

Poverty Alleviation, Elderly Care and Support for the Disadvantaged



- Released in November 2014 the updated official poverty line. With the implementation of poverty alleviation measures including the Old Age Living Allowance, the overall poor population dropped to 970 000, below 1 million for the first time and the poverty rate fell to a 5-year low of 14.5% in 2013.
- Secured funding approval of the LegCo Finance Committee in January 2015 for the implementation of the Low-income Working Family Allowance Scheme (LIFA). The estimated annual expenditure for the allowance is around \$3.1 billion and will benefit over 200 000 low-income households (involving 710 000 persons, including over 170 000 eligible children). The Scheme is expected to be implemented in the second quarter of 2016.
- The Commission on Poverty approved 3 new assistance programmes under the Community Care Fund, including the provision of a one-off special subsidy for students on full grant under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme so that timely assistance can be made available to support students from low-income families before the launch of LIFA; the provision of cash grant for ordinary schools with relatively more students with special educational needs (SEN) and financial needs to arrange SEN coordinators; and enhancing the academic expenses grant for students with SEN pursuing post-secondary programmes. The total commitments of the programmes concerned exceed \$700 million, which will benefit more than 140 000 persons. In addition, the Extra Travel Subsidy for Needy Special Schools Students will also be regularised from the 2015/16 school year onwards to benefit 1 700 primary and secondary students each year.
- Announced in January 2015 that the Commission on Poverty will launch a public consultation on retirement protection in the latter half of 2015, and earmarked \$50 billion to underline the commitment of improving retirement protection for the elderly.
- Announced in February 2015 the allocation of \$130 million to strengthen child care services for supporting women in achieving work-family balance. The strengthened child care services will include (a) from 2015-16 onwards, increase by phases the Extended Hours Service (EHS) places for children aged below 6 by about 5 000, from about 1 200 at present to about 6 200, at aided child care centres and kindergarten-cum-child care centres in districts with high demand; (b) from 2015-16 onwards, provide resources for aided

- standalone child care centres and service units providing EHS and Occasional Child Care Service to enhance supervisory and administrative support; and (c) from 2017-18 onwards, provide about 100 additional aided long full-day child care places for children aged below 3.
- Invited non-governmental welfare organisations to submit proposals for the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services from February to April 2015. Enrolment of trainees is expected to commence in the third quarter of 2015. A total of 1 000 places will be provided in the coming few years for training young persons to take up care work.
 - Announced in January 2015 the extension of the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance for 2 years to March 2017, involving an additional expenditure of \$223 million. About 22 800 participants are expected to join the programme.
 - With effect from February 2015, the income and asset limits of the Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme have been increased again under the annual adjustment mechanism. Over 92 000 low-income earners have received subsidy from the Scheme since its introduction.
 - Provided 1 666 additional Enhanced Home and Community Care Service places and enhanced the service content of all 7 245 places starting from March 2015, involving an additional annual allocation of \$170 million.
 - Provided about 330 additional subsidised day care places from 2014-15 to 2016-17. Sites at 11 development projects have been reserved for the provision of day care centres/units. About 550 new day care places are expected to be provided.
 - Provided about 1 710 additional subsidised residential care places for the elderly from 2014-15 to 2017-18 through a multi-pronged approach. Sites at 11 development projects have been reserved for the construction of new residential care homes for the elderly. Some 1 200 new places are expected to be provided.
 - As at May 2015, about 1 985 carers for elderly person have joined the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of the Elderly Persons from Low Income Families financed by the Community Care Fund. The project will incur some \$126 million in additional expenditure.
 - Regularised the Bought Place Scheme for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities in October 2014. An annual estimated expenditure of about \$40 million is earmarked to provide 450 bought places for persons with disabilities.
 - Extended the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities to cover green minibuses in phases starting from March 2015, following the implementation of the Scheme in MTR, buses and ferries. To date, the number of eligible beneficiaries, including elderly people aged 65 or above and eligible persons with disabilities, is around 1.2 million. They can travel by the above means of public transport at a concessionary fare of \$2 per trip. The number of average daily passenger trips made under the Scheme is around 880 000.
 - Extended the Labour Department post-placement follow-up service for job seekers with disabilities from 3 months to 6 months in 2015-16. The new measure would cover over 2 000 persons with disabilities each year.
 - Announced in January 2015 that subsidies would be provided for social enterprises and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), for offering about 2 000 to 3 000 on-site training places for persons with disabilities and other groups in need, including the elderly and ethnic minorities, so as to enhance their employment prospect.
 - Allocated additional annual funding of \$160 million from 2015-16 onwards to strengthen the support for persons with disabilities, including the provision of 1 271 additional places for rehabilitation services; increasing the manpower of long stay care homes and enhancing the allied health services of hostels for moderately mentally handicapped persons; and increasing the social work manpower in the Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness and the existing subvented Parents/Relatives Resource Centres.
 - Announced in February 2015 that \$150 million would be earmarked for rolling out a new phase of the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme and implementing enhancement measures to support a wider range of social enterprises that provide support to the socially disadvantaged.

- Rolled out 4 projects under the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund in March 2015 at Kai Ching Estate and Tak Long Estate in Kowloon City, Cheung Lung Wai Estate in Sheung Shui and Lower Ngau Tau Kok Estate in Kwun Tong to facilitate the building of mutual help networks among the residents of newly completed or redeveloped PRH estates.
- Implemented a number of initiatives to strengthen community support for ethnic minorities in the second half of 2014 as scheduled, including setting up a new support service centre for ethnic minorities in Kwai Tsing, setting up youth units in all support service centres and sub-centres for ethnic minorities, implementing a youth ambassador scheme and recruiting additional staff familiar with ethnic minority cultures and languages.
- Required all bureaux and departments to adopt gender mainstreaming in formulating major government policies, initiatives and legislation from April 2015 onwards to ensure that women and men have equitable access to, and benefit from, society's resources and opportunities. At the same time, the gender benchmark for appointing women to government advisory and statutory bodies has

been raised from 30% to 35% to increase women's participation in public affairs. These 2 measures would help promote women development and implement the applicable provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

- Implemented the 3-day paid statutory paternity leave with effect from February 2015. Tens of thousands of employees are expected to benefit.
- Raised the amounts of 18 compensation items under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, the Pneumoconiosis and Mesothelioma (Compensation) Ordinance and the Occupational Deafness (Compensation) Ordinance by a range of 5.73% to 44.44% with effect from March 2015, affording better statutory protection for about 10 000 eligible persons.
- Increased the Statutory Minimum Wage rate to \$32.5 per hour with effect from May 2015, leading to further improvement to the earnings of grassroots workers.
- Supported, through the second round of Digital Inclusion Mobile Apps Funding Scheme, the development of 5 mobile apps for providing information and services to

underprivileged groups (including persons beset with dementia, persons with hearing impairment, and children with visual impairment, hearing impairment or dyslexia) and assisting the groups' integration into society. The mobile apps were launched from March 2015 onwards. Continued to organise the Web Accessibility Recognition Scheme to encourage public and private organisations to adopt accessibility design in their websites and mobile apps.

- Launched the ICT Outreach Programmes for Elderly, through which social workers and volunteers visited over 1 000 institutionalised and "hidden" elderly persons between March and December 2014. Through introduction to tablet computers and interesting apps, the elderly are encouraged to make use of information and communications technology in broadening their social circles and enriching their lives.

