

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. A large proportion of elders aged 65 or above faces financial difficulties and the problem is unlikely resolved in the short run.
3. A part of elders in the next cohort will be comparatively healthier, highly-educated and better prepared for their retired life.
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 financial capacity, knowledge, healthy bodies and capability are human resources for the society.
6. Hong Kong’s economy is still being influenced by the development of the globe and mainland China.
7. With the transformation of family structure and its functions, elders receive less care from the family.
8. The development of science and technology will influence the design and planning of related services, products and others for elders.

Concerns

1. How to enable elders to participate in social policy formulation.
2. How to make plans for financing related elderly services, targeting elders with different levels of financial capacity.
3. How to safeguard elders’ employment rights, economic protection, as well as how to eliminate poverty among elders.
4. How to encourage elders to learn and participate in the communities, including voluntary work.
5. How to build up a positive image of aged and reduce age discrimination in the society.
6. How to establish a sound health care system and long-term care system so as to improve elders’ physical and psychological health.
7. How to build up aged-friendly and barrier-free residential and community environment.
8. How to assist and train carers in the family.
9. How to enhance or increase manpower of the caring profession and related supportive professions.
10. How to safeguard elders’ personal safety and rights to survival.
11. How to leverage the development of science and technology to facilitate and

benefit elders in meeting their needs in everyday life.

12. How to promote community care service so that elders can enjoy “ageing in place.”
13. How to pay close attention to elders’ psychological and emotional needs.
14. 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.

Challenges Ahead

1. The existing government policy formulation mechanisms do not have designated seats for elders to participate.
2. A large number of elders are frail requiring labor-intensive nursing care.
3. There are still a substantial number of elders having financial difficulties or living in poverty. Or, they are engaged in low-paid jobs, and even exploited.
4. 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. In our society, there still exists age discrimination. People have many misunderstandings and negative impression upon elders.
6. The existing policy is not able to make special arrangements for the needs of elders, which causes some inconvenience and unfairness towards elders. For example, elders cannot apply for CSSA independently, and thus lead to domestic disputes. Or, elders who are at the age of 65 or above cannot apply for Continuous Education Fund.
7. At present, we have no comprehensive policy for elders. Neither does the government have any schedule on making a comprehensive policy for elders.
8. Our government has no “Budget for Elders”.
9. The transformation of family structure and its functions make family members hard to take the responsibility of taking care elders in their families.
10. 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.
11. Public and private supply/demand are unbalanced in this profession. The private market of services and products for elders is to be developed.
12. The existing services have not sufficiently supported in-family carers.
13. The existing urban design, infrastructure, housing design, etc. have not given enough considerations to the special needs of elders.

Possible Actions

1. To build aged-friendly community in terms of urban and infrastructure design.
2. To provide opportunities for elders so as to encourage them to take part in the advisory bodies and processes of the government.
3. To establish a special unified body in government to coordinate cross-department and cross-sectoral policies and services
4. To enable elders to start up businesses and to improve employment environment for elders, including flexible retirement plan.
5. To establish universities for elders and Elderly College, etc.
6. To further improve medical care and rehabilitation services.

7. To pay attention to elders’ mental health problems, including Alzheimer’s disease (dementia) and depression.
8. To further improve public transport services so as to encourage elders’ social and community participation.
9. To foster more contacts and communications among different age groups so as to promote harmony between the younger generation and the elders.
10. 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.
11. To explore and review retirement protection system.
12. To explore legislation on prohibiting age discrimination.
13. To develop silver hair market to provide related services and products for elderly groups with different needs.

How do you think about the themes/topics above? Are there any other themes left out that you would like to raise? What are other issues or problems related to this Agenda that you think should be explored and discussed?

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