



社會福利署  
Social Welfare Department

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**By Fax Only**  
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Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu Hung  
(Attn: CHAN Siu Ming)  
Fernando Chiu Hung CHEUNG  
Legislative Councilor's Office  
Room DB01, G/F, Chung Ping House,  
Chung On Estate, Ma On Shan,  
N.T., Hong Kong

5 August 2015

Dear Mr CHAN,

**Re: Letter of Enquiry  
for refugees, torture claimants and asylum seekers in Hong Kong**

Further to our letter of 3 July 2015, I am authorised to give you a reply.

*Humanitarian Assistance Programme*

2. The Government commenced operating a unified screening mechanism (USM) in March 2014 to screen claims made by foreigners who smuggled themselves into Hong Kong, visitors who overstayed their limit of stay allowed by the Immigration Department (ImmD) or who were refused entry by ImmD upon arrival at Hong Kong refusing to be removed to another country on all applicable grounds. Some non-refoulement claimants may not be able to meet their basic needs when their claims are being assessed. On humanitarian grounds, the Government has been offering in-kind assistance to those claimants to prevent them from becoming destitute (the assistance programme).

3. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has commissioned the International Social Service Hong Kong Branch (ISS-HK) to provide the above humanitarian assistance through tendering exercises since 2006. Coverage of such assistance includes temporary accommodation, basic utilities allowance, food, clothing, basic necessities, appropriate transportation allowance and counselling activities. The objective of the assistance programme is to ensure that non-refoulement claimants will not, during their presence in Hong Kong, become destitute. The assistance programme is not intended to provide them with extra assistance than is necessary to meet their basic needs, so as to avoid



any magnet effect which may have serious implications on the sustainability of the assistance programme and on our immigration control.

#### *Introduction of Food Coupon System*

4. In light of the views of some concerned non-governmental organisations and Members of the Legislative Council, food coupons are introduced in the 8<sup>th</sup> round of service contracts, commencing 26 May 2015. It is an additional and preferred option in the provision of food assistance with a view to enabling service users to have wider choices of food at more stores for collection.

5. Currently, food coupons with a total value of \$1,200 from Wellcome Supermarket are given to each service user every month. Service users can redeem their food at over 280 stores of the supermarket. The number of food items available for their selection has significantly increased from around 200 to 1 000 under 46 food categories, including 245 Halal food items to meet cultural and religious needs of service users. The food coupon system is a brand new arrangement. We will seriously consider the suggestion on widening the food choices and only excluding cigarettes, alcoholic drinks. Service users in need of assistance in maintaining a balance and healthy diet may obtain some sample menus from ISS-HK which are devised with reference to the advice of Department of Health.

6. Food coupons are for food items only. They are non-cashable and non-transferable. This is to ensure that service users are using the food coupons to redeem food for their own consumption only in order to ensure prudent use of public resources and to avoid possible abuses. To this end, receipts have to be submitted for close monitoring on the use of food coupons.

7. The present food coupons provider, Wellcome Supermarket, is well informed of the terms and conditions of the food coupons. The supermarket has undertaken to provide necessary training to their frontline staff to familiarise themselves with such terms and conditions. The barcoding devices of the supermarket also facilitate the staff to screen out the excluded items during the transaction process effectively and efficiently. ISS-HK is working closely with the Wellcome Supermarket to ensure the smooth operation of the food coupon system.

8. While food assistance is mainly rendered in the form of food coupons, in those cases which are urgent and/or with justifiable needs, ISS-HK will provide emergency in-kind food to those in need.



*Way Forward*

9. We hope you will appreciate that the food coupon is a newly introduced mode of food service delivery with a view to widening the food choices and providing more stores for collection. SWD will continue monitoring its implementation. Views or suggestions would certainly help improve the arrangement in future.

10. Should you need further information, please contact Miss Fung Hing-sum, Fanny, Senior Social Work Officer (Family)1, at 2892 5169.

Yours sincerely,

(WONG Kwok Chun, Alex)  
for Director of Social Welfare

c.c. Security Bureau (Attn: Ms Zorina WAN)