Sport for All - Participation Patterns of Hong Kong People in Physical Activities consultancy study findings unveiled

A consultancy study, "Sport for All - Participation Patterns of Hong Kong People in Physical Activities", commissioned by the Community Sports Committee of the Sports Commission revealed that over 60% of the respondents (65.5%) indicated they have participated in sports for at least once during the three months of survey period. The study, successfully interviewed more than 5 000 respondents, found that the male participation rate in sports is 68.4%, slightly higher than the 62.9% for the female. The survey also showed that with the increase in age, the sport participation rate dropped significantly from 95.6% (aged 7 to 12) to 53.3% (aged 60 or above).

On the frequency of sports participation, 41.2% of the respondents (27.0% of the population) indicated that they had participated in sports three times or more per week, and 80.3% (52.6% of the population) for at least once per week. The sports they participated in most frequently were jogging (13.8%), swimming (13.2%) and badminton (10.1%). The three sports they were most eager to learn were swimming (14.7%), tai chi (10.3%) and badminton (8.8%).

More than half of the respondents (60.6%) used mainly the leisure facilities of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) or other government departments. The first three considerations for the people to choose a sport to learn were "interest" (40.7%), "keeping fit/health" (21.3%) and "time available" (11.6%). "Facilities" (4.8%) and "cost" (2.9%) were not their primary considerations.

About half of the respondents (46.9%) usually played sports with friends/ neighbours, 40.8% played sports alone and 13.1% with classmates.

Apart from studying people's sport participation pattern, the study also covered their participation in physical activities. "Physical activities" refers to all physical activities that consume energy, including daily activities such as walking, housework, gardening and job-related manual work, and sports which require physical exertion and skills for the improvements of health and physique.

The study revealed that over half (51.4%) of the Hong Kong people failed to meet the level of the "baseline indicator" of physical activity level. The "baseline indicator" is set at a level of as least an accumulation of 30 minutes a day and at least three days a week in moderate or vigorous physical activities. "Moderate intensity activities" refer to physical activities that slightly speed up one's
breathing and heart rate and cause mild sweating without feeling exhausted, and that is still in a state of capable of talking smoothly. Examples are brisk walk, jogging, walking stairs, slow cycling or dancing.

The primary reasons for the respondents' participation in physical activities included "keeping fit/health" (35.9%), "interest" (12.9%) and "physical activities/sports is a habit in daily life" (11.6%). The reasons for not taking the initiative in participating in physical activities included "no spare time due to work/study" (30.7%), "tired" (17.5%) and "lazy" (14.6%).

More than half of the respondents (57.4%), especially the younger ones aged seven to 12 (72%) or the elderly aged 60 or above (77.7%) considered that they had sufficient or very sufficient amount of physical activities. However, if measured by the "baseline indicator", only 48.6% of the people reached the activity level of the "baseline indicator". It showed that there was a significant gap between self-evaluation and objective assessment on the amount of physical activities.

The consultancy study "Sport for All - Participation Patterns of Hong Kong People in Physical Activities" was conducted in two stages, namely literature review and questionnaire survey.

The LCSD appointed the Department of Sports Science and Physical Education of The Chinese University of Hong Kong as the consultant in September 2007 to undertake a literature review, supervise the implementation of the survey and prepare a comprehensive final report. The Literature review began in January 2008 with the collection of sports development data and related studies of Hong Kong and ten countries/regions.

In April 2008, the LCSD appointed the Consumer Search to conduct a household survey for the second stage of the study. The survey was carried out from May 22 to July 10, 2008 (first phase), followed by other carried out from September 2 to October 19, 2008 (second phase).

More than 5 000 people were successfully interviewed. Of the total respondents, 48.7% were male and 51.3% were female, matching the gender distribution of Hong Kong's population.

Speaking at the press conference held today (September 2) to announce the findings of the survey, the Chairman of the Community Sports Committee (CSC), Mr Chau How-chen, said the CSC endorsed six strategies for promoting community sports. One of them is to formulate objective indicators to measure the effectiveness of the promotion of Sport for All in the community. Through the conduction of a large-scale study, information on the extent, frequency and other data on the participation patterns
of Hong Kong people in physical activities were collected so as to objectively measure the level of penetration of Sport for All in the community. The purpose is for a better grasp of the updated information of people's participation in physical activities so as to serve as references for formulating community sports strategies in the future. He emphasised that as far as promotion of Sport for All was concerned, this study is one of the important achievements of the six strategies.

A task force, formed under the CSC with Dr Lo Wing-lok as convener, was responsible for survey-related issues. Speaking at today's press conference, Dr Lo said that the data collected by the study, particularly information on physical activities and the "baseline indicator", were valuable references for future promotion work of community sports.

Based on the findings, the CSC proposed cooperation among the stakeholders in the community to disseminate the message on the importance of regular participation in sport and other physical activities. It was also proposed to review the provision of a greater variety of leisure activities and facilities for the public with a view to achieving the objective of Sport for All.

Speaking at the press conference about the follow-up action, Assistant Director of LCSD, Miss Olivia Chan, said that based on the findings, the CSC proposed that to further promote Sports for All in the community, emphasis should be made to "education" and "service". Through education and upgrading services from time to time, more people will be encouraged to actively participate in sports and physical activities.

She said that follow up action will be taken into two phases. The first phase will focus on introducing the findings of the study to various stakeholders including government departments, District Councils, National Sports Associations (NSAs), district sports associations, business organisations and schools; enlist their support to promote "Sport for All" in the community; and to disseminate messages on the importance of regular participation in sport and other physical activities to the public through various channels. The promotional work will be a continual process targeting different stakeholders and user groups.

The focus of the second phase is to conduct a comprehensive review on the existing provision of leisure services, including the composition of the sports programmes and the public needs for sport facilities. A wider range of sports and other physical activities to cater for the needs of different age groups will be designed in consultation with NSAs. Similar study will be conducted regularly to collect the most update information of people's participation in sports and physical activities.
The executive summary of the study has been uploaded onto the LCSD’s homepage www.lcsd.gov.hk for public view.

Ends/Wednesday, September 2, 2009