

**Community Care Fund - Assistance Programme
Financial Assistance for Ethnic Minorities and
New Arrivals from the Mainland for
Taking Language-related Public Examinations
Evaluation Report**

Background

The Community Care Fund (CCF) has been established since early 2011 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, the CCF may take forward 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.

2. The former Steering Committee on CCF endorsed at its meeting on 20 April 2011 the launch of the programme in 2011-12 on a pilot basis to provide financial assistance for non-school-attending ethnic minorities (EMs) and new arrivals from the Mainland (NAs) from low income families to take language-related international public examinations so as to facilitate further study or employment.

3. The two-year pilot programme was administered by the Home Affairs Department (HAD) and application was accepted from 26 September 2011 to 25 September 2013. Applicants for assistance must be non-school-attending EMs or NAs from low income families¹ and must obtain a pass or a specified result in the specific international public examination on languages. The amount of financial assistance per application is equal to the examination fee, ranging from some \$200 to some \$1,000. The original estimated expenditure for the programme was \$3.15 million (i.e. an amount of financial assistance of \$3 million and an administrative fee of \$150,000). It was expected that the programme would benefit around 3 000 people.

¹ Low income families refer to those whose monthly household incomes not exceeding 75% of the Median Monthly Domestic Household Income applicable to their household size, or those who have passed the means tests of specified assistance schemes.

Implementation of the Assistance Programme

4. HAD has commissioned a non-governmental organisation (NGO) through open quotation as the service provider of the programme to assist in promotion of the programme, handling of applications and disbursement of financial assistance to the successful applicants, etc.

5. HAD and the service provider conducted a briefing at the end of September 2011. Representatives from over 30 organisations attended the briefing, including government departments and organisations concerned, examination authorities, Support Service Centres for EMs, community support teams for ethnic communities, as well as other relevant NGOs and local organisations. HAD and the service provider introduced to them the programme in detail, and appealed to them to promote and publicise the programme to the target groups through their respective networks.

6. HAD and the service provider promoted the programme to EMs and NAs through various channels, including posters, leaflets, websites, radio, newspapers and the Ambassador Scheme, etc. Furthermore, HAD and the service provider promoted the programme through Support Service Centres for EMs, the Immigration Department (ImmD), social enterprises (SEs) and examination authorities. They also held promotions and accepted applications at examination venues on examination days.

7. In November 2011, HAD accepted the views of EM groups and included the Chinese Language Examinations of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and the Advanced Level and Advanced Supplementary Level of the General Certificate of Education (GCE) to the list of specific examinations under the programme so as to allow more choices for target beneficiaries.

8. Having regard to the applications to the programme, the estimated expenditure was revised to \$1.05 million (i.e. an amount of financial assistance of \$1 million and an administrative fee of \$50,000) in February 2013. It was expected that the programme would benefit around 1 000 people.

Review

9. HAD conducted a review of the programme in late February 2013. The effectiveness of the programme was mainly assessed by analysing the application data and applicant profile as well as the questionnaire survey on the beneficiaries and the service provider. The review was completed in early June 2013.

Applicant Profile and Survey Results

I. Application Data and Applicant Profile (Details are at Appendix (i))

10. As at late May 2013, a total of 483 applications have been received. 363 of them have been vetted and 120 were being processed². Among the 363 vetted cases, 283 were successful with the financial assistance disbursed amounting to around \$300,000, and 80 were ineligible.

11. Among the 483 applications received, 45 (9.3%) were from EMs and the remaining 438 (90.7%) were from NAs. The majority of applicants belonged to the age group of 31 to 40, accounting for 50.3%.

12. Among the 483 applications received, 385 (79.7%) took Putonghua tests, such as State Language Commission – PSC (Putonghua Shuiping Ceshi) Test, 78 (16.1%) took examinations on English language, such as those of International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and 20 (4.2%) took examinations on Chinese language, such as those of the Advanced Level of the GCE.

13. Regarding the 80 ineligible applications, the chief reason for rejection was incomplete information. Information required, such as examination result certificates, was not provided after repeated contact and the applications were withdrawn by the applicants (60 cases, accounting for 75%). The second reason was that the applicants were still attending school (10 cases, accounting for 12.5%).

² Applicants must submit to the service provider a copy of notification of examination results upon receipt of the notification so that their applications can be further processed. As a result, quite a number of applications were being processed.

II. Feedback from the Beneficiaries (Details are at Appendix (ii))

14. Participation of the beneficiaries in the questionnaire survey was voluntary. As at late May 2013, among the total of 210 questionnaires received by the service provider, 2 were from EMs, and 208 from NAs. Among the responding beneficiaries, the majority belonged to the group having resided in Hong Kong for one to three years, accounting for 32.3%. In terms of age, the majority belonged to the age group of 31 to 40, accounting for 50.9%. In terms of education level, the majority were of senior secondary level, accounting for 43.8%.

15. The responding beneficiaries who agreed or strongly agreed that the promotion efforts of the programme were adequate accounted for 82.4%; that the programme had achieved the objective of encouraging further study accounted for 93.3%; and that the financial assistance under the programme was helpful to the beneficiaries accounted for 94.7%. The feedback of the responding beneficiaries on the service provider was positive. With regard to the enquiry service, handling of applications, reimbursement arrangement and staff service attitude of the service provider, over 95% of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied.

III. Feedback from the Service Provider

16. HAD also conducted a questionnaire survey on the service provider. On the whole, the service provider considered that the arrangement and preparation of the programme were appropriate and was satisfied with the HAD's active support and overall arrangement. It also expressed willingness to continue providing assistance to similar programmes.

IV. Public Enquiries (Details are at Appendix (iii))

17. The service provider had set up a hotline to provide necessary support and information to the public. During the implementation of the programme from September 2011 to late May 2013, the service provider received a total of 130 calls involving 157 enquiries. The majority were about the eligibility criteria, application procedures, reimbursement of the examination fee, etc.

Evaluation Results

18. The results of HAD's analysis are as follows:

(a) The programme can encourage and help some non-school-attending EMs and NAs to take examinations for improving language abilities

- Faced with the pressure of life and work after leaving school, EMs and NAs have limited motivation to take language examinations.
- In spite of the above, the feedback of the beneficiaries of the programme was highly positive. They expressed that the financial assistance under the programme was very helpful to them and the programme could encourage them to take language examinations for improving language abilities. Organisations providing services for EMs and NAs were also generally supportive of the programme.
- HAD considers that a multi-pronged approach should be adopted to help EMs and NAs improve their language abilities. While schooling is generally regarded as most important for improving language abilities, it is also necessary to consider providing them with other forms of support in addition to attending school.
- HAD considers that the programme should be incorporated into its regular support service so that those EMs and NAs aspiring for self-enhancement to increase their competitiveness will have the opportunity to continue to receive financial assistance in future for taking language examinations. HAD will meet the expenditure required through deployment of internal resources.

(b) The mode of operation of the programme was smooth

- According to the survey results, all respondents, be they EMs or NAs, the beneficiaries or the service provider, were satisfied

with the current operational arrangement. Only a minority considered that improvement was needed with most of them opined that promotion should be strengthened.

(c) The promotion of the programme was generally adequate

- HAD and the service provider had tried to promote the programme to EMs and NAs as far as possible through various channels, including posters, leaflets, websites, radio, newspapers and the Ambassador Scheme, etc. Moreover, the programme was also promoted through Support Service Centres for EMs, ImmD, SEs and examination authorities. Promotions were also held and applications accepted at examination venues on examination days.
- If the programme is incorporated as a regular service, HAD will intensify promotion at the district level with a view to creating an atmosphere of self-enhancement and encouraging non-school-attending EMs and NAs to pursue further study and take examinations for improving their personal abilities through the programme.

Conclusion

19. HAD considers that the programme can indeed encourage and help some non-school-attending and low income EMs and NAs to take language examinations for improving their personal abilities. It should therefore be incorporated into the regular support service of HAD so that those EMs and NAs aspiring for self-enhancement to increase their competitiveness can continue to receive financial assistance in future for taking language examinations. HAD will explore the feasibility of streamlining the application procedures and strengthen promotion at the district level to further fine-tune the programme.

Home Affairs Department
July 2013

Applicant Profile**(a) Age of Applicants**

| Age group | No. of Persons | Percentage |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Aged under 18 | 1 | 0.2% |
| Aged 18-30 | 192 | 39.8% |
| Aged 31-40 | 243 | 50.3% |
| Aged 41-50 | 46 | 9.5% |
| Aged 51 or above | 1 | 0.2% |
| Total | 483 | 100.0% |

(b) Reasons for Ineligible Application

| Reason for rejection | No. of Cases | Percentage |
|--|---------------------|-------------------|
| Information incomplete. Information required, such as examination result certificates, was not provided after repeated contact, and the applications were withdrawn by the applicants. | 60 | 75% |
| Applicants still attending school | 10 | 12.5% |
| Household income exceeding the specified limit | 6 | 7.5% |
| Examinations not taken within the specified period | 3 | 3.8% |
| Taking non-specific examination | 1 | 1.3% |
| Total | 80 | 100.0% |

(c) **Examinations taken by the Applicants (as at 31 May 2013)**

| Exam Code | Name of Examination | No. of Applications |
|------------------|--|----------------------------|
| A01 | Business English Certificates | 0 |
| A02 | Business Language Testing Service | 2 |
| A03 | English for Business | 0 |
| A04 | English for Business Communications | 0 |
| A05 | English for Commerce | 0 |
| A06 | English for Office Skills | 0 |
| A07 | English Language Skills Assessment | 0 |
| A08 | International English for Speakers of Other Languages | 0 |
| A09 | International English Language Testing System | 69 |
| A10 | International Spoken English for Speakers of Other Languages | 0 |
| A11 | Pearson Test of English | 0 |
| A12 | Spoken English for Industry and Commerce | 0 |
| A13 | Test of English As a Foreign Language | 1 |
| A14 | Test of English for International Communication | 5 |
| A15 | Test of English for International Communication Bridge | 0 |
| A16 | Trinity Graded Examinations in Spoken English for Speakers of Other Languages | 0 |
| A17 | Trinity Integrated Skills in English Examination | 0 |
| A18 | Versant for English with open questions | 0 |
| A19 | Written English for Tourism | 0 |
| B01 | Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority – Test of Proficiency in Putonghua (TPP) | 21 |
| B02 | State Language Commission – Putonghua Shuiping Ceshi Test (PSC) | 364 |
| C01 | International General Certificate of Secondary English – Chinese Language | 0 |
| C02 | General Certificate of Education(GCE) (Advanced Supplementary Level) | 2 |
| C03 | General Certificate of Education(GCE) (Advanced Level) | 18 |
| C04 | General Certificate of Secondary Education(GCSE) | 0 |
| | Non-specific Examination | 1 |
| | Total | 483 |

Survey on the Beneficiaries³**(a) Length of Residence**

| Length of Residence | No. of Persons | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Less than 1 year | 14 | 6.7% |
| 1 to 3 years | 68 | 32.3% |
| 3 to 5 years | 62 | 29.5% |
| 5 to 7 years | 63 | 30.0% |
| More than 7 years | 1 | 0.5% |
| No response | 2 | 1.0% |
| Total | 210 | 100.0% |

(b) Age

| Age | No. of Persons | Percentage |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 18 to 30 | 69 | 32.8% |
| 31 to 40 | 107 | 50.9% |
| 41 to 50 | 27 | 12.9% |
| 51 or above | 2 | 1.0% |
| No response | 5 | 2.4% |
| Total | 210 | 100.0% |

(c) Education Level

| Education level | No. of Persons | Percentage |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Primary or below | 1 | 0.5% |
| Junior secondary | 51 | 24.3% |
| Senior secondary | 92 | 43.8% |
| Post-secondary/undergraduate | 45 | 21.4% |
| Postgraduate | 16 | 7.6% |
| No response | 5 | 2.4% |
| Total | 210 | 100.0% |

³ Participation in the survey was voluntary and the service provider has received a total of 210 questionnaires.

(d) Feedback on the Programme

| Statement and Comment | No. of Persons | Percentage |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. The promotion efforts of the programme are adequate | | |
| - Strongly agree | 58 | 27.6% |
| - Agree | 115 | 54.8% |
| - Neither agree nor disagree | 36 | 17.1% |
| - Disagree | 0 | - |
| - Strongly disagree | 1 | 0.5% |
| - No comment | 0 | - |
| Total | 210 | 100.0% |
| 2. The programme can achieve the objective of encouraging further study | | |
| - Strongly agree | 93 | 44.3% |
| - Agree | 103 | 49.0% |
| - Neither agree or disagree | 12 | 5.7% |
| - Disagree | 1 | 0.5% |
| - Strongly disagree | 1 | 0.5% |
| - No comment | 0 | - |
| Total | 210 | 100.0% |
| 3. The financial assistance under the programme is helpful to you | | |
| - Strongly agree | 104 | 49.5% |
| - Agree | 95 | 45.2% |
| - Neither agree or disagree | 9 | 4.3% |
| - Disagree | 0 | - |
| - Strongly disagree | 1 | 0.5% |
| - No comment | 1 | 0.5% |
| Total | 210 | 100.0% |

(e) **Feedback on the Service Provider**

| Statement and Comment | No. of Persons | Percentage |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Enquiry service provided by the service provider for the programme | | |
| - Very satisfied | 102 | 48.6% |
| - Satisfied | 102 | 48.6% |
| - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 5 | 2.4% |
| - Dissatisfied | 0 | - |
| - Very dissatisfied | 1 | 0.5% |
| - No comment | 0 | - |
| Total | 210 | 100.0% |
| 2. Handling of applications by the service provider | | |
| - Very satisfied | 95 | 45.2% |
| - Satisfied | 108 | 51.4% |
| - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 6 | 2.9% |
| - Dissatisfied | 0 | - |
| - Very dissatisfied | 1 | 0.5% |
| - No comment | 0 | - |
| Total | 210 | 100.0% |
| 3. Reimbursement arrangements | | |
| - Very satisfied | 107 | 50.9% |
| - Satisfied | 93 | 44.3% |
| - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 5 | 2.4% |
| - Dissatisfied | 2 | 0.9% |
| - Very dissatisfied | 1 | 0.5% |
| - No comment | 2 | 0.9% |
| Total | 210 | 100.0% |
| 4. Staff service attitude | | |
| - Very satisfied | 116 | 55.2% |
| - Satisfied | 89 | 42.4% |
| - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 4 | 1.9% |
| - Dissatisfied | 0 | - |
| - Very dissatisfied | 1 | 0.5% |
| - No comment | 0 | - |
| Total | 210 | 100.0% |

Appendix (iii)

Public Enquiries

| Subject | No. of Cases |
|---|---------------------|
| Eligibility criteria | 62 |
| Application procedures | 38 |
| Examination fee reimbursement procedures | 4 |
| Progress of application | 2 |
| Obtaining application forms | 2 |
| Information on examinations | 2 |
| Others | 47 |
| - Scheme \$6,000 under the Community Care Fund (36) | |
| - Training courses (5) | |
| Total | 157 |