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Shortages at the Food Bank

On a typically hot and, humid summer day in Hong Kong, it is not difficult to spot a long queue in front of one of the community service centers that partially operates as a food bank in a public housing estate in District A of East Kowloon. The queue fills up the small entry way of the service center, which is approximately 1,800 sq feet. One of the women in line is overheard commenting to another:

“It is lucky that we have this service in our community. As you know I am a newly immigrated mother from Mainland China, and my husband has recently been dismissed from his job as a labourer due to the economic downturn. I was told that we can get food from here but I am still worried about what will happen 6 weeks from now as I will only be given enough food until then.”

The two social workers in the food bank had just finished sorting out the food and items to be distributed for the day, which had taken them quite a while since the other six social workers in the center were responsible for other projects such as case management, application reviews, and administration work. The two social workers, Miss Chan and Miss Cheung, then began distributing the food to their clients in the queue while making sure each client signed the notice of collection after receiving their portion of food aid.

Clients of the Food Bank left the center with dried food items such as instant noodles, rice, canned food, and bread. They were heard saying to the social workers:

“Thanks a lot for the assistance, but is it possible for us to collect the food from a less public place since I do not want to be seen lining up for free food? You know how it is in our society; we don’t want others to know we are getting things for free.”

Dr. Helen K. Liu and Research Assistants Lau Shuk Fan and Tsoi Ka Wan, prepare this case. They are grateful to the EXCEL3 for the grant support. Some data in the case have been disguised or notified to protect privacy. HKU cases are developed solely as the basis for class discussion. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective management.

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As Miss Chan surveyed the still crowded queue, she was worrying about the increasing demand for food services. In the years since the Food Bank began operations, there had been a steady rise in the number of people requiring food assistance and she was concerned about whether they would be able to sustain service provision in the future, especially with acceleration in food inflation.

“There is a reason why we are doing our job here – we want to help those in need. It just does not feel right to turn away anyone who is really in need of assistance. But with the increasing number of applicants we receive each month, I doubt we can serve all the families who meet the requirements for food assistance.”

Background

The Food Bank is located in District A. District A, one of the poorest districts in Hong Kong, has a median household income of HKD 14,050, much lower in comparison to the HKD 17,250 median income of all of Hong Kongⁱ. The district is situated at the eastern part of the Kowloon Peninsula, a boundary that stretches from Lion Rock in the north to Lei Yue Mun in the south. With pressing needs to develop new lands to cope with the population pressure brought by the waves of immigrants from Mainland China, as well as for more space for further industrial development, District A was developed to accommodate the divergent interests of society.

In 1954, the government carried out large-scale reclamation of the bays in District A and the reclaimed land soon became the major industrial area. To accommodate the population in flux, the government decided to build large-scale public housing estates in L, M and N in the late 1950's to re-settle people living in squatter areas and provide labour to the nearby factories. The population of District A expanded rapidly in the 1960's and 1970's with the boom of the manufacturing industry. The population reached its peak of 700,000 in the 1970's and is the most densely populated districts in Hong Kong. However, as the manufacturing industry began to decay following that period, the population of District A also declined. Many of the industrial buildings were abandoned or transformed for commercial land use. By the 21st century, according to the 2006 by-census, District A remains one of the most densely-populated districts with a population of 587,423, a density of 52,123 per km square, and over 50% of the population living in public rental flatsⁱⁱ.



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Food Assistance Policy in Hong Kong

Food Banks are common social welfare components in countries such as the United States, however the concept of food assistance is new to Hong Kong. In face of the worsening poverty situation and financial tsunami, the government decided to cooperate with nonprofit organizations (NPOs) to launch food bank services in low-income communities. In 2009, the government announced a food bank scheme in which Hong Kong was divided into five main areas and 100 million dollars allocated to implement the scheme. In February that year, the

Social Welfare Department assigned funds to five NPOs to operate food assistance services for the whole territory to aid individuals and families encountering difficulties in meeting their daily food expenditures. This programme, operated by the Social Welfare Department, targets citizens who have difficulties in meeting their daily food expenditure, including the unemployed, low-income groups, new immigrants, homeless, and other people who experienced sudden financial hardships. These food assistance services were meant to provide temporary relief following the financial crisis and were therefore considered short-term programmes, for a maximum of 6 weeks. Furthermore, the government funding was estimated to last until 2013 only.

The Food Bank in District A

The Food Bank office is located in a public housing estate in District A. The office space is small with a few rooms used for different purposes. There is a small lobby with 3 computers for communal use and a reception area near the entrance. Only one room is used for food storage.

The Food Bank is actually a branch under a religious NPO incorporated in Hong Kong. The mission of the Food Bank is to “spread the love of God and help people in need to raise their living standard”. The Food Bank’s main objective is to provide both short and long-term food assistance to the underprivileged, which helps to alleviate some of their financial difficulties.

The Food Bank runs two programmes: Project Gleaner and Project Meal. Project Gleaner is self-financed whereas Project Meal is sponsored by the government.



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Project Gleaner

Project Gleaner began operating as early as 2005 and is one of the earliest food banks in Hong Kong. With the Project, the Food Bank attempts to provide prompt food relief to the needy, and to study the causes of poverty in order to make policy suggestions to the government. Finally, it works towards building up a network of the poor to collectively make a better tomorrow.

The Project is self-financed, primarily through donations and support from the host NPOs and does not receive any government funding, thus enjoying absolute discretion in deciding service recipients and the duration of assistance per case. Their annual food expense is approximately HK\$100,000. The Project responds to the needy living within District A. It aims to serve individuals and families trapped in low income or poverty, or those who need emergent relief. However, the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme (CSSA) recipients are generally excluded from the Project unless the case is supported by partner organizations. All the eligible individuals and families for the Project have to apply through the Food Bank's partner organizations.

Food is distributed on a weekly basis, ranging from rice, canned food, noodles to oatmeal and eggs. A recipient can come to the Food Bank in the afternoons every Monday to Friday, from 2 to 5 pm, to collect the food.

The Project is also ambitiously engaging in public advocacy activities and network-building for the poor. It takes the initiative to make a difference in local poverty alleviation. It reaches beyond food distribution work and attempts to influence public policies as well as public awareness regarding the poor people and the poverty issues.

Project Meal

In order to help the poor in District A, the Food Bank started operation since 2005 to provide assistance to people in dire need of food and essential items. This was later followed by government announced plans to allocate 100 million dollars to set up short-term food assistance service centres in 2008, in response to calls for solutions to assist the needy who were impacted by soaring inflation rates and the financial crisis.

Having received funding from the government, Food Bank, in collaboration with four other organizations, implemented the "Food Network" project to provide short-term food assistance for the needy in Districts A, B, and C. In order to be eligible to receive assistance from the Food Network, applicants must meet the following requirements: (1) are families that are currently living



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under the poverty line (for instance, monthly household income of a family should be 55% lower than that of the average income of the Hong Kong population, HKD 14,500); (2) are unemployed persons, new arrivals, or homeless persons; (3) need prompt assistance and urgent relief due to emergency situations or unexpected events, such as injuries, domestic violence, death of the breadwinner of the family, etc.; (4) other special needs (upon verification of their needs and approval obtained from the center or its partner organizations). Applicants must satisfy at least one of the above criteria. At the same time, they should not: (1) currently benefit from any government's relief measures, i.e., they are non-recipients of the CSSA, the Disability Allowance or the Old Age Allowance; (2) have any electricity accounts;

(3) earn a monthly income of more than \$10,000 and live in boardrooms/beds/rooftop structures 6 months before making the application.

There is also a detailed description of the application process that the Food Bank needs to follow in order to be accountable to the government and continue to receive funding. The Food Bank will need the applicants to provide proof of their residence address. Applicants will need to apply to one of the designated service units for referrals because the designated organizations can help to assess the eligibility of the applicants. Referral requests can be made to affiliated organizations of "Food Network", including the Social Welfare Department, relevant government departments, the Office of the District Councilors, social service agencies, schools and churches. These organizations will assist in making an appointment for the assessment to take place. Applicants are required to complete the required application form and provide the necessary supporting documents, including the applicant's household status, proof of address, income and savings, for evaluation purposes; applicants who fail to meet the above requirements, may be unable to get the appropriate treatment, and their applications may even be delayed or rejected. Applicants only need to meet the eligibility criteria of one of the above. In approving the application, the service units will base their decision on assessment findings and recommendations, information submitted by the applicants as well as relevant supporting documents. Due to the short-term nature of the assistance scheme, differential levels of assistance will be given to applicants, usually in accordance with their predicaments and needs, with the maximum period of assistance not to exceed six weeks.

The applicants are informed about withdrawal or termination of the food relief services. The applicants should inform the Food Bank when they no longer need assistance and their situation has improved, making them ineligible



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for the services, or when they plan to leave Hong Kong for more than seven days. However, there is no way for the Food Bank staff to check on the situation of their clients and they must rely upon the clients to report honestly.

Once the “need” test is passed, the applicant can obtain the food aid he needs. Under normal circumstances, he can receive food assistance in the afternoon of the day the application is approved. Food will be distributed on a weekly basis, and collection time of the food will depend on the agreements made between the service agencies and the users. Approved service users must go to the designated location to get their food. Special distribution arrangements will also be made on the day before public holidays. Apart from dried food items, milk, food coupons, food and redemption coupons are also distributed to individuals when necessary. Since all the food is received through government-funding or donations, the service users have a moral obligation to inform the social workers when the service is no longer needed. This allows essential food items to be allocated to other persons in need.

Operating Structure and Work Division

There are a total of 15 staff members in the service center in District A, together with one supervisor who oversees all work in the center. In addition to food assistance, other services are also available through the center. This includes helping low income citizens with finding employment, advocating for labour rights, providing community service for new immigrants, etc. Every staff person in the center is involved in the Food Bank programme, doing tasks such as contacting donors and other miscellaneous works, but there are only 3 staff members who are mainly responsible for the Food Bank project. The three members include Miss Chan and Miss Cheung, who are both social workers, and one clerk. In addition, there is a warehouse officer in charge of the warehouse used for storage of food. The Food Bank has 4 regular volunteers and around 10 irregular volunteers who mainly help with stocktaking and warehouse administration.

“On the face of it, it seems like we have sufficient personnel to handle the work of a food bank. People might not understand how complex it can get when it comes to hands on work, especially in the center where everyone is focused on several projects at the same time. The increasing workload has me worried about how we can approach the government to provide us with more funding for administrative expenses.”



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Seeking Food Assistance

There are two options for those who would like to receive food assistance from the Food Bank: they can either receive a referral or walk-in to the center.

(1) Referrals

Social service organizations in Hong Kong can refer cases to the Food Bank when they believe such cases warrant additional assistance. However, there are restrictions on which organizations have the ability to make referrals. Only organizations that apply for a partnership with the Food Bank are eligible to make referrals. Organizations wishing to partner with the Food Bank must fill out the requisite paperwork, including any relevant documentation, and submit these to the Food Bank. The Food Bank will then approve the applications of those organizations that meet the requirements for partnership. The partnership organizations will fill in forms and prepare documentation for referring to the Food Bank (usually in the way of facsimile).

Upon receipt of a referral of an application, the Food Bank staff will review the information and contact the applicant to arrange an interview with them. After the interview, those applicants who meet the requirements will receive a notice of approval and are able to receive food assistance within 5-7 days.

(2) Walk-ins

Persons in need of food assistance can also choose to apply to the Food Bank directly and are considered walk-ins. Walk-ins are limited by geographical scope, as the Food Bank will only accept applicants who live in District A. Also, the Food Bank will generally decline applications from CSSA recipients as they are not eligible to receive further assistance (as mentioned earlier), subject to overwhelming reasons that food assistance is needed, and the Social Welfare Department has the discretion to deduct the amount of CSSA received by the applicant should they apply for food bank services.

The main difference between walk-ins and referrals is that partner organizations making the referral conduct preliminary screenings on the eligibility of applicants in District A. Therefore, the rate of approved food assistance applications is higher for referrals than walk-ins. After the applications are approved, clients have to wait for 5-7 days before they receive any food, unless there is an emergency.



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Serving the clients

Usually referrals and walk-in clients wait to be served about 30 minutes to an hour after they enter the service center. It usually takes 10-15 minutes for the clients to complete the application form for each programme. Upon receipt of the application, Miss Chan or Miss Cheung will spend 30 minutes reviewing the information. However, sometimes, it will take a few days to confirm the eligibility of their clients with partner organizations since it is hard to get hold of staff who are in charge of food applications right away. After verifying the eligibility of the applicants, Miss Chan or Miss Cheung will call the applicants to come back to the food bank for a short interview. The interview itself is short, around 10 minutes, but the applicants usually have to wait until Miss Chan or Miss Cheung are free. The interview serves as an important determinant for acceptance or rejection of the food service applications. Each successful applicant will receive a notice and they can then receive food within 5-7 days after their application is approved.

Both referrals and walk-ins generate the same amount of applications each month and most applicants will be approved unless they fail to meet the requirements of the programme. Normally the food bank serves around 300 – 600 persons each month. The number fluctuates depending on the time of the year, and also the economic situation, for example, during the economic tsunami in 2008, the Food Bank received twice as many applications as usual.

Miss Chan, the social worker who has primary responsibility for the food bank programme, explained that

“We generally do not turn away applicants. However, with the increase in food assistance applications, it takes longer to process and approve cases. We sometimes receive calls from impatient applicants asking for progress and while it can be frustrating, we understand that they are worried since they are depending on our assistance to have enough food for themselves and their family.”

With only two social workers processing a few hundred applications each month (and the number has been increasing), there is a huge backlog since the start of the programme. In addition, Miss Chan also mentioned that:

“There have been some instances that my colleague and I actually missed some of the applications because of the heavy workload. We feel really badly about that since it is our fault and we understand all applicants are



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having hardships that should be dealt with as soon as possible but there is just too much work for only two of us to handle.”

The Food Bank staff is also responsible for meeting with applicants to process their applications, however sometimes the social workers miss meeting with clients since they are away from the center for stocktaking or food purchase. Miss Chan advises applicants to confirm with the center before the meeting to make sure that the social workers are available to meet them.

Ordering food

Food is normally ordered once a month by bulk orders on the 10th day of every month. If any item is running low, a special order will be placed accordingly. Social workers first need to compare prices from different suppliers (e.g. Garden Bread (嘉頓麵包), Dai Chong Hong (大昌行), Doll Instant Noodles (公仔麵)) and bargain prices with them to minimize costs due to limited funding they receive. It took Miss Chan a long time to establish good relationships with each of the suppliers.

“At first, we could not really obtain any substantial discount from the suppliers. We knew that in order to get a cheaper price, we could not buy food from supermarkets or outlets, we needed to go directly to the suppliers. After ordering a few times and discussing our food bank scheme with suppliers, they came to understand that we provide food to the needy for free and were more willing to offer us additional discounts, sometimes up to 10%. From time to time, if they have any excess storage of food due to expire soon, they would give it to us for free or sell it at a lower price. The problem then of course, is that the food bank would need to distribute these items to recipients as soon as possible before they expire.”

Up until now, social workers still contact suppliers directly and hold meetings, usually by telephone, to negotiate better prices. However, negotiating cheaper prices has become increasingly difficult in view of the accelerating inflation rate. Once an order is placed, the staff either pays before the delivery or upon delivery.

When the order is finally placed, the social workers have to wait for a specific delivery date. Usually food arrives within one or to two weeks after placing an order or making a payment. The social workers do their best to acquire food



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from the least number of suppliers in order to save time because they need to accept deliveries at the center in person.

Miss Chan commented “It is a give-and-take situation. Certainly if possible, we would like to acquire each type of food item from the cheapest suppliers, but that will add up the time we need in accepting delivery. Thus, we make compromises and sometimes we purchase a number of items from one single supplier in order to reduce the number of deliveries to the center.”

When the food finally arrives at the center, the social workers must confirm and accept each delivery, inspect the food and take stock to ensure the order matches the delivery. This requires a lot of time and also requires them to halt other tasks and focus on taking the delivery.

“It’s tough work, we have so much to do when the food is delivered from the suppliers. We only want to get the delivery out of the way as soon as possible and continue to see clients and distribute food”

Depending on the amount of food ordered, it could take up to two hours so the staff usually prefers to schedule food deliveries early in the morning so that they can handle it and then move on to perform more substantive work.

Storing Food at the Warehouse

The space for the Food Bank is limited in a small public estate and it is impossible to keep all the food items inside the small center. To solve this problem, the staff went searching for a storage warehouse. They did not look for one in a public estate due to higher rent and limited available space. Instead, the staff had their eyes on the older industrial parts of District A.

District A used to be one of the busiest industrial districts in Hong Kong a few decades ago. As the society became more financially developed, most factories there moved back to China, leaving empty buildings behind. Many such factory buildings have now been converted into storage use. Miss Chan viewed this as an advantage as the old buildings have relatively lower rent and are located in District A. A lease was signed with a monthly rent of approximately HK\$25,000 and renovations were made to turn it into the warehouse for the food bank. A warehouse officer was then hired to take charge of the warehouse.



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Getting Food between the warehouse and the food bank

The center serves as the distribution point of the food to the clients, which means some part of the food will be kept at the center in a small conference room, while the rest will be transported to the warehouse. To facilitate the process, a medium sized truck was leased by a private rental company. The warehouse officer is the official driver of the truck.

The social workers will call clients and ask them to collect food at the center. Clients usually will confirm with the Food Bank one day before collection. Prior to distributing the food, the staff needs to first sort out the different food items and pack them into bags and boxes according to the needs of each recipient. Each client would spend 30 minutes collecting their food from the center only once a week. Sometimes, clients do not get all the food at one time so that they need to go home and wait. The next day, when the Food Bank has the food, the social workers contact the clients to collect it at the center again.

“I only need to come here once a week. At first, I did not even know the exact location of this place as I live on the other side of District A. Normally I would bring my own trolley to carry the food back to my home. Miss Chan and her coworkers always prepare enough food for my wife and my son. I dare not chat too much with her as she seems so busy all the time!” a recipient said.

The Inventory System and Stock Management

Food is stored at the center and the warehouse. Normally, Miss Chan and Miss Cheung would have several numbers of boxes for each type of food at the center. If the food in the center is going to run out soon, they would call the warehouse officer to transport food to them by truck.

Half of the space in the warehouse is used to store food while the other half is occupied by the daily necessities, such as boilers, steamers, clothes, diapers, children’s toys, etc, donated by the public. Donated items are distributed to recipients from time to time if necessary and suitable. Most of the food is canned or packaged, and can easily be stored on the shelves. There are two refrigerators used to store fresh meat and other frozen food such as dumplings, although fresh and frozen food items are limited in quantity and not available all the time.



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The warehouse officer not only transports the food from the center to the warehouse but also transports the food back to the small office when there is not sufficient food to distribute. It is not uncommon for him to make four such trips in a week. During the week immediately after the monthly bulk order, more transporting trips are required. It takes around twenty minutes to half an hour for a truck to travel from the warehouse to the food bank center although both buildings are in the same district.

Although the warehouse officer does not have to keep track of the exact outflow and inflow of the food, he usually notifies the staff when any particular item is running low. The staff can then place an extra order with the supplier of that food item or, if the situation is really urgent, the warehouse officer will drive the truck over to the center to get petty cash and make necessary purchases on the spot. Alternatively, Miss Chan or another staff member would personally carry out the emergent purchases.

Even with this process in place, however, there are still some problems. When the stock of pastry was alarmingly low and the warehouse officer tried to contact Miss Chan on this matter, she was busy taking deliveries from an earlier order. The other social worker, Miss Cheung, gave out petty cash to the officer to purchase pastry from the outlets. After Miss Chan finished taking the delivery, she made another order after hearing from other staff that pastry was running low without knowing that her colleagues had already solved the problem. "Luckily it was only pastry, which will not expire any time soon!" Miss Chan commented on this incident. Ad hoc purchases of food items also mean higher prices paid for those items. Sometimes, when the officer is cleaning the warehouse, he discovers some food items hidden behind other items. For example, he may have forgotten that he put the canned fish behind the canned vegetables so that he thought canned fish was running low but it was not.

Client Case 1

It's a busy Friday for Mr. Kwan. Once a week, he visits the food bank and today he was informed by Miss Chan that he should be there at 4:30pm. He was wondering besides the rice, noodles, biscuits, and canned fish as usual, what else can he get this time? He still remembered that two months ago he was given some frozen dumplings and some fresh meat. May be not today, he thought to himself, since fresh food is not routinely on the distribution list.

"Hello, Miss Chan, I am here to collect the food," it was 4:30pm sharp and he



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was told by Miss Chan to wait until she finished with other clients who had come in earlier. After giving Miss Chan his shopping bag, he waited next to the entrance of the center. About half an hour later, Miss Chan emerged from the corridor with the shopping bag full of food items. “Wait a minute, Mr. Kwan, I need to take this call,” said Miss Chan as she picked up her ringing phone.

“Mr. Kwan, I remember last time you said you love the fresh meat and dumpling. The warehouse officer is calling to tell me that he just discovered two bags of dumpling at the bottom of the refrigerator. He must have ignored them for so long! He said the dumplings will expire on Sunday. If you want, we can give them to you today since we don’t work on Saturdays or Sundays?” Miss Chan asked. “We do not wish to waste food.”

“Sure! That would be great? So I wait here for the officer?” Mr. Kwan replied, with delight.

“Oh...we may have an issue. The warehouse officer had delivered various boxes of food items this morning already and he will end work by 5:30pm. It is unlikely he can use the truck to deliver the two packs of dumpling here. Why don’t you go to our warehouse yourself? If you reach there before 5:30pm he can give the food to you!” Miss Chan suggested, with an apologetic smile.

Mr. Kwan then grabbed his shopping bag full of food and took off to the warehouse with the address written to him by Miss Chan in hand. It was not far as the warehouse is within the same district as the center itself. However, he was worried he could not make it in time, so he took the minibus which costs \$2.80.

“I’ll just walk back home afterwards, it’s worth it if I can get some dumplings for my girls.” Mr. Kwan said to himself, thinking about the frozen dumplings he had two months ago.

Client Case 2

It was a sunny Tuesday, but the good weather did not make Mrs. Fung feel less worried. Mrs. Fung was hurrying to the Food Bank. Being a first-time mother, she just found out that the milk powder for her little baby will only last for another week at most. She had been receiving assistance from the Food Bank for around two weeks now. She knew that milk powder is not an item routinely stocked by the Food Bank and was therefore worried about how long it



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would take before she could get milk powder for her child. She arrived at the Food Bank and asked for Miss Chan, the social worker responsible for Food Bank Programme.

“Miss Chan, I am so sorry to make this urgent request for milk powder, I know I should have asked for it earlier but it is urgent as what I have at home can only last for another week!”

Miss Chan felt the strain of the job at times like this, but still promised Mrs. Fung that she would try her best to get the milk powder as soon as possible. She then contacted the supplier that they usually ordered milk powder from, and asked for delivery of a box (with 6 cans) of milk powder to their service center. Unfortunately the supplier said they can only make the delivery 3 days later as they only deliver twice a week on Monday and Friday.

After waiting until Friday, the milk powder was finally delivered to the service center in the morning. Miss Chan immediately contacted Mrs. Fung to come and pick up the milk powder for her child. Mrs. Fung was relieved when she heard the news, and hurried to the Food Bank.

When Mrs. Fung arrived in the afternoon after asking her neighbor to look after her child for a while, Miss Chan went into the storage room to locate the milk powder, only to find the whole box of milk powder missing. She then asked the other social worker, Miss Cheung, the whereabouts of the milk powder. Surprised, Miss Cheung said that she had asked the warehouse officer to move the box to the warehouse that morning, thinking that there was enough in the office already.

Miss Chan had not informed Miss Cheung that Mrs. Fung was in urgent need of milk powder and would be coming in to pick it up that day.

Miss Chan turned to Mrs. Fung, “I apologize for the confusion Mrs. Fung, I am afraid there has been a mix up and that you will have to either go to the warehouse yourself to fetch the milk powder, or wait till Monday when our warehouse officer can come back and deliver the milk powder.”

Mrs. Fung was upset but what could she do? She could not leave her child with her neighbor any longer, she had to hurry home. “I only hope what we have left of the milk powder can last till Monday morning,” thought Mrs. Fung as she headed home.



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On Monday morning, Mrs. Fung went back to the Food Bank again to fetch the milk powder. Luckily it was there and she got the milk powder this time. Any further delays would have meant her child was without food.

The Future

If you spend a day at the Food Bank, you might be amazed by the hectic working schedule of the staff. Streams of people come in asking and applying for help and food or arriving to collect their food items; the warehouse officer arrives with food or leaves with food; delivery trucks from suppliers' drops off food items.

“People have ups and downs in life, sometimes they will have difficulties making ends meet. They may be receiving government assistance or they may not. What we do is quite simple - we help people in need. We assist individuals as well as families.” Miss Chan commented on the work they do. “Hong Kong might need more Food Bank services in the future because our society is facing a huge problem with the widening wealth gap between the poor and the rich. As the community we serve changes, we also need to adapt. For example, we will acquire more milk products as the number of families we serve with children and infants increases. Also, we try to make sure we distribute healthy food to clients since they are more aware of health concerns. More fresh vegetables and raw meats should be available to them, and this will definitely impact our delivery chain and inventory system. Hopefully, we could serve more clients under the limited capacity we have” Miss Chan concluded.



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Table: Demand for food of the Food Bank in September 2008 (top 5 demanded food)*

Date	Total number of clients served	Total number of food collected				
		Rice (kg)	Bread (pack)	Noodles (pack)	Oatmeal (pack)	Eggs (dozen)
1	19	50	300	160	40	67
2	20	51	308	164	41	68
3	16	42	252	135	34	56
4	17	44	260	139	34	56
5	15	40	236	126	32	53
8	18	46	276	147	37	61
9	20	53	315	168	42	70
10	24	63	378	202	51	84
11	22	57	339	181	45	76
12	21	55	332	177	44	74
15	21	55	331	178	44	73
16	20	53	315	169	42	70
17	23	61	363	194	48	79
18	23	59	355	189	48	79
19	25	65	386	207	52	86
22	24	62	370	198	50	82
23	19	49	292	156	39	65
24	16	42	252	135	34	56
25	17	45	268	143	36	60
26	18	47	284	151	39	63
29	17	44	262	139	35	58



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30	18	48	280	150	38	62
Total	433	1131	6754	3608	905	1498

* Normally the food bank serves around 300 – 600 persons each month. This table is based on their monthly records of major types of food served.

Endnotes

ⁱ Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government (2006). *Leaflet: Key Statistics*, retrieved from

http://www.byccensus2006.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_962/06bc_leaflet_keystat.pdf

ⁱⁱ Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government (2006). *Basic Tables for District Council Districts*, retrieved from

http://www.byccensus2006.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_962/06bc_dcd.pdf