

## **Leaking Huts – Asylum seekers have to walk 300 meters for the washroom.**

There is a small “slum” located in the Kwan Tei Village in Fanling, where 8 Bangladesh asylum seekers are staying in 6 small squatter or huts of dreadful living conditions. The asylum seekers cook, groom and bathe within the 100 square feet area. The unit has no toilets, and they have to walk about 300 meters to go to the public washroom.

In the squatter area, eight Convention Against Torture claimants from Bangladesh are waiting for their refugee status determination. Each applicant claimed that they escaped from their home country to stay in Hong Kong due to political factors. Habobur, one of the asylum seekers, came to Hong Kong 4 years ago. He moved to the Kwan Tei Village 6 months ago. Because the temporary houses have no toilets, he stated that “it is problematic for daily life.”

NGO claimed that the huts are similar to the slums.

When the reporters visited the area last month, it was raining heavily. Water was leaking through the roof. To avoid electricity leakage, the asylum seekers did not turn on the lights. Some even claimed that they had previously seen snakes inside the huts. The Director of Vision First, Cosmo Beatson, said that he was shocked when he first saw the houses in the Village. He described that the conditions are comparable to slums. He criticized that the International Social Service (ISS) failed in its duties by not considering the safety of the premises. Mr. Beatson also requested the Government to arrange more suitable accommodation for the claimants.

ISS: The asylum seekers “choose” to live in the huts.

The ISS replied that the asylum seekers in Ping Che have “chosen” to stay at such premises. Social workers contact them every month and ask them whether

they would like to stay there. The department also proposes possible assistance to each applicant. However, the ISS department has not received much formal requests from the applicants. Only two complaints were filed in May of this year, since 2008.

The legislator, Fernando Cheung, said that he has rarely seen such dreadful and harsh environment like the huts in Kwan Tei Village. He also pointed out that the \$1200 rent allowance is insufficient to help them to find a safe or suitable accommodation.