

香港社區組織協會（社協）吾家·露宿者攝影展今日舉行開幕儀式，展示本港露宿者最新困境和政策問題，是次展覽是2013年ArtWalk展覽系列之一。社協今天特別邀請勞工及福利局局長張建宗主持展覽開幕儀式，促請政府及公眾正視本港露宿者的問題。

ArtWalk是全港一年一度舉行的最受歡迎的藝術慈善活動，今年將於4月18日（星期四）下午4時30分至11時30分舉行，屆時參加者可於70間畫廊欣賞藝術作品，門票收益捐助慈善團體（成人\$450，學生\$150）。ArtWalk自2005年開始將門票收益捐贈本會，支持服務弱勢社群及推動人權工作。社協衷心感謝ArtWalk多年來對本會的大力支持，以及Schoeni Art Gallery少勵畫廊自2008年開始慷慨贊助展覽場地，讓更多市民認識貧窮議題。

2012年本港的人均收入踏入歷史新高，但現時仍有近千名露宿者，因著社會政策的失誤、個人際遇和生活困難而露宿街頭；他們當中有中年工友、有患病的精神病康復者、有失去家庭支援的單身漢和貧困長者等，他們是我們社會中最弱勢、最無助的一群，亟待公眾關注及正視。

是次名為「吾家」的攝影展覽，本會有幸邀請義務專業攝影師雷日昇先生、義務記者何美華、義務攝影師劉健倫陪同本會社工，日以繼夜深入社區黑暗的角落，透過鏡頭和文字訴說在繁華都會背後的陰暗面，展現露宿者生活，并希望引起社會對本港露宿者的關注，促使當局協助居民改善生活環境。展覽期間亦會慈善義賣露宿者明信片（每套六張共20港元），所有收益將撥作慈善用途。

現存社署露宿者數字未能全面反映真實情況

露宿者在香港一直存在，準確的統計人數有助制訂適切的服務，惟政府在估算露宿者人數的方法却存有漏洞。根據社會福利署提供的數據，截止至2013年2月，全港共有已登記露宿者586名，惟現時社署登記並未有計算露宿少於一個月的露宿者，只要露宿者「即月被安排入住露宿者宿舍」，即會被政府取消登記。再者，由於有工作的露宿者大多沒有固定露宿地點，在社署統計中往往被遺漏。社協在2010年¹及2012年²兩次調查均顯示，就業人士佔所有非領取綜援人士分別為78.9%及63.7%，遠高於社署（2012年）就業人士只占非領綜援人士的25%。因此，**社協認為社署極可能漏計露宿者人數，亦嚴重低估露宿者就業人口。絕大多數露宿者習慣入夜後才到隱蔽地方露宿，以躲避社會歧視和政府驅趕。他們流動性極高，不易被接觸。社協估計全港大約有1,200名露宿者。**

就業不穩定令超過一半露宿者「再露宿」

近年本港就業市場改變，勞動工種傾向短期化，由于工作不穩，住屋租金昂貴，導致再失業及再露宿的情況更為突出。本會2012年調查顯示有52.4%為「再露宿」人士，兩次露宿相距中位數更由2010年的4年劇降至2012年的1年。其中不少露宿者均從事政府外判短期合約工作，反映勞工政策間接影響露宿者就業狀況。

四成非領取綜援露宿者無力租樓

最低工資生效後，雖然露宿者工資中位數由2010年的3,000元提高至2012年的5,000元，但由于私樓租金大幅高企，很多露宿者仍因負擔不起私樓床位和板間房的高昂租金及按金而被迫露宿街頭。奈何政府自2005年起取消月租僅430元的單身人士宿舍，缺乏支援露宿者住屋的服務；加上房屋署每年

¹ 香港社區組織協會 2010香港露宿者調查報告

² 香港社區組織協會 2012香港非綜援露宿者研究報告

配編的一人公屋單位不足2,000個，導致單身人士輪候公屋編配無期，露宿者只能以街頭為家，反映政府並無完善政策處理收低收入人士的住屋問題。

綜援租金津貼過低和不足

縱使有領取綜援的露宿者，他們也因綜援租金津貼不足而露宿街頭。2003年起政府把單身人士綜援租金津貼上限由1,505元減至1,265元，2012年2月起首次增加至1,335元，2013年2月至1,440元，更取消綜援租金按金、取消了60歲以下綜援人士特別津貼如牙齒護理、眼鏡等特別津貼。根據社署統計資料，近七成單身私樓綜援戶的實際租金均高於租金津貼最高金額。截至2012年1月，全港居於私樓的綜援戶個案數目為37,638個，當中有22,688宗個案其每月實際租金均高於租金津貼最高金額，佔所有私樓綜援個案的60.3%，若以1人家庭私樓受助個案計劃，每月超出租金津貼上限的個案更高近七成（67.6%），情況更有惡化趨勢。

露宿者被滋擾 政府未有保障政策

香港目前並無明確的法例規定香港市民是否可以在街頭露宿。社協過往屢次發現政府利用「針對性的行政手段」來處理露宿問題。根據本會2012年調查，受訪露宿者表示曾被警察/保安等騷擾（30.4%）、擔心人身安全（25.5%），政府部門不斷驅趕露宿者、清理露宿者在街頭的私人物品，卻無保障露宿者的政策。

本會建議

面對以上露宿者困境，本會促請政府推行以下改革建議：

1. **改善露宿者政策**：當局應恢復1997年前社署全港以「數人方式」計算露宿者數目，以達至更完善「露宿者服務的規劃」，并仿效日本制定政策及法例以保障露宿者。
2. **增建市區廉價單宿**：恢復廉價（如430元月租）的市區單身人士宿舍，協助占露宿者39.9%的「非綜援露宿者」上樓。
3. **改革綜援制度**：當局應檢討綜援制度，包括：提供牙齒護理、眼鏡等特別津貼；恢復單身綜援人士租金津貼回到1,505元水平，並為領綜援的露宿者提供租金按金津貼，以促進就業。
4. **完善公屋政策**：當局應增建公屋，檢討市區1人獨立單位比例，取消計分制，縮短單身人士「輪候公屋時間」。
5. **強化對精神健康支援服務**：現時部份「醫院精神科外展隊」，未必願意在街頭診斷露宿者，當局應加強「醫院精神科外展隊」服務，在四間露宿者外展隊協作下，到主要露宿區域探訪露宿者。

香港社區組織協會
2013年4月17日

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The Society for Community Organization (SoCO) held a press conference today to announce the Photo Exhibition *Home, Street Home*, which reveals the truly difficult circumstances of the homeless in Hong Kong. The exhibition is one of a series of ArtWalk 2013 exhibitions. SoCO invited the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Hon. Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, JP as a special guest to the opening ceremony of *Home, Street Home*. SoCO urges the government and the public to squarely face the problem of the homeless in Hong Kong.

ArtWalk is Hong Kong's most popular charity art event activity, held annually. This year, it will be held from 4.30 p.m. to 11.30 p.m. on 18 April (Thursday). Participants can enjoy a variety of art in 70 art galleries. The proceeds from the admission ticket (\$450 for adults and \$150 for students) will be donated to charities. Since 2005, ArtWalk has donated the revenue from admission tickets to our organization, supporting our work in serving the underprivileged and promoting human rights. SoCO sincerely thanks ArtWalk for the great support it has given to our organization. Our sincere thanks also goes to the Schoeni Art Gallery: since 2008, Schoeni has generously sponsored the exhibition venue so that more people can understand issues of poverty.

In 2012, the per capita GDP in Hong Kong reached its highest in history. However, due to the failure of social policies, personal circumstances and poor livelihood, there remains nearly 1,000 homeless people who sleep in Hong Kong's streets. Amongst the homeless are middle-aged workers; rehabilitated mental patients who remain ill; and single and impoverished elderly people who have lost family support. They are the most underprivileged, most helpless group in our community. They are in dire need of concern and attention from the public.

In the *Home, Street Home* photo exhibition, SoCO is fortunate to have photographer Mr. LEI Jih-sheng, the journalist HO Mei Wah and the photographer Alan LAU to accompany our social workers and go, day and night, deep into the dark corners of the community. Through their lens and words, they volunteered to recount the dark side behind our glamorous cosmopolitan city and unfold the life of the homeless. It is hoped that this will arouse the community's concern about the homeless and spur the authorities to assist them in improving their living conditions. **During the exhibition, there will be charitable sale of the postcards of the homeless (\$20 per set of 6 cards). The proceeds will all be used for charitable purposes.**

Social Welfare Department's homeless statistics do not represent the facts

Homelessness has always existed in Hong Kong. Accurate statistics on the number of homeless would help the formulation of more appropriate services. There are, however, loopholes in the way in which government estimates the number of homeless. According to figures provided by the Social Welfare Department, there are 586 registered homeless people as at February 2013, but the Department has not taken into account those who have become homeless for less than a month. As long as a person is "arranged to enter a shelter for the homeless within one month", he / she will be de-registered by the government. **Furthermore, since most homeless people who have employment do not sleep in fixed locations in the street, they are often omitted from the Department's statistics.** The surveys conducted by SoCO in 2010³

³香港社區組織協會 2010香港露宿者調查報告

³ 香港社區組織協會 2012香港非綜援露宿者研究報告

and 2012⁴ show that employed persons represent 78.9% and 63.7% respectively of the persons not receiving comprehensive social security assistance (CSSA). Both figures are way above the Social Welfare Department's 2012 statistics that employed persons represent 25% of the persons not receiving CSSA. Therefore, **SoCO is of the view that SWD has most probably omitted some homeless people in its counting and has seriously underestimated the number of the homeless who have employment.** In order to avoid discrimination and the officialdom's expulsion from locations, the vast majority of homeless are in the habit of going to sleep in not noticeable places after dark. They are high in mobility and difficult to contact. **SoCO estimates that there are about 1,200 homeless people in Hong Kong.**

Uncertainty in employment results in more than half of the homeless "become homeless again"

Owing to changes in the employment market, manual work tends to become short-term. As a result of job instability and exorbitant rent for residences, the situation of becoming unemployed again and becoming homeless again has become more prominent. Our 2012 survey shows that 52.4% of respondents are persons who have "become homeless again". The median of the intervening period between the two homeless occasions has dropped sharply from the 4 years in 2010 to 1 year in 2012. Quite a few of the homeless are engaged in short-term contract work outsourced by the government. It shows that labour policies indirectly affect the employment of the homeless.

40% of the homeless not receiving comprehensive social security assistance cannot afford rent

After minimum wage legislation took effect, and although the median salary of the homeless has increased from HK\$3,000 in 2010 to HK\$5,000 in 2012, private housing rent has increased by a wide margin. Consequently, many homeless people are forced to sleep in the street because they cannot afford the exorbitant rent or rent deposit of bed spaces and wood-partitioned cubicles in private flats. Moreover, since 2005, the government has abolished single people's hostels that had been charging rent of only HK\$430 per month. There is a lack of services to support the housing of the homeless. In addition, the Housing Department allocates less than 1,000 single-person public housing units each year. It means single persons have to wait indefinitely for allocation of public housing. Therefore, the homeless can only regard the street as their homes, which shows that the government does not have sound policies to address the housing problem of low-income people.

CSSA rent allowance is inadequate.

Even the homeless receiving CSSA sleep in the street because the rent allowance under the CSSA is inadequate. With effect from 2003, the government reduced the ceiling of CSSA rent allowance from \$1,505 to \$1,265. The amount was increased, for the first time, to \$1,335 in February 2012 and then to \$1,440 in February 2013. However, the CSSA rent deposit was cancelled. Also cancelled were the special allowances for CSSA recipients under 60 years old, such as allowances for dental care and spectacles. According to SWD's statistics, the actual rent paid by nearly 70% of single person CSSA recipients living in private housing exceeded the ceiling of rent allowance. As at January 2012, 37,638 households receiving CSSA were living in private housing. These included 22,688 cases where the monthly actual rent exceeded the ceiling of rent allowance. The figure represented 60.3% of the CSSA cases in private housing. If only the single-person families in private housing who receive assistance are counted, the ceiling of rent allowance was exceeded in nearly 70% (67.6%) of the cases. The trend indicates the situation will become worse.

The homeless are harassed; the government has no policy to protect them

Hong Kong does not have, at present, any clear legislation on whether or not people may sleep in the street. SoCO has found on several past occasions that government officials used "targeting executive measures" to

address the problem of street-sleeping. According to our survey in 2012, the homeless interviewed say they have been harassed by the police / security guards (30.4%) and worried about personal safety (25.5%). Government departments incessantly expel the homeless and clear their personal belongings from streets, but have no policies to protect the homeless.

SoCO's recommendations

To address the difficulties of the homeless as described above, we urge the government to implement the following reform proposals:

1. **To improve the policy on the homeless** – the government should reactivate the SWD's pre-1997 practice to calculate the number of homeless people by "head counting", so as to arrive at a better "plan to serve the homeless". As in Japan, policies and legislation should be established to protect the homeless.
2. **More low-cost single-people hostels in urban areas** – reactivate the low-cost (e.g. monthly rent of HK\$430) single-people hostels in urban areas to assist "non-CSSA homeless" - who represent 39.9% of the homeless, - to move into housing flats.
3. **Reform the CSSA system** – the authority should review the CSSA system, including: providing special allowances for dental care, spectacles etc; Revise the rent allowance for single-person CSSA recipients back to the \$1,505 level and provide rent deposit allowance to the homeless who are CSSA recipients to promote employment.
4. **Improve the public housing policy** – the authority should build more public housing flats, review the proportion of one-person independent units in the urban area and shorten the "public housing waiting time" of single persons.
5. **Strengthen the support services for mental health patients** – at present, some "hospital psychiatric outreach teams" may not be willing to examine the homeless on the street. The authority should strengthen the services of the "hospital psychiatric outreach teams". Under the co-ordinated efforts of four outreach teams, visits should be paid to the homeless in the main areas where the homeless are staying.

Society for Community Organization
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