement Protection*

8. Retirement protection is a very important social issue. In the coming few months, the CoP will devise the framework and set out the details for a public consultation in the latter half of 2015.

9. In exploring the issue of retirement protection, we must fully consider the adequacy, sustainability, affordability and robustness of various policy options. Hong Kong's long-term economic growth will decelerate over time due to an ageing population. The Government will face increasing fiscal pressure in the medium to long terms. If we were to deploy our financial resources to benefit all, the benefits received by elderly people in financial need would inevitably be reduced. In addition, we should take into full account the functions of the various pillars under the existing retirement protection system and explore possible necessary enhancement measures. We should also have regard to the traditional values cherished by our community, including self-reliance, focusing social resources on helping those most in need and mutual support among family members.

10. The Government agrees that protection for needy citizens after retirement should be improved. To demonstrate our determination and commitment, \$50 billion has been earmarked to provide for future needs.

## *Care for the Elderly*

11. As regards caring for the elderly, the Government adopts a proactive approach in handling the ageing population in Hong Kong. Our objective in elderly services is to enable our senior citizens to live in dignity and to provide necessary support for them to promote their sense of belonging, sense of security and sense of worthiness. We will continue to implement a wide spectrum of measures to strengthen elderly services on all fronts. We will proactively promote active ageing while taking care of the service needs for the frail elderly. We strive to provide quality and cost-effective long-term care services to those who are in need, in line with the policy of promoting “ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up”.

### *Enhancing Support for Elder Academies (EAs)*

12. To promote active ageing, LWB and the Elderly Commission (EC) launched in early 2007 the EA Scheme to enable the elderly to pursue continued learning in a school setting so that they can lead a more fulfilled life, and to interact more with the younger generation to foster inter-generational harmony. In 2009, an allocation of \$10 million was provided to set up the Elder Academy Development Foundation (EADF) to support the Scheme. Up to date, a total of 121 EAs have been set up in primary and secondary schools and higher education institutions.

13. The Government injected \$50 million into the EADF in March 2014. The Committee on EADF has since devised new measures to enhance the Scheme. Apart from raising the amount of funding to EAs in secondary and primary schools, the Committee will strengthen support to district networks and encourage recognition of credit and better coordination among different EAs within the networks, with a view to attracting more elderly persons to enroll into the EA courses.

### *Merging the Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project (NAAP) and the Opportunities for the Elderly Project (OEP)*

14. We plan to merge NAAP with OEP in 2016 for better use of resources in encouraging elderly people to actively take part in community affairs and continue contributing to society, and to lead a fruitful elderly life by joining elderly volunteer service as well as activities relating to community education and inter-generational harmony.

*Extending the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities to Green Minibuses*

15. We are pressing ahead with the extension of the widely welcomed Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities to green minibuses in phases. We expect that the first phase of the extension, including some 110 green minibus (GMB) operators (about 75% of the total) running some 380 routes (about 78% of the total), will be rolled out in end-March this year. It is expected that the second phase of the extension will be launched in two to three months' time after the first phase.

16. The number of average daily passenger trips under the Scheme is at present around 720 000, with around 630 000 trips (88%) made by the elderly persons<sup>1</sup> and around 90 000 trips (12%) made by eligible persons with disabilities<sup>2</sup>. In 2014-15, the estimated reimbursement of revenue forgone to the MTR, franchised bus and ferry companies by the Government under the Scheme is around \$594.2 million. It is estimated that the reimbursement of revenue forgone to the GMB operators under the Scheme will be around \$221.6 million in 2016-17 when the Scheme is fully implemented for GMBs.

***Support for the Disadvantaged***

17. Some people in the community are in need of temporary or more long-term assistance from the community owing to various factors such as financial or family circumstances etc. Different welfare services are one of the ways to support them. We will continue to offer appropriate financial assistance to people in need through the CSSA Scheme and Social Security Allowance Scheme and to strengthen the support for people or families with special needs. The aim is to remove the barriers that hold them back from realising their potential. We will also continue to develop client-centred, family-focused and community-based services that provide integrated and cross-sectoral support.

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<sup>1</sup> Elderly persons refer to those aged 65 or above.

<sup>2</sup> Eligible persons with disabilities are persons aged below 65 with severe disability as defined under the Disability Allowance receiving the allowance and those with 100% disabilities receiving CSSA in the same age group.

## ***Support for the Disadvantaged***

### **Piloting On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services**

18. Early intervention is very important to the development of children with disabilities or children at risk of becoming disabled. The Government will therefore continue to increase the number of pre-school rehabilitation service places for early provision of intervention and training services to children with special needs so as to enhance their physical, psychological and social developments, thereby improving their opportunities for attending ordinary schools and participating in daily life activities and helping their families meet their special needs. The Government will launch a pilot scheme through the Lotteries Fund to invite NGOs operating subvented pre-school rehabilitation services to provide on-site services so as to benefit children with special needs who are studying in kindergartens or kindergarten-cum-child care centres as early as possible.

### **Enhancing the Services of Parents/Relatives Resource Centres**

19. Parents/Relatives Resource Centre provides a focal point for family members/carers of persons with disabilities/mental illness to share experience and seek mutual support with assistance from the staff. The service also enables family members/carers to enhance their understanding and acceptance of their family members with disabilities and empower the entire family functioning in coping with their stress and difficulties in taking care of the persons with disabilities.

20. In 2015-16, the Government will increase the social work manpower in the existing subvented Parents/Relatives Resource Centres so as to organise more systematic training and experience sharing activities with a view to enhancing the support for persons with disabilities and ex-mentally ill patients, including children/youth with special needs and their family members/carers.

### **Enhancing the Services of Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness (ICCMWs)**

21. Since October 2010, ICCMWs have been providing one-stop and district-based community support services ranging from prevention to crisis management for discharged mental patients, persons with suspected mental health problems, their family members/carers and residents living in the community. These services include outreaching visits, casework

counselling, therapeutic and supportive groups, social and recreational activities, day training and public education programmes and, where necessary, referral of cases to the Hospital Authority (HA) for clinical assessment and psychiatric treatment. The Government has continued to increase the funding allocation to enhance the service. At present, the annual allocation to these centres amounts to about \$205 million.

22. In 2015-16, the Government will increase the social work manpower in ICCMWs to support ex-mentally ill persons and persons with suspected mental health problems living in the community as well as their family members or carers, consolidate their mutual support networks and provide them with appropriate training.

23. In addition, we will explore the implementation of a pilot project under the Lotteries Fund for trained ex-mentally ill persons to serve as peer supporters in community psychiatric service units to provide support and encouragement for other persons in rehabilitation through sharing their recovery experience.

#### *Strengthening Support for Persons with Autism*

24. The Government will launch a pilot project under the Lotteries Fund to strengthen support for persons with autism, under which a professional team comprising practitioners in various disciplines will provide them with professional services and training so as to strengthen their capabilities in development and adjustment as well as enhance their skills in life, socialisation and employment, etc. The project will provide training and support to the parents/carers of persons with autism as well as professional training to service providers serving persons with autism.

#### *Strengthening Care and Support for Ageing Service Users*

25. The Government is mindful of the need of rehabilitation service users for a higher level of care and support owing to ageing. Over the past two years, the Government allocated additional resources to strengthen the manpower of the residential homes for persons with different types of intellectual/physical disabilities as well as day training and vocational rehabilitation centres in order to enhance the services for ageing service users. The Government will increase the manpower of long stay care homes and enhance the allied health services of hostels for moderately mentally handicapped persons to strengthen the care and support for ageing service users.



### *Including Sign Language Courses in the Continuing Education Fund*

26. We will actively explore the inclusion of sign language courses in the scope of the Continuing Education Fund so as to benefit people in need.

### *Assisting Families Most in Need of Support*

27. Currently, the 65 Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) over the territory and the two Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) in Tung Chung have been providing a spectrum of preventive, supportive and remedial family welfare services for individuals and families in need. To more effectively support individuals and families in preventing and handling problems, the Government will increase the number of professional social workers in IFSCs and ISCs to provide early identification and intervention and strengthen the support for families and children who are vulnerable to domestic violence and have other welfare needs, at-risk pregnant women, mothers suffering from postnatal depression, and children with development problems and their family members, etc.

### *Supporting Residents of Public Rental Housing Estates with Intakes*

28. Family problems may arise from the lack of support when residents move into newly built or redeveloped public rental housing estates. Having regard to the experience of building community networks in Tin Shui Wai, the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund Committee will deploy resources to public rental housing estates with intakes to support residents in building mutual help networks. This aims at developing social capital by way of promoting cross-sectoral collaboration among the Government, community organisations, welfare organisations, schools and medical organisations, etc.

29. We expect that four projects will be rolled out in 2015 in public rental housing estates completed or redeveloped in recent years. These projects, together with other existing social services, will support residents more effectively. Upon completion of the projects, we hope that the relevant mutual help networks will complement mainstream services in continuing to become the support network for the community in helping families in need.

## *Supporting Women*

30. With the prevalence of nuclear families and an increasing number of mothers in employment, there is a growing need for day care facilities for young children. We have taken note of the opinions expressed by some quarters of the community that better community child care provision and after-school care would address the frequently expressed concerns about the difficulty in finding affordable and reliable child care services in the community so as to increase female participation in the labour force. Meanwhile, to enable women to fully realise their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life, the Government, in collaboration with the Women's Commission (WoC) and the community as a whole, will continue to promote the well-being and interests of women through a three-pronged strategy, viz. the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women and public education.

## *Helping Women Balance Family and Work Commitments*

31. To support parents who are unable to take care of their children temporarily because of work or other reasons, SWD has all along been providing subsidies to NGOs to run a variety of child care services for children below the age of six. To remove the barriers for women to enter or stay in employment and to further respond to the community demand for child care services, the Government will launch a series of measures to enhance child care services helping women balance their work and family commitments, including –

- (a) from 2015-16 onwards, increasing, by phases, the provision of places of Extended Hours Service (EHS) at aided child care centres and kindergarten-cum-child care centres in districts with high demand, thus increasing the total provision of such EHS places from about 1 200 to over 6 200 places, representing a fourfold increase. This can alleviate the pressure on working parents by allowing more needy pre-primary children (aged below six) to remain in the service units that they attend for longer hours to receive care;
- (b) in 2017-18, providing about 100 additional aided long full-day child care places for children aged below three;
- (c) inviting NGOs to establish work-based child care centres through the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses (Special Sites Scheme). Two NGOs have

responded positively proposing to provide a total of about 100 self-financing places. The Government will also explore, on a pilot basis, the feasibility of providing about 100 NGO-operated child care places for staff members in the proposed Government Complex in Tseung Kwan O;

- (d) providing resources for aided standalone child care centres and service units providing Occasional Child Care Service and EHS to enhance supervisory and administrative support; and
- (e) launching a pilot project to help grandparents become well-trained child carers in a home setting in order to strengthen the support to nuclear families.

32. The Government will also commission a consultancy study in 2015-16 to advise on the long-term development of child care services with a view to providing services that meet the needs of the families in Hong Kong.

33. In parallel, the Government will continue to coordinate the efforts of all parties in promoting women employment by, inter alia, encouraging employers to offer part-time jobs which are more popular with women.

#### *Facilitating the Development of Women*

34. The Gender Mainstreaming Checklist developed by the WoC has so far been applied to over 50 different policy and programme areas. The Government has accepted the recommendation of the WoC that, starting from 2015-16, all bureaux and departments should be required to refer to the checklist and apply gender mainstreaming when formulating major government policies and initiatives.

35. Taking into account the advice of the WoC, the Government introduced, in January 2004, the first gender benchmark of 25% as a working target for appointing women to Government advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs). Subsequently in June 2010, the Government, on the recommendation of the WoC, raised the gender benchmark from 25% to 30%. As at the end of April 2014, 1 963 (32.3%) of the appointed non-official members in 418 Government ASBs were women. On the recommendation of the WoC, the Government now decides to raise the benchmark for appointing women to Government ASBs from 30% to 35%, starting from 2015-16, to enhance women's participation in

the work of these bodies.

## **On-going Initiatives**

### ***Poverty Alleviation Measures***

#### **Extending the Reach of the Child Development Fund (CDF)**

36. Since its establishment in 2008, the \$300-million CDF has provided suitable support to underprivileged children aged 10 to 16 to widen their horizons and enhance their exposure, help them develop a saving habit and plan for the future, so as to help them overcome inter-generational poverty. Up till now, CDF projects have benefited almost 7 000 underprivileged children. The fifth batch of CDF projects run by NGOs will be rolled out under the new “one-plus-one” approach – this will comprise 20 projects to be launched in the second quarter of 2015, benefiting 2 000 to 2 300 underprivileged; and another 20 projects to be launched in the third quarter of 2018, benefiting another 2 000 to 2 300 new participants. Seven school-based pilot projects have been launched in 2014 to experiment the new school-based approach, with a view to extending the reach and enhancing community support for CDF projects. More school-based pilots will be introduced in the 2015-16 academic year.

37. On 12 January 2015, we briefed the LegCo Panel on Welfare Services (the Panel) on the enhancement measures to be implemented for projects beyond 2015. These measures include increasing the training provision and administrative fee for each participating child by 10% to \$22,000 and \$2,200 respectively, and adjusting the Government special financial incentive for a participant’s completion of his/her targeted savings programme from a fixed amount of \$3,000 to a 1:1 matching incentive payment capped at \$4,800. The additional allocation of \$300 million as announced in the 2014 Policy Address will be used to fund projects to be launched beyond 2015, and such new allocation is estimated to benefit an additional 9 700 underprivileged children.

#### **Regularising the CCF programmes**

38. The main objective of CCF is to provide assistance to people facing economic difficulties, in particular those who fall outside the social safety net or those within the safety net but have special circumstances that are not covered. In addition, CCF may implement measures on a

pilot basis to help the Government identify those that can be considered for incorporation into the Government's regular assistance and service programmes. SWD has so far regularised four of the CCF programmes implemented by the Department, including the provision of subsidy for CSSA recipients who are owners of Tenants Purchase Scheme Flats, training subsidy for children who are on the waiting list for subvented pre-school rehabilitation services (please refer to paragraph 52 below), special subsidy to persons with severe physical disabilities for renting respiratory support medical equipment, as well as special subsidy to persons with severe physical disabilities for purchasing medical consumables related to respiratory support medical equipment (please refer to paragraph 51). At present, SWD is receiving application on the extended implementation of the special care subsidy for the severely disabled. Two other programmes, which are the incentive scheme to further encourage CSSA recipients of the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance to secure employment, and the pilot scheme on living allowance for carers of the elderly persons from low income families (please refer to paragraph 45), are in progress.

#### *Reviewing Old Age Living Allowance (OALA)*

39. As regards social security, we will review OALA to ascertain, among other things, whether the asset limits should be relaxed. OALA is one of the important initiatives to address the issue of elderly poverty. We consider it more prudent to take account of the outcome of the discussion on retirement protection. OALA has only been implemented for slightly over a year. While the Government currently has no plan to extend the OALA to any places outside Hong Kong, we will continue to monitor the implementation of OALA in Hong Kong and pay regard to the operating experience gained from the implementation of the Guangdong Scheme, in order to explore the feasibility of extending OALA to Guangdong.

#### ***Elderly Services***

##### *Formulating an Elderly Services Programme Plan*

40. The EC is pressing ahead with the formulation of the Elderly Services Programme Plan (Programme Plan) and aims to submit its report to the Government in mid-2016. A consultant team has been engaged and a dedicated team set up in LWB to assist the EC in formulating the Programme Plan.

41. The EC conducted public engagement activities from October to November 2014 through the consultant team to gather the views of stakeholders on the scope of the Programme Plan. On 8 December 2014, we briefed the Panel on the progress, and will join the Panel in meeting the deputations on 20 January 2015. The EC will take into account the views gathered in deciding the scope of the Programme Plan and will further engage the public and stakeholders in the next stage of its work which is to focus on the directions and possible alternatives for handling the key issues identified. We will continue to provide support to the EC in formulating the Programme Plan.

*Exploring the Feasibility of Voucher Scheme on Residential Care Services for the Elderly*

42. The EC has been tasked to explore the feasibility of introducing a voucher scheme on residential care services for the elderly and is expected to submit its recommendations in mid-2015. A consultant team has been engaged to assist in conducting the feasibility study. The dedicated team mentioned in paragraph 40 above is providing support to the EC in the process.

*Strengthening Community Care Services (CCS)*

43. In line with the policy of promoting “ageing in place as the core”, the Government will continue to strengthen the provision of CCS to enable our elderly citizens to live in a familiar environment. We will continue to increase the supply of subsidised CCS places. In 2014-15, a total of some 230 new day care places would be provided. A total of 1 500 additional places of the Enhanced Home and Community Care Services (EHCCS) will commence service from March 2015 onwards. We will also strengthen the new and existing EHCCS places through integrating the major service content of the Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders into EHCCS. In addition, we will continue to implement the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients to provide integrated support services for discharged elderly patients who have difficulties taking care of themselves, and also for their carers.

44. The Government will continue to implement the First Phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly to enable eligible elderly people to choose the services that suit their individual needs with the use of service vouchers. SWD will take into account the experience and the outcome of the mid-term review in

drawing up the details of the next phase of the Pilot Scheme.

### Supporting Carers

45. In support of the carers of the elderly persons, CCF introduced a two-year pilot programme in June 2014 to provide living allowance for 2 000 carers of the elderly persons from low income families. We have commissioned the Sau Po Centre on Ageing of the University of Hong Kong to assist in conducting an evaluation study during the pilot period to assess the effectiveness and implications of the pilot scheme. Meanwhile, the Government will continue to provide training programmes and other support services to carers in need through the subvented district elderly community centres and neighbourhood elderly centres.

### Implementing Improvement Programme of Elderly Centres (IPEC)

46. The Government will continue to implement IPEC to enhance the physical setting and facilities of 237 elderly centres. As at December 2014, the Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee had approved 105 applications. Relevant works have commenced in succession, with 46 having completed renovation works and re-opened for service with a new look.

### Increasing Subsidised Residential Care Places

47. We attach utmost importance to the quality of residential care services. With the provision of infirmity care supplement and dementia supplement, we strive to offer elderly residents with different frailty conditions in subsidised care places the suitable level of care. We will also continue to increase the supply of subsidised residential care places for the elderly through a multi-pronged approach. Apart from the Special Sites Scheme as mentioned in paragraph 63 below, we will make better use of space in subvented homes and construct new contract homes for provision of more subsidised places. We will also continue to explore the option of redeveloping the Wong Chuk Hang Hospital to provide more residential care places for the elderly as well as other welfare facilities.

48. We will continue to implement the Pilot Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong to provide elderly persons on the Central Waiting List for subsidised residential care places with an option to live in the two elderly homes located in Shenzhen and Zhaoqing which are

run by Hong Kong NGOs. Since June 2014 SWD have started to invite eligible elderly persons to consider whether they would choose to live in the two homes and have been arranging placements in the homes for the elderly persons according to their wishes.

### *Training Nurses for the Welfare Sector*

49. To alleviate the problem of nurse shortage in the welfare sector, SWD, in collaboration with the HA, has so far run a total of 14 classes under a two-year full-time programme to train enrolled nurses for the welfare sector since 2006. The trainees of the first eleven classes have graduated. Among the trainees in the first eight classes, about 90% of them have joined the welfare sector. An additional 920 training places will be provided in the coming few years.

### ***Rehabilitation Services***

#### *Providing Additional Places for Rehabilitation Services*

50. The Government will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach to actively identify suitable sites to provide more service places. The Government will also provide more rehabilitation service facilities through the Special Sites Scheme as mentioned in paragraph 63 below, with a view to relieving the service demand and shortening the waiting time.

#### *Strengthening Community Support for Persons with Disabilities*

51. To further relieve family members/carers of their pressure in taking care of persons with disabilities, we have enhanced the short-term day care and residential care services for persons with disabilities, in particular those aged 6 to 14, so that their family members/carers may take a planned short break or attend to their personal business. This also helps to temporarily relieve the family members or carers of their caring duties and alleviate their stress. We have also incorporated two CCF items into Government's regular subvention programme to provide subsidies to persons with severe physical disabilities living in the community for renting of respiratory support medical equipment and acquisition of medical consumables. To facilitate their continued community living and integration into society, case managers will coordinate and arrange appropriate services for them according to their needs. Meanwhile, we will continue to provide one-stop community support services in a case management service approach for persons with



disabilities and their family members/carers through 16 District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities, with a view to providing service users with more comprehensive and convenient support.

### Enhancing Pre-school Rehabilitation Services

52. In December 2011, a CCF programme was launched to provide a training subsidy to children of low-income families in need of rehabilitation services so as to enable them to receive timely pre-school rehabilitation services provided by NGOs while waiting for subvented services. Considering the effectiveness of the programme, the Government has regularised the programme, and increased the level of subsidy, starting from October last year. A maximum subsidy of \$3,867 per month is provided to each eligible child who is waitlisted for Special Child Care Centre or Residential Special Child Care Centre. A maximum subsidy of \$2,763 per month is provided to each eligible child who is waitlisted for Early Education and Training Centre or Integrated Programme for Disabled Children in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre.

### Promoting Employment for Persons with Disabilities

53. Employment is instrumental in facilitating integration of persons with disabilities into the community. LWB, in collaboration with the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and the Hong Kong Joint Council for People with Disabilities, is taking forward the Talent-Wise Employment Charter and Inclusive Organisations Recognition Scheme. We will continue to mobilise the Government, business sector as well as public and subvented bodies to implement a host of measures to promote the employment of persons with disabilities.

### Enhancing the Rehabus Service

54. To meet the special transport needs of persons with disabilities, the Government has all along been subsidising an NGO to provide point-to-point Rehabus service for persons with disabilities who have difficulties in using public transport. The Government will continue to review the service needs from time to time. In the past three years, 18 new rehabuses were procured, thereby increasing the fleet to 141. Having regard to the keen demand for Rehabus service, the Government will continue to allocate additional resources to increase the fleet size and strengthen the manpower with a view to further enhancing the Rehabus

service.

### *Reviewing the Disability Allowance*

55. LWB has established an inter-departmental working group to study the proposal to allow people with loss of one limb to apply for Disability Allowance and related issues. The working group has commissioned the University of Hong Kong to study experience outside Hong Kong and would also make reference to the latest survey on persons with disabilities released by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) in end-December 2014, as well as the “Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on Disability 2013” published by the Economic Analysis and Business Facilitation Unit under the Financial Secretary’s Office and C&SD in end-December 2014.

### ***Child Services***

#### *Strengthening Residential Child Care Services*

56. To support and protect children who cannot be adequately cared for by their families, as well as young people with behavioural or emotional problems, the Government has been providing subsidies to NGOs to provide various types of residential child care services. We will increase the number of residential places in small group homes to provide temporary accommodation and emotional support for children and young people who have been abused or affected by domestic violence or other family problems.

#### *Enhancing After-School Care Services*

57. Supportive after-school care services have been provided by NGOs for children aged 6 to 12 so that children whose parents are unable to care for them during after-school hours owing to work, job-search or other reasons could receive proper care. Through the Fee Waiving Subsidy Scheme for After School Care Programme, SWD provides assistance to needy families by waiving or reducing the fee of after-school care services. The Government will continue to strengthen the After School Care Programme by extending the service hours on weekday evenings, Saturdays, Sundays and school holidays in some after-school care centres and provide additional fee-waiving and fee-reduction quotas. From December 2014 onwards, SWD has been providing subsidies to 34 after-school care centres to set up the above-mentioned enhanced services, providing a total of 299 full

fee-waiving places.

58. The Government will also provide \$200 million matching grant via the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged to encourage the business sector and organisations to work with schools to launch more after-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary school students from grassroots families. SWD will invite schools and welfare NGOs to submit applications in mid-January 2015.

### ***Youth Services***

59. We have been providing subventions for NGOs to offer young people a series of preventive, developmental and remedial welfare services with a view to cultivating a sense of responsibility among them so that they may contribute to society. Our service strategy is to provide timely support through cross-sectoral and inter-departmental collaboration as well as early identification of needy youth.

60. Apart from continuing to deliver mainstream services such as Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres, school social work and youth outreaching social work, we also reach out to the youth in need, especially the hidden youth, on the internet through the pilot cyber youth outreaching projects. In view of the current manpower shortage in elderly and rehabilitation services, we will implement the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services (the Navigation Scheme) to attract more young people to join the elderly and rehabilitation care sector (please see paragraph 64 below for details).

### ***Family Services***

#### ***Following up on the Law Reform Commission (LRC) Report on Child Custody and Access***

61. In its Report on Child Custody and Access, the LRC recommended the introduction of a new “parental responsibility model” into Hong Kong’s family law to replace the custody and access arrangements under the existing family law. We conducted a public consultation exercise on the LRC’s recommendations from end-2011 to April 2012, and reported the results of the public consultation and proposed the way forward to the Panel in July 2013. LWB, the Department of Justice and other departments concerned have now commenced the initial law drafting work to consolidate the provisions dealing with disputes relating to children, including arrangements on

divorce, guardianship, disputes with third parties, or disputes between parents without accompanying divorce proceedings, into one ordinance. We will consult the public on the draft legislation, in co-operation with various stakeholders. On the other hand, SWD will educate the public or divorcing/divorced parents through different publicity, educational or training programmes, helping them understand that children would continue to require the care from both parents on divorce and that the parents would also need to take up continuing parental responsibilities even after divorce. Meanwhile, the Government will also explore ways to strengthen support services for divorced families.

### *Combating Domestic Violence*

62. The Government does not tolerate domestic violence and has been dealing with the problem through a three-pronged strategy, viz. preventing domestic violence, supporting victims of domestic violence and providing specialised services and crisis intervention. We will continue to allocate resources in enhancing the specialised and support services, including providing various support services for victims of domestic violence as appropriate as well as providing counselling and psycho-educational services for batterers to change their abusive attitude and behaviour.

### ***Social Welfare Planning***

#### *Implementing the Special Sites Scheme*

63. LWB and SWD are actively following up on about 60 projects under the Special Sites Scheme to assist social welfare organisations to pursue in-situ expansion or development to provide particularly more elderly and rehabilitation facilities. SWD and relevant departments are examining the revised proposals of applicant organisations. Among the projects, five are expected to be completed by 2017-18, providing about 100 places for subsidised elderly services and 450 places for subsidised rehabilitation services in total. Separately, SWD would provide funding support to some applicant organisations to enable them to conduct technical feasibility studies on their proposals in 2014-15 and 2015-16.

#### *Developing Manpower Resources in Care Services*

64. To encourage the younger generation to join the elderly long-term care sector, a “first-hire-then-train” pilot project was launched in 2013 through funding under the Lotteries Fund. Young persons were

recruited to provide care services in residential care homes for the elderly. Apart from receiving on-the-job training, these young employees were provided with subsidies from the Government to pursue a relevant course. Upon completion of the course, they will be equipped to rise to higher positions and move further up their career ladder in the social welfare sector. In view of the positive response to the pilot project, the Government has earmarked approximately \$147 million to launch the Navigation Scheme providing a total of 1 000 places in the next few years to encourage young persons to join the elderly and rehabilitation care services. SWD will invite welfare NGOs to submit proposals on the Navigation Scheme in end-January 2015 and expects to recruit trainees in the second half of this year.

### *Enhancing the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System*

65. We understand that the social welfare sector is concerned about the operation and effectiveness of the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System. The Government also attaches great importance to this issue. In order to further enhance the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System, the Government provided an additional recurrent funding of about \$470 million in 2014-15 to strengthen central administrative and supervisory support for NGOs, enhance “Other Charges” that cover other operating expenses such as food costs, assist NGOs in recruiting and retaining paramedical staff more effectively or in hiring paramedical services, and allow NGOs more flexibility in using the Provident Fund reserve. The Government will continue to monitor the implementation of these measures.

## **Conclusion**

66. The Government attaches great importance to social welfare and has invested substantial resources in this area. Recurrent expenditure on social welfare in this financial year (i.e. 2014-15) is estimated to be \$56.9 billion, accounting for 18.5% of the recurrent expenditure of the Government as a whole. The Government will continue to plan for and deliver suitable social welfare services, through strengthening collaboration with different sectors of the community,

Labour and Welfare Bureau  
Social Welfare Department  
January 2015

For information  
on 20 January 2015

## **Legislative Council Panel on Manpower**

### **2015 Policy Address**

#### **Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau**

#### **Purpose**

The Chief Executive (CE) delivered his 2015 Policy Address on 14 January 2015. This paper sets out the major new and on-going initiatives pertaining to the labour and manpower portfolio to be undertaken by the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and the Labour Department (LD), as set out in the 2015 Policy Address and Policy Agenda.

#### **Policy priorities / New initiatives**

##### ***Promoting employment, vocational training and developing manpower***

2. People are Hong Kong's most precious resources, providing the impetus for our continued social and economic development. Following the initiatives set out in the population policy action agenda announced in the 2015 Policy Address, we will continue to promote employment and unleash the potential of the local labour force to proactively tackle the challenges brought by our demographic changes. LD will continue to provide employment services that can suit the different employment needs of job seekers. It will also implement employment programmes to enhance the employability of the special needs groups so as to promote their employment. This will help them realise their potential and pave the way for an inclusive society. To achieve this, we will carry out the following new initiatives.

##### **Enhancing the employment support service for elderly job seekers**

3. In the face of the demographic challenges arising from an ageing population and a shrinking labour force, promoting a longer working life to enhance employment of elderly people is one of the ways to unleash the potential of the labour force.

4. At present, LD implements the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged (EPM) to encourage employers, through the provision of on-the-job training allowance, to employ job seekers aged 40 or above with employment difficulties in full-time permanent jobs and provide them with on-the-job training. As some elderly persons may only be interested in part-time jobs, LD will extend the EPM to part-time jobs in the second half of 2015 to encourage employers to provide more suitable part-time employment opportunities to elderly persons. The training allowance will be set at 25% of the employee's monthly salary, up to<sup>1</sup> \$3,000, for a period<sup>2</sup> of three to six months.

5. LD will implement a series of measures to encourage elderly persons to re-join the employment market. We will organise employment briefings to assist elderly persons to better understand the latest situation of the employment market and improve their job search skills; set up a dedicated webpage for elderly persons under the Interactive Employment Service website and enhance the functions of the vacancy search terminals to facilitate elderly persons in obtaining employment information and looking for vacancies; strengthen liaison and cooperation with the non-governmental organisations serving elderly persons; and organise large-scale thematic job fairs for elderly persons and experience sharing sessions on elderly employment for employers.

#### Encouraging employers to build an elderly-friendly working environment through publicity

6. Along with our employment support services, we also encourage employers to adopt employment practices conducive to fostering an elderly-friendly work environment, thereby attracting more elderly people to remain in or return to the job market.

7. LD will launch various promotional and educational activities, such as issuing publications, staging roving exhibitions, broadcasting promotional message, publishing news supplement as well as conducting regular meetings and exchanges with business executives and human resources managers so as to publicise relevant messages across the community and encourage employers to adopt elderly-friendly employment practices at workplaces.

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<sup>1</sup> The ceiling is the same as the one for EPM.

<sup>2</sup> The period of providing allowance is the same as the one for EPM.

### Extending the follow-up period for job seekers with disabilities

8. LD provides personalised employment services to job seekers with disabilities fit for open employment to help them find suitable jobs. To strengthen support for employers and help employees with disabilities adapt to their new job, LD will enhance the post-placement follow-up service provided for job seekers with disabilities by extending the service period from three months to six months.

9. During the follow-up period, placement officers will keep in view the work progress of the employees with disabilities by maintaining closer contacts with them to help them adapt to their work as soon as possible. Placement officers will also provide more intensive support services for employers to assist them better understand the special needs of their employees with disabilities and help both parties build up good working relationship.

### Organising inclusive job fairs and implementing the pilot project “Employment Services Ambassador Programme for Ethnic Minorities”

10. LD plans to organise large-scale and district-based inclusive job fairs in 2015-16 to enhance the employment opportunities of the ethnic minorities (EMs). In inviting employers to participate in the job fairs, LD will specifically request employers to provide vacancies suitable for EMs to apply and encourage employers to employ them.

11. In addition, to strengthen the employment services for EM job seekers, LD launched a pilot project named the “Employment Services Ambassador Programme for Ethnic Minorities” in September 2014 to directly employ over ten EM trainees of the Youth Employment and Training Programme (YETP) as Employment Services Ambassadors in the job centres and job fairs of LD for six months.

12. Employment Services Ambassadors for EMs can assist the staff of LD to provide employment services to job seekers, in particular EMs, and approach EM job seekers proactively. The trainees who are engaged as Employment Services Ambassadors can gain working experience to enrich their personal qualifications, thereby facilitating them in seeking employment opportunities in the open market in future. LD will conduct a review based on the operating experience and then consider future arrangements.

### Providing retraining courses and support services for different social groups

13. The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) has been providing training



courses and support services for different social groups. In 2015-16, amongst other target groups, ERB will focus on providing training for people aged 50 or above and help them re-join the job market. ERB will conduct market research on such people and retired persons to understand their views on continuing employment as well as employers to understand their opinions on employing people aged 50 or above or retired persons. Subject to research findings, ERB will launch training courses on a pilot basis. In addition, ERB will offer new courses and support services for women, new arrivals, EMs and persons with disabilities. For example, ERB will provide more in-demand programmes under the Modular Certificates Accumulation System to enable trainees to obtain full-time course certificates upon completion of a number of specified half-day or evening courses. This will allow trainees who are unable to pursue full-time courses owing to work or family commitments to make flexible arrangement for further studies and acquire recognised qualifications.

#### Organising large-scale, district-based and thematic job fairs

14. LD will continue to organise large-scale, district-based and thematic job fairs regularly in collaboration with employers from different sectors and through the two recruitment centres for the retail and catering sectors to expedite the dissemination of vacancy information and shorten the job search process of job seekers so as to help employers fill their vacancies promptly.

15. Rapid developments of the Mainland have recently provided job seekers, including young people, with opportunities for career development. LD will organise in the fourth quarter of 2015 a large-scale job fair including employment and vacancy information on the Mainland. Employers who intend to employ local job seekers to work on the Mainland will be invited to participate in the job fair, which aims at enhancing the understanding of job seekers and young people in employment opportunities on the Mainland.

#### Establishing a Construction Industry Recruitment Centre (CIRC)

16. Drawing reference to the successful experience in setting up dedicated recruitment centres for the retail and catering sectors, and having regard to the problem of acute shortage of skilled labour faced by the construction industry, the Government will set up a dedicated CIRC to provide local construction workers with career counselling services and conduct on-the-spot interviews and job fairs, thereby facilitating job matching and dissemination of vacancy information to job-seekers.

### Manpower shortage in certain industries

17. The Government's policy on labour is to ensure that local workers are accorded priority in employment. The Government remains committed to developing our local manpower as its priority, unleashing the potential and optimizing the deployment of our local workforce. We will continue to closely monitor manpower demand and supply. In sectors facing manpower shortage, we will work together with the industry concerned as well as relevant training bodies to do more to attract new entrants to join the sectors and provide training for them. Approval for importation of labour would be considered only if employers have genuine difficulties in recruiting suitable workers locally. At present, employers in sectors facing manpower shortage can apply for importation of skilled workers on a limited scale under the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS) to meet their imminent needs when they experience genuine difficulties in recruiting local workers.

18. The construction industry is facing the acute problems of shortage and ageing of skilled workers. In April 2014, the Government rolled out enhancement measures to SLS specifically for public sector works projects of the construction industry. Having regard to the unique characteristics of the construction industry, the Development Bureau will propose further enhancement measures to increase the flexibility of SLS and will liaise with the Labour Advisory Board accordingly. It will also continue to liaise closely with the stakeholders in the construction industry and the labour sector to address the industry's demand and meet Hong Kong's economic and social development needs.

### Studying the feasibility of drawing up a talent list

19. The Government will study, having regard to overseas experiences, the feasibility of drawing up a talent list to attract, in a more effective and focused manner, high-quality talents to support Hong Kong's development into a diversified and high value-added economy.

### ***Safeguarding workers' rights and benefits***

20. The Government is committed to safeguarding workers' rights and benefits. We take rigorous enforcement actions against breaches of labour laws. Under the premise of striking a reasonable balance between the interests of employees and the affordability of employers, we also seek to gradually improve the rights and benefits of employees and raise the employment standards in a way commensurate with the pace of Hong Kong's socio-economic developments. In this regard, we are going to implement the following measures this year.

### Preparing for the implementation of the revised Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) rate

21. After conducting comprehensive analyses of various social, economic and employment data and undertaking extensive consultation to take full account of the views of various sectors of the community, the Minimum Wage Commission (MWC) has by unanimous consensus recommended that the current SMW rate of \$30.0 be raised to \$32.5 per hour, an increase of \$2.5 or 8.3%. The CE in Council has accepted the recommendation of MWC and the revised SMW rate will take effect on 1 May 2015 subject to the approval of the Legislative Council (LegCo). LD will organise extensive publicity activities to enhance public awareness of the revised SMW rate such as broadcasting Announcements in the Public Interest on television and radio, publishing leaflets and posters for wide distribution and display, staging seminars and roving exhibitions, publicising through various channels, etc. LD's 24-hour enquiry hotline of 2717 1771 (handled by "1823") will answer public enquiries about the revised SMW rate while in-person consultation service will be provided through a territory-wide network of ten branch offices of the Labour Relations Division. Besides, LD will launch targeted enforcement campaigns to effectively monitor the implementation of the revised SMW rate.

### Strengthening the regulation of employment agencies (EAs) which are involved in placement of foreign domestic helpers (FDHs)

22. There are more than 330 000 FDHs in Hong Kong at present. They have made significant contribution to Hong Kong, particularly in releasing women with families to join the workforce.

23. To enhance the protection of FDHs, the Government has stepped up collaboration and information exchanges with the Consulate-Generals of the FDH exporting countries in Hong Kong, and has been organising briefings for FDHs and their employers to ensure that they are aware of their own rights and obligations and the complaint channels. We will also draw up a code of practice to strengthen the regulation of local EAs.

### ***Supporting the Family***

#### Providing paternity leave to eligible male employees

24. The Employment (Amendment) Ordinance 2014 (Amendment Ordinance) on statutory paternity leave was passed by the LegCo on 18 December 2014. Under the Amendment Ordinance, eligible male employees are entitled to three days' paternity leave with pay at four-fifths of their average daily wages. The notice appointing the commencement date of

the Amendment Ordinance was published in the Gazette on 2 January 2015 and sent to LegCo on 7 January 2015. If everything goes smoothly, the statutory paternity leave will become effective on 27 February 2015. Male employees with child born on or after the commencement date of the Amendment Ordinance will be entitled to paternity leave if they fulfil other requirements as stipulated in the law. We will review the implementation of statutory paternity leave one year after its coming into operation.

Enhancing publicity and education efforts to encourage wider adoption of family-friendly employment practices (FFEP)

25. FFEP are good people management measures adopted by employers to help employees balance their roles and responsibilities in work and family. Making the workplace family-friendly is a shared responsibility of the whole society. Employers may adopt different types of FFEP having regard to the size, resources and culture of their organisations.

26. LD has been acting as a facilitator in promoting FFEP. Relevant information has been disseminated to the community through a wide range of publicity channels and various educational and promotional activities to publicise relevant messages across the community and encourage employers to adopt FFEP at workplaces.

27. LD will enhance its publicity and education efforts in this respect by collaborating with employers and employees in individual industry to devise practical guidelines in implementing FFEP for reference of employers in the industries. To encourage more employers to adopt FFEP at workplaces, LD will also publish a series of news supplements by conducting case interviews with various enlightened organisations to share their experiences in implementing FFEP. The series will be compiled into a booklet for wide distribution to related parties to enhance the promotion of FFEP.

***Encouraging young people to enrich their global exposures***

Enhancing the promotion of the Working Holiday Scheme (WHS)

28. To provide our youths the opportunity to experience foreign culture and customs and broaden their horizons through living and working temporarily overseas while holidaymaking, Hong Kong has established bilateral WHSs with ten economies (including New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, Germany, Japan, Canada, Korea, France, the United Kingdom (UK), and Austria). Youths aged 18 to 30 may apply for working holiday visas with these economies. Save for the UK and Austria which allow our youths to stay for up to 24 months and six

months respectively, the remaining eight partners allow Hong Kong youths to stay in their economies for up to 12 months for holidaying and taking up short-term employment, and/or studying short-term courses (except Ireland which disallows participants to undertake training courses locally in accordance with their standing visa policy).

29. More than 50 000 Hong Kong youths have participated in the schemes and experienced living and working overseas hitherto. LD will enhance the promotion of WHS arrangements between Hong Kong and other economies in the coming year, and will explore the signing of new arrangements with more economies and/or seek to expand the quotas in our existing arrangements with our partners so that more of our youths can enrich their global exposure.

### **On-going initiatives**

30. Apart from the aforementioned policy priorities/ new initiatives, LWB and LD will continue to carry out the following on-going initiatives in areas of assisting low-income earners, vocational training, and promoting and safeguarding employees' welfare, etc.

#### Conducting discussion on the working hours policy, with a view to building consensus and identifying the way forward

31. The Standard Working Hours Committee (SWHC) has since its establishment comprehensively taken forward its work in four strategic areas, namely: (a) enhancing public understanding; (b) collection of relevant information, including working hours statistics and further research into the working hours regimes of other places; (c) adoption of an evidence-based approach for discussion on the basis of a range of factors; and (d) launching public engagement and building community consensus on different options.

32. SWHC's two working groups on "Working Hours Consultation" and "Working Hours Study" have completed a wide public consultation and a comprehensive working hours survey. With reference to findings in these two aspects, SWHC will continue to conduct discussion on directions of working hours policy.

#### Implementing the Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (WITS) Scheme

33. The WITS Scheme was launched in October 2011 to help relieve the burden of work-related travelling expenses on low-income earners and promote sustained employment. With the enhancement measures implemented since 2013, applicants may choose to apply for the subsidy on a household or

individual basis. As at the end of 2014, LD had received a total of 227 876 applications, including 152 637 household-based and 75 239 individual-based applications. The income and asset limits for WITS will be adjusted in accordance with the annual adjustment mechanism concurrently with the relevant limits of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme (CSSA)<sup>3</sup>.

34. Having regard to the experience gained in the first three years of operation of the WITS Scheme, LD is conducting a comprehensive review of the Scheme, including its objectives, eligibility criteria, modus operandi and effectiveness.

#### Funding the Vocational Training Council (VTC) to implement the traineeship scheme in services industries

35. VTC launched the Traineeship Scheme in end-2011 to extend the structured apprenticeship arrangements to services industries. The Scheme provides on-the-job training and vocational education to youngsters aged 15 or above so that they can learn and work at the same time and accumulate the requisite knowledge and skills for starting their career in services industries. Initially, VTC launched the Scheme in the beauty care and hairdressing industries, and then applied this training-cum-work mode to other services industries (i.e. retail and elderly care services) in 2014. As at October 2014, VTC had enrolled 380 trainees under the Scheme. In 2015-16, VTC will continue with the Scheme to train new blood for these services industries.

#### Implementing employment projects and pilot projects

36. LD will continue to implement YETP, EPM and the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme to encourage employers to offer more employment opportunities for young people, the middle-aged and persons with disabilities and provide them with on-the-job training through the provision of allowances to employers so as to enhance their employability and employment opportunities.

37. On employment support to young people, LD launched six pilot projects under YETP in 2014, offering a total of some 760 on-the-job training places. LD will continue to strengthen its collaboration with employers and various organisations to launch pilot projects so as to enhance the employability and employment opportunities of young people with different backgrounds.

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<sup>3</sup> The asset limits are pegged to three times the asset limits of the CSSA as adjusted.

Taking stringent enforcement action against wage offences, including breaches of the SMW provisions, and offences of wilful defaults of Labour Tribunal (LT) or Minor Employment Claims Adjudication Board (MECAB) awards

38. LD continues with its rigorous enforcement against wage offences through speedy investigation into reported offences, conducting trade-targeted campaigns to detect offences, strengthening intelligence gathering and evidence collection, and taking out prompt prosecution. Apart from prosecuting the companies, the directors and other responsible persons of the companies will also be prosecuted having regard to the evidence available.

39. Extensive publicity and promotional efforts have also been made by LD to remind employers of their statutory obligations of wage payment, urge employees to report breaches of labour laws and pursue wage claims promptly, and publicise its complaint hotline (2815 2200) widely. In 2014, a total of 304 convicted summonses on wage offences were recorded, down 31% from 2013. A total of 48 convicted summonses against company directors and responsible persons for defaulting wage payment were recorded, a decrease of 73% as compared to 2013. In 2014, the highest fine for an individual case was \$300,000. Two employers and one company director convicted of wage offences were sentenced to imprisonment and another company director was sentenced to community service order.

40. Since the implementation of SMW on 1 May 2011, the state of law compliance has been satisfactory. From 1 May 2011 to 31 December 2014, labour inspectors conducted over 149 000 workplace inspections on establishments of low-paying sectors such as catering, retail, cleaning service, and security industries. Including reported cases, 169 cases involving suspected violations of the Minimum Wage Ordinance were detected. Follow-up actions on all these cases confirmed that the employees in most of the cases had received SMW or recovered the shortfall in wages. Wilful offenders were prosecuted if there was sufficient evidence. As at end-2014, 37 convicted summonses of 10 cases against employers for under-payment of SMW were recorded. The industries involved included elderly homes, security companies, import and export trades, and personal services. The highest fine for an individual case was \$25,000.

41. The Employment (Amendment) Ordinance 2010 (the Amendment Ordinance) came into operation on 29 October 2010. A criminal offence was introduced to EO against employers who wilfully and without reasonable excuse fail to pay any sum under an LT or MECAB award which are wages and entitlements attracting criminal sanction under the EO. As at end-2014, 179 convicted cases involving 326 convicted summonses under the Amendment Ordinance were recorded. Of the convicted summonses, 129 involved

company directors and responsible persons. The highest fine for a single case was \$300,000. Two employers and two company directors were sentenced to imprisonment, whereas another two employers and four company directors were awarded community service orders. LD is taking active investigation and prosecution action on other suspected cases of default awards.

#### Adopting an intelligence-based and proactive strategy in combating illegal employment

42. Safeguarding the employment opportunities of local workers has always been a priority task of the Government. In 2014, LD mounted 178 joint operations with other law enforcement departments to raid targeted establishments to combat illegal employment.

43. Apart from enforcement actions, LD has adopted proactive strategies, including intelligence collection by labour inspectors during their workplace inspections and launching publicity programmes through various channels such as advertising in newspapers and public transport carriers, issuing press releases and distributing publicity leaflets, to remind the public of the serious consequences of employing illegal workers. LD has also widely publicised its complaint hotline (2815 2200) to encourage the public to report illegal employment activities. The Government will continue to strengthen publicity and enforcement efforts to combat illegal employment.

#### Intensifying systematic prevention and enforcement measures to ensure construction safety in anticipation of the increase in the number of new works projects and expected growth in building renovation and maintenance works

44. With the commencement of a number of mega works projects and a large number of maintenance works projects for old buildings, and in anticipation of the continuous construction boom, there are increasing job opportunities in the construction industry. The number of construction workers increased by 43% from over 55 000 in 2010 to 80 000 in the first half of 2014. In view of these challenges, LD will enhance accident prevention and enforcement measures to strive to ensure work safety in the construction industry.

45. Apart from conducting over 50 000 routine site inspections each year, LD will from time to time launch special enforcement operations to deter work practices contravening work safety requirements, with focus on high-risk processes such as lifting operations, work-at-height, electrical work, sea-based construction works, etc.. LD will take immediate enforcement actions upon discovery of breaches of safety legislation. LD launched a number of special



enforcement operations in 2014, with a total of 500 Suspension Notices (SNs) (348 in 2013) and 716 Improvement Notices (INs) (590 in 2013) issued, and 745 prosecutions to be initiated (652 in 2013). As regards the enforcement figures for the construction industry as a whole (inclusive of the figures for special enforcement operations) in 2014, LD issued a total of 930 SNs (669 in 2013) and 1 395 INs (1 218 in 2013), with 2 177 prosecutions initiated (1 988 in 2013).

46. LD also strives to prevent accidents owing to systemic deficiencies from the source, including: through enhancing liaison with major works project proponents; urging the contractors concerned to, in respect of high-risk processes, strengthen their site safety management systems; strengthen the participation of professional resident site staff in monitoring work safety; and step up safety audits of major works projects so as to eliminate potential work hazards. On work safety for sea-based construction works, LD organized a seminar in collaboration with the Construction Industry Council and the Marine Department (MD) in December 2014, and produced relevant safety posters to raise safety awareness on work over water. In addition, LD and MD launched several joint enforcement operations in end 2014 / early 2015 to deter work practices contravening safety requirements for sea-based works. We will continue with these publicity and enforcement efforts in 2015. LD will also tackle systemic risks by strengthening the analysis of underlying systemic risks of serious construction accidents, instituting targeted inspections and enforcement actions, organizing seminars on thematic work safety (e.g. lifting operation, work-at-height, electrical work, etc.), and formulating codes of practice on work safety.

Launching safety enhancement initiatives and large-scale promotional programmes to raise the standard and awareness of stakeholders in the construction and catering industries on occupational safety and health

47. LD will, in conjunction with the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC), continue to enhance the work safety standard of the repair, maintenance, alteration and addition sector in 2015 through providing small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with safety management audits, safety training and subsidies for fall arresting devices. OSHC will launch publicity activities to promote safety-conscious contractors, with a view to enhancing the occupational safety culture of the industry continuously through market forces. In addition, LD in collaboration with OSHC has launched a “Mobile Platform Sponsorship Scheme for SMEs” since 2013 to subsidise SME contractors in their purchase of mobile working platforms conforming to safety standards, with a view to minimizing the risk of workers falling from work areas a few metres above ground or substandard ladders. As at end-December 2014, over 1 700 applications were received. OSHC approved over 1 580 applications,

benefiting around 17 300 workers. We are considering widening the scope of the sponsorship scheme to cover those working platforms for light-duty work in restrictive environment.

48. As for the work safety of workers in the catering industry, OSHC will continue to launch the “Outstanding OSH Restaurant - Pilot Scheme on Catering Safety Accreditation” this year. Participating enterprises may take part in the “Accreditation Scheme for Catering Establishments with 5S Good Housekeeping” to enhance the safety and cleanliness of workplaces. Accredited restaurants will receive subsidies for purchasing slip resistant shoes, cut resistant gloves and heat resistant gloves.

49. Besides, LD will continue to organise large-scale promotional and publicity programmes to enhance occupational safety and health awareness in the construction and catering industries. These programmes include “Safety Award Schemes”, roving exhibitions, promotional visits, broadcast of Announcements in the Public Interest on television and radio, radio programmes, fun days and experience sharing workshops, etc.

50. LD will also tailor-make simple and easy-to-understand promotional leaflets for EM workers, and organise site visits and talks in collaboration with workers’ unions and trade associations to enhance their safety awareness.

## **Conclusion**

51. The Government will continue to work closely with both employers and employees as well as different sectors of the community in implementing the various labour and manpower initiatives.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau**  
**Labour Department**  
**January 2015**