

AGENDA 1**Population Ageing and Societal Response**

Local population ageing has become one of the core issues in society over the past decade. The main reason is that with the increasing population of elders, the whole society needs to be well prepared in every aspect from hardware to software, and from community facilities to social services. So, the development issues of population ageing and how the society responds to it are in need of prompt exploration and discussion.

Major Trends

1. The number and proportion of the aged in population is on the rise.
2. Hong Kong's economy is still being influenced by the development of the globe and mainland China.
3. With the transformation of family structure and its functions, elders receive less care from the family.
4. The backgrounds of the population group of elders are diverse: education, finance, health, residence, activity, etc. Related policies and services should accommodate such diversified needs.
5. Elders with different financial capacity, knowledge, healthy bodies and capability can be human resources for the society.
6. A large proportion of elders face financial difficulties and the problem is unlikely resolved in the short run.
7. A part of elders in the next cohort will be comparatively healthier, highly-educated and better prepared for their retired life. Yet, their mental health is still largely neglected.
8. The development of science and technology will influence the design and planning of related services, products and others for elders.

Concerns and Challenges

1. How to ensure the government can make appropriate policies for elders to take care of their special needs based on different policy principles, consider special allocation of resources for them in annual budget. A comprehensive population policy, together with a time table of its implementation is also needed.
2. The existing government policy formulation mechanisms do not have designated seats for elders to participate. How to enable elders to participate in social policy formulation?
3. How to make plans for financing related elderly services and balancing private and public services demand and supply and how to target elders with different levels of financial capacity to monitor private provision of services and goods.
4. How to safeguard elders' economic protection, as well as how to eliminate poverty among elders when there are still a substantial number of elders having financial difficulties or living in poverty. Elders in poverty do not have financial capability. They therefore can only live on public services, such as social security, housing, medical treatment, and long-term nursing care, etc.
5. How to protect the rights to work of capable elders who are in need of employment when many of them are engaged in low-paid jobs, and even exploited.
6. How to encourage elders to learn and participate in the communities, including

voluntary work.

7. In our society, there still exists age discrimination. People have many misunderstandings and negative impression upon elders. How to build up a positive image of aged and reduce age discrimination in the society.
8. How to establish a sound health care system and long-term care system so as to improve elders' physical and psychological health and meet their psychological and emotional needs. Also, how to take care of those with special needs such as those having dementia.
9. How to build up aged-friendly and barrier-free residential and community environment so that special needs of elderly can be taken of in any urban design, infrastructure, housing design, etc.
10. The transformation of family structure and its functions make family members hard to take the responsibility of taking care elders in their families. While the existing services have not sufficiently supported in-family carers, how to assist and train carers in the family.
11. A large number of elders are frail requiring labor-intensive nursing care. The existing salary and career prospect for professional carers are not satisfactory. It is hard to attract people to join this profession, leading to a lack of adequate manpower and variations in quality of carers. How to enhance or increase manpower of the caring profession and related supportive professions.
12. How to safeguard elders' personal safety and rights to survival, to reduce elder abuse, and to prevent elders from being the victims of fraud and crime.
13. How to leverage the development of science and technology to facilitate and benefit elders in meeting their needs in everyday life.
14. How to promote community care service so that elders can enjoy "ageing in place" and other rights, and maintain their effective social networks.
15. How to add different angles (like gender, race, culture, etc) into policy and service planning in order to cater for diverse needs of different groups of elders.

Possible Actions

1. To promote public understanding of and concern over ageing population and the challenges and opportunities that it will bring about.
2. Based on the principles of Active Aging and Elderly Friendly advocated by World Health Organization (WHO), we should put in place the following:
 - a) Safety/Security
 - To explore legislation on prohibiting age discrimination.
 - Economic protection - To enable elders to start up businesses and to improve employment environment for elders, including flexible retirement plan.
 - To explore and review retirement protection system.
 - b) Health
 - To further improve medical care and rehabilitation services.
 - To pay attention to elders' mental health problems, including Alzheimer's disease (dementia) and depression.
 - To support in-family carers so that they can play their roles and fulfill their function more effectively, and that their stress can be reduced.

- c) Participation
 - To provide opportunities for elders so as to encourage them to take part in the advisory bodies and processes of the government.
 - To establish universities for elders and Elderly College, etc.
 - To foster more contacts and communications among different age groups so as to promote harmony between the younger generation and the elders.
 - To develop silver hair market to provide related services and products for elderly groups with different needs.
 - d) Elderly Friendly Community
 - To build aged-friendly community in terms of urban and infrastructure design.
 - To strengthen coordination among different departments and bureaux for the forging a better living community environment for the elderly and promoting their community participation
3. The society and the government should make relevant policies on ageing population to provide policy directions for implementation of measures as well as resource allocation.
- To establish a special unified body in government to coordinate cross-department and cross-sectoral policies and services

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