

**Commission on Poverty (CoP)  
Task Force on Children and Youth**

**Strengthening Parenting Support for  
Disadvantaged and Hard-To-Reach Parents**

**PURPOSE**

This paper seeks to update Members on the follow up actions to strengthen parenting support and education for parents from disadvantaged background following a sharing session on parenting held by the Task Force in December 2005.

**SHARING SESSION ON PARENTING**

2. The sharing session on 15 December 2005 among relevant bureaux/departments and their advisory bodies was very useful in promoting awareness of each other's work and how, in total, different agencies might contribute to the prevention and alleviation of cross-generational poverty. In addition to a shared need for continued dialogues among them, parties to the session also agreed that, despite their conscientious efforts in promoting parenting, and in particular in providing support and services for families with special needs or from disadvantaged background ("high-need/high-risk parent")<sup>1</sup>, a sharper focus in terms of target, approach, content, presentation and delivery was needed to ensure effective parent empowerment for the high-need groups<sup>2</sup>.

3. As a follow up, relevant policy bureaux, departments and advisory bodies agreed to take into account the comments made at the sharing session in planning their future work. The session, at the same time, also saw the need to fill an existing gap of understanding and service, viz. the identification of the needs of the high-risk/high-need parents and exploration of the key elements of a parent education/empowerment programme targeting these needs. The session agreed that the CoP Task Force might

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<sup>1</sup> Please refer to CoP TFCY Paper 6/2005 on an overview of existing parenting support and services <[www.cop.gov.hk](http://www.cop.gov.hk)>

<sup>2</sup> For details of the discussion, please refer to the gist of discussion at CoP website <[www.cop.gov.hk](http://www.cop.gov.hk)>

usefully play a role in this.

## **NEEDS OF HIGH-NEED/HIGH-RISK PARENTS**

4. In order to facilitate the Task Force to formulate appropriate policy recommendations to strengthen parenting support for the high-need/high-risk parents, the Secretariat has surveyed relevant existing studies and material. Most of the existing studies focus on “should” viz. the importance of parents to fulfill their parenting roles and what parents should do. While there are studies demonstrating that protective/inattentive family factors are related to adolescent coping and resilience, there is limited empirical exploration of parenting in poor families, its relation to child outcome in the local context and how a process of change can be brought about. We are not aware of any study that attempts to examine specifically the “how” of parent education in economically disadvantaged and hard-to-reach families in the Hong Kong context.

5. Basic empirical evidence and research findings focussing on the needs of the high-need/high-risk parents are needed to guide the Task Force’s further deliberation. There are a number of areas that the Task Force may wish to focus on -

- (i) how parent education services are currently provided by different sectors, including the focus, approach, content and mode of delivery etc, and how their effects in serving economically disadvantaged and hard-to-reach families are;
- (ii) the support that the economically disadvantaged parents and hard-to-reach parents need for the performance of their parenting role so as to identify the preferred content, format and mode of delivery of parent education; and
- (iii) how to better promote parent education in Hong Kong by looking at the existing policy interface and the room for further collaboration.

## **NEED FOR A STUDY ON PROMOTING PARENT EDUCATION FOR DISADVANTAGED PARENTS**

6. In light of the above, we consider it necessary to commission a more in-depth study on parent education with a view to-

- (i) reviewing on how parent education is conducted in Hong Kong by various sectors, including schools, government departments, and social service agencies, with a focus on economically disadvantaged and hard-to-reach

families;

- (ii) identifying the needs of hard-to-reach parents with offspring from 0 to 15 years of age for parent education; and
- (iii) making recommendations, based on the findings of the study, on the possible ways to support the parents in the performance of their parenting role, and the contents, modes of delivery, structure of parent education for economically disadvantaged and hard-to-reach parents.

Subject to Members' views, it is expected that preliminary findings will be available in the third quarter of this year to facilitate Members' further discussions.

### **ADVICE SOUGHT**

7. Members are invited to comment on the proposed way forward in paragraphs 3 and 6 above. We have also invited experts on parent education to brief Members on the proposed study during the Task Force meeting on 9 March 2006, and to incorporate Members views on the subject.

Commission Secretariat

March 2006