

# Transcript of remarks at press conference on analysis of the poverty situation in Hong Kong

The Chief Secretary for Administration and Chairperson of the Commission on Poverty, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong; the Deputy Commissioner for Census and Statistics, Ms Marion Chan; and the Principal Economist of the Office of the Government Economist, Ms Reddy Ng, today (November 19) held a press conference to announce the analysis of the poverty situation in Hong Kong in 2017. Following is the transcript of remarks at the press conference:

Reporter: It seems that the number of children living in poverty has been decreasing in the past few years, but it's increased slightly last year. Are there any specific reasons that you can think of that led to this increase? And also the Chief Secretary has talked about a lot of statistical limitations in the calculation of our poverty rate, but the fact is the rate has been increasing – it's reached a nine-year high now. So isn't that the strongest evidence to show that the Government's policies in alleviating poverty have failed? Thank you.

Chief Secretary for Administration: First of all, I don't think our policy has failed at all. If anything, in fact, if you look at the figures, look at elderly sector particularly, there is an obvious increase, an improvement, increase in the effectiveness of our measures. We're now back to the 2003 level, which is very encouraging in fact.

The other thing I want to be able to stress here is that poverty alleviation is a multi-pronged effort and the problem with our methodology, it's constrained by the very fact that a lot of these non-recurrent government cash programmes like the Community Care Fund, a lot of these so-called one-off relief measures and all that, and also a lot of services including after-school care services, elderly care services, home care services are not counted at all. All these are money but the trouble is because of this methodology, the rigidity, the constraint, the parameter. But we've got to follow the international norm, that's why all these are not reflected in the figures at all. But that does not mean that we should be complacent at all. The figures themselves tell us that we should continue to work hard, continue to step up our efforts on poverty alleviation, join hands with the community and also encourage those who are needy, eligible for the allowances, for example the Working Family Allowance to apply. I mentioned earlier on that we are now targeting ethnic minorities because of their lack of understanding, language barrier and all that – we want to reach out to them directly, proactively, so that they can have access. Once they have access, the figures will be improved, because it is reflected in the poverty figure generally. So we should step up our efforts, no doubt about it.

As for children, the reason why it's got a slight increase of 0.3 percentage points, it's primarily they come from families, big families, big households, with just one breadwinner and living with one old family member, which will drag down the household income in the analysis. But if you look at what's happening for children, basically, the number is not significant at all. It's purely, I said that, the demographic structure we are facing, structural ageing community. Every year 60,000 Hong Kong residents enter to the senior citizens bracket, and also household size becomes smaller and smaller. All these really are posing a challenge in terms of statistical analysis. Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)