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Agencies seek decision role

The Government should involve voluntary agencies in its decision-making process, representatives from three agencies said yesterday.

Speaking at the second quarterly meeting of the Hongkong Council of Social Service, the council's representative in the Government's programme for rehabilitation, Mr F. C. Tang, urged officials to work closely with voluntary agencies in preparing the Rehabilitation White Paper.

"We appreciate the partnership and equality that we experienced when working with Government officials in preparing the Green Paper. However, we are disappointed that this friendly atmosphere does not extend to the preparation of the White Paper," Mr Tang said.

He said he was also sorry to see that last month's Budget did not make any provision for the care of thousands of handicapped people.

The other two representatives, Mrs Grace Wan and Mr Peter Tsang, also urged the Government to involve voluntary agencies in its development plans.

Another speaker was the Social Welfare Department's Administrative Officer, Mr C. W. Lau.

He pointed out that the social welfare five-year plan, first published in 1973, has a number of shortcomings.

"Some projects are proposed without adequate consideration given to overall need and demand. Timings for projects are scheduled unrealistically," Mr Lau said.

"Furthermore, alternative courses of action are not properly analysed or evaluated and there is a lack of information in some areas. Action required is not followed up in a satisfactory manner, and the annual review of the five-year plan was not published early enough to guide the voluntary agencies in applying for subvention."

Mr Lau also explained why the voluntary sector was not consulted in the preparation of the social welfare chapters of the development plan last year.

"It was mainly because of the time factor. However much material has been taken from the five-year plan," he said.

Mr Lau also noted that some areas of development in the five-year plan have received detailed policy and financial approval, such as public assistance and provision of community service centres.