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HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE



Health and Social Welfare

The Government's long-term policy objectives are to enhance the quality of medical services, and improve medical and health care facilities, thus safeguarding and improving public health. The health departments have been continually accelerating the establishment of different kinds of facilities, improving the medical and health systems, raising the level of medical services, and increasing health care resources at the community level.

In the scope of social service, it is the policy of the Government to strengthen the provision of community services, focus on securing and improving people's standard of living, helping the underprivileged in the community, and ensuring family harmony and social inclusiveness. The Government is committed to helping individuals, families and members of vulnerable groups in distress, enabling them to reassume their social functions, enhance their living skills and acquire a better quality of life.

Public Health

Macao's standard of public health care is comparable to that of developed countries and regions. According to Health Bureau statistics for 2023, the ratio of doctors to residents was 2.9 per thousand residents; that of nurses to residents was 4.4 per thousand residents; and that of hospital beds to residents was 2.8 per thousand residents. The general mortality rate in 2023 was 4.4 per thousand inhabitants, while the mortality rate for infants was 2.4 per thousand live births. The average life expectancies for men and women in Macao were 80.3 and 86.0 years (2020-2023), respectively, which are among the highest life expectancies for any country or territory.

According to the ICD-10-CM classification system (International Classification of Disease, Tenth Edition, Clinical Modification), malignant tumours were the main cause of death in Macao, while circulatory diseases and respiratory diseases ranked second and third, respectively. In 2023, these three categories accounted for 29.6 percent, 27.4 percent and 16.8 percent, respectively, of all deaths during the year.

Health Bureau

The main functions of the Health Bureau are to coordinate health-related activities of public and private institutions, and to protect public health through specialist medical and health services and community health care services, disease prevention measures and hygiene promotion work.

Medical Benefits

The Government devotes considerable resources to medical and health care to optimise medical services and various health care facilities. In 2023, total expenditure on medical and health services was about 9.08 billion patacas, representing a decrease of 6.6 percent over the 2022 figure.

The Government takes great responsibility for public health, so Macao residents can enjoy a comprehensive coverage of medical benefits. All legal residents of Macao, regardless of their

age or occupation, are entitled to free services at Health Centres and supplementary check-ups at Conde S. Januario Hospital by referral from Health Centres, while non-residents are required to pay for such services according to rates established by the Health Bureau. Services provided by the Conde S. Januario Hospital are chargeable except for people specified by the Government, but Macao residents may enjoy a waiver of 30 percent of the charges. Conde S. Januario Hospital also provides assistance to Macao residents who have financial difficulties.

In addition, the Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College (Macao Union Hospital) commenced trial operations at the end of 2023. As a large-scale integrated public medical institution, it provides private medical and healthcare services, with priority given to public medical and healthcare services.

A three-tier fee structure has been introduced, in which the first tier is for free medical care. Each Macao resident entitled to free medical care can retain the same benefits following a referral by the Health Bureau to the Macao Union Hospital.

The second tier is fee-for-service medical care, which includes the following scenarios: a reasonable fee will be charged to Macao residents who are referred by the Health Bureau and are not entitled to free medical care; appropriate concessions will be considered for Macao residents who are not referred by the Health Bureau; and normal fees will be charged for foreign employees who are not Macao residents.

The third tier is international and private medical services, which will provide higher-end choices of medical services, with fees set by referring to the market prices of private medical services. Appropriate concessions will also be considered for Macao residents.

Additionally, there are medical entities subsidised by the Government and other institutions, such as Kiang Wu Hospital, the Workers' Clinic and Tung Sin Tong Clinics, as well as various private clinics and laboratories.

Specialist Medical and Health Services

Conde S. Januario Hospital is a modern medical institution with advanced and comprehensive facilities. The hospital has received international accreditation for its management. It has 29 specialist departments providing 73 types of specialist outpatient services, including specialist outpatient, specialist medical examination and treatment outpatient services, and consultations and lectures organised by the outpatient department.

The specialist medical services provided by Conde S. Januario Hospital and the community medical services provided by various health centres in Macao are fully coordinated through two-way referrals, to provide appropriate medical services to the public. The hospital also provides 24-hour emergency medical services, including specialists on rotating rosters, surgeries and specialist in-patient services.

The hospital has also established the Island Emergency Station, the Community Rehabilitation Ward, the Dementia Medical Centre, the Children's Integrated Assessment Centre, and the Emergency Service Building, to optimise medical services and the consultation environment.

According to statistics provided by the Health Bureau, in 2023 Conde S. Januario Hospital had 442 doctors, 1,129 nurses and 1,197 beds (1,081 inpatient beds and 116 outpatient beds). It received 493,139 outpatients and 288,238 emergency cases, and 23,744 inpatient cases. The bed occupancy rate was 71.2 percent, and patients stayed in the hospital for an average of 11.0 days. The daytime hospital treated 67,367 patients, surgical operations were performed on 9,551 occasions, and 1,519 women gave birth in the hospital. A total of 7,616,813 diagnoses and medical examinations were conducted.

Community Health Care Services

To realise the objective of “Health for All” advocated by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Health Bureau has established Health Centres throughout the territory. The establishment of a community health care services network, with health centres as its operational units, provides Macao people with easy access to community health care services in their own neighbourhoods.

There are nine health centres and two health stations offering adult health care, child health care, oral health care and fillings, school health care, pre-natal health care, women’s health care, Chinese medicine and acupuncture, psychological health care, tobacco quitting consultations, nutrition consultations, cervical cancer and colorectal cancer screening, health screening and immunisation services.

At the end of 2023, there were 163 doctors (including general practitioners, dentists and Chinese medicine practitioners) and 261 nurses providing community health care services to 859,494 outpatients. The most sought-after outpatient services were adult health care, non-scheduled consultations, and Chinese medicine and acupuncture, which accounted for 41.5 percent, 27.3 percent and 9 percent, respectively, of total outpatient visits to the community health care services. Another 10,728 service sessions were provided by the Physical Examination Centre for Civil Servants.

Development of Traditional Chinese Medicine Services

The Health Bureau has always upheld the concept of “Integrating traditional Chinese and Western medicine”, to leverage the unique characteristics and advantages of traditional Chinese medicine, strengthen the development of traditional Chinese medicine services, and provide appropriate medical services to residents. In 2022, the Health Bureau established the Department of Traditional Chinese Medicine Service Development, to popularise the application of traditional Chinese medicine services in the community, promote talent cultivation and formulate service quality standards to facilitate the comprehensive development of traditional Chinese medicine services. Through active popular science education on traditional Chinese medicine, the department disseminates information on health care, disease prevention and treatment to residents through various means, achieving the goal of enhancing residents’ health.

Cooperation with Non-profit-making Medical Institutions

The Government cooperates with many non-profit-making medical institutions to provide various services to residents including specialist health care (inpatient, emergency and cardiac surgery),

Chinese medicine and dental care, rehabilitation, home care, cervical cancer screening, colorectal cancer screening and psychological therapy. It also provides education programmes on AIDS prevention, mental health and promotion of tobacco-free lifestyles.

Since 2009, the Government has implemented a medical subsidy scheme, distributing health care vouchers to every Macao permanent resident on an annual basis to enhance public health consciousness and subsidise medical expenses, as well as foster development of private medical units. In 2018, the Government issued electronic vouchers. Through application of big data, the Government is able to better analyse and review the usage of health care vouchers, thereby enhancing the development of smart health care.

Public Hygiene and Disease Prevention

Following World Health Organisation guidelines, the Health Bureau continues to conduct regular disease monitoring; enhance prevention of and responses to coronavirus, dengue fever, enteroviruses and outbreaks of seasonal influenza; strengthen education on AIDS screening and prevention, and intervention measures for tuberculosis high-risk groups; refine health and disease prevention systems at border checkpoints; maintain cooperation with neighbouring regions; and optimise regional collaboration mechanisms.

Through the Healthy City Committee and the Commission for the Prevention and Control of Chronic Diseases, the Government continues to work on prevention of chronic diseases and advocate healthy lifestyles by organising health promotion activities such as the Healthy Enterprise Programme, the Healthy Eating Scheme, health promotion activities in schools, and tobacco and alcohol control.

In 2023, there were 30,682 cases of infectious diseases requiring mandatory declaration, the top three of which were influenza (22,043 cases), enteroviruses (5,612 cases) and coronavirus-related severe respiratory infections (1,191 cases). In addition, in order to minimise any outbreak of influenza and reduce the risk of severe and fatal cases, the Health Bureau provided free influenza vaccinations for high-risk people, and opened free vaccinations to all other Macao residents once vaccination of priority groups was essentially complete, allowing more residents to be vaccinated before the peak season. As of 31 December 2023, the Health Bureau's 2023-2024 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Program had provided 155,707 people with free influenza vaccinations.

To ensure public health, the Public Health Laboratory conducts chemical and microorganism tests for food safety, water quality, medicine, cigarettes, and clinical samples, as well as diagnostic services for some infectious diseases. In 2023, it received 129,640 samples, and conducted a total of 426,117 tests.

Tobacco and Alcohol Control

Law No. 5/2011 - "Law of Smoking Prevention and Control", as amended by Law No. 13/2022, came into effect on 5 December 2022. The Health Bureau continued to promote a smoke-free environment through legislation, law enforcement, publicity and education, and incentives for quitting smoking.

Law No. 6/2023 – “Regime of Prevention and Control of Underage Alcohol Consumption” came into effect on 5 November 2023, aiming to reduce the health risks or damage to minors that may arise from the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

In 2023, following the approach of tobacco and alcohol control, a total of 285,339 inspections were conducted at various types of establishments regulated by the law, with a total of 3,147 prosecutions for breaches of the tobacco control law and two for breaches of the alcohol control law.

Blood Collection

Macao adopts a voluntary, no rewards and anonymous blood donation policy. The Blood Transfusion Centre is responsible for promoting non-remunerated blood donation and blood collection to provide adequate amounts of safe blood / blood composition and blood services to patients in need in Macao, and a consultation service for immunohaematology to hospitals.

In 2023, 14,200 residents registered as blood donors, and the centre collected 18,468 units of blood and prepared 43,373 units of blood components for 3,787 patients. Professional inspections and related consultation services were provided in 181 cases involving non-common blood types referred by hospitals.

Health Care Specialists and Establishments

In 2023, there were 7,036 health care professional licensees, 464 health care establishments and three private hospitals registered under the Health Bureau plus 462 licences for interns, with a total of 7,965 issuances of health care licences/permits, representing an increase of 9.3 percent compared to the figure in 2022. Among the persons receiving licences, there were 1,980 practising doctors and 2,980 practising nurses.

Pharmaceutical Administration Bureau

Established on 1 January, 2022, the Pharmaceutical Administration Bureau is responsible for studying, coordinating and implementing policies regarding drug supervision and administration in the MSAR, especially through managing pharmaceutical activities including Chinese medicine and drug registration, professional pharmacy activities, registration of medical devices, and the management of drug and related product advertising activities.

Pharmaceutical Approval

As of December 2023, there were 35,326 western medicines circulating in Macao, including 11,412 over-the-counter medicines, 21,891 prescription medicines and 2,023 medicines for hospital use only. There were also 3,920 traditional Chinese medicines and 274 natural medicines circulating in Macao.

In accordance with the Law on Pharmaceutical Activities in the Field of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Registration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Chinese Medicine Law), which came into effect in 2022, the Pharmaceutical Administration Bureau formulated and announced 25

detailed technical regulations covering aspects including clinical trials, registration of traditional Chinese medicines, importation, manufacturing, circulation, distribution, supply, and usage of Chinese patent medicine products, and set up the Chinese Patent Medicine Evaluation Expert Advisory Committee in accordance with the law. The committee is responsible for providing professional opinions on the registration, quality, efficacy, and safety of traditional Chinese medicines in Macao.

Pharmaceutical Establishments

In accordance with the implementation of the Chinese Medicine Law, the Pharmaceutical Administration Bureau has established a one-stop licensing and temporary licensing system, to handle applications for licences to import and export Chinese medicines for wholesale, and licences for Chinese herbal stores. The bureau also established a committee for reviewing plans and inspections related to Chinese medicines, in accordance with the law.

As of December 2023, the pharmaceutical establishments with licences issued by the Pharmaceutical Administration Bureau included 341 pharmaceutical stores, 132 Chinese herbal stores, 23 pharmaceutical dealers, 164 import and export wholesale stores, three Western pharmaceutical factories and six Chinese medicine pharmaceutical factories. Among these, two Western pharmaceutical factories and one Chinese medicine pharmaceutical factory (granule production line) comply with the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) for Pharmaceutical Products.

Regulation of the Pharmaceutical Market

The Pharmaceutical Administration Bureau continues monitoring compliance with pharmaceutical regulations in the industry, through routine and impromptu inspections. Inspectors check imported drugs and products arriving at Macao's ports on a daily basis, and conduct regular inspections of pharmaceutical establishments to ensure that facilities, equipment, drug storage, sales and employees comply with regulations. In 2023, there were 10,073 inspections of imported drugs and related products, 2,324 inspections of pharmaceutical establishments, and 166 inspections of non-pharmaceutical establishments. Through strict regulation of the pharmaceutical market, the industry is encouraged to operate legally, boosting the confidence of residents and tourists in the Macao pharmaceutical market and promoting the healthy development of the pharmaceutical industry.

Regulation of Pharmaceutical Advertisements

The Pharmaceutical Administration Bureau processes applications to advertise medicines and products with claimed health benefits according to the law, with strict control over the contents of such advertisements. In 2023, a total of 581 advertising applications were approved, including 357 exhibition advertisements, 118 medicine advertisements and 106 advertisements for products with claimed health benefits.

Pharmaceutical Professionals

As of December 2023, there were 827 licensed pharmacists, 27 licensed Chinese medicine

practitioners, and 339 pharmacy technician assistants in Macao. In addition, the Professional Licence function was launched on the “Macao One Account” platform, allowing pharmaceutical professionals to link their licences to their account.

Islands District Medical Complex – Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College Hospital

The Islands District Medical Complex – Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College Hospital, abbreviated as “Macao Union Hospital”, is the largest medical complex in Macao. Adjacent to the Cotai Road (Estrada do Istmo), on the northeast side of the Seac Pai Van Reservoir in Coloane, Macao Union Hospital spans over 76,000 square metres of land, with a total built area of about 430,000 square metres. With 26 operating rooms, Macao Union Hospital is designed to provide more than 1,000 beds upon the completion of the Islands Rehabilitation Hospital. The hospital complex incorporates the Macao Hospital, the Logistics and Support Building, the Residential Building for Staff, the Administration and Multi-Services Building, and the Central Laboratory Building.

Macao Union Hospital is an important cooperative project between the Macao SAR and mainland China in the healthcare sector, and the first of its kind, under the policy of “One Country, Two Systems”.

Macao Union Hospital will build upon the philosophy, expertise, technologies, resources, and culture of Peking Union Medical College Hospital (PUMCH). While priority will be given to recruiting Macao residents, Macao Union Hospital will also include a team of prominent experts from PUMCH, and top specialists recruited from around the world on an as-needed basis, thus improving the city’s ability to diagnose and treat severe, advanced, and rare diseases, and leveraging Macao’s institutional advantages in the importation of advanced medicines and medical equipment to provide more choices of medical treatment to its residents and tourists.

In terms of facilities and equipment, Macao Union Hospital has introduced world-class medical equipment. The 26 operating rooms comprise one integrated complex operating room, eight conventional operating rooms, 13 day-surgery and endoscopy rooms, and four caesarean section and artificial insemination rooms.

The eight conventional operating rooms are all equipped with advanced integrated luminal operating systems for performing all kinds of conventional surgeries. With a total area of 174 square metres, the complex operating rooms are capable of performing catheter surgery, gastrointestinal endoscopy and abdominal surgery at the same time, ensuring the best rescue time and treatment for complicated angiomas, complicated gastrointestinal tumours and post-operative bleeding.

Regarding medical equipment, the advanced medical technology and international medical equipment of PUMCH are adopted for oncology radiotherapy and imaging services, including CT scan, MRI, PET-CT, SPECT and linear accelerator.

On 20 December 2023, a ceremony for the commencement of trial operations was held at Macao Union Hospital. Subsequently, the islands emergency station of Conde S. Januario Hospital was the first to move in, and commenced operations on 21 December, providing 24-hour emergency services.

Kiang Wu Hospital

Kiang Wu Hospital is a non-governmental medical and health institution administered by the Kiang Wu Hospital Charitable Association of Macao. Established in 1871, it has a 153-year history. It is a charitable hospital founded and managed by Chinese people with the principles of running the hospital diligently and frugally, providing treatments with a caring heart, treating people with courtesy and putting patients first. Kiang Wu Hospital has developed into a modern general hospital that integrates treatment, prevention, teaching and research; and it is currently implementing a modern information management system in phases. In 2023, the hospital had 2,144 staff: 390 doctors, 663 nurses, 178 technical professionals and 913 other employees.

Kiang Wu Hospital has the following departments: Emergency, Outpatient, Inpatient, an Intensive Care Unit (ICU/CCU), Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and Special Care Baby Unit (SBU), Breast Health Centre, Endoscopy Centre, Plastic Surgery Centre, Physical and Mental Health Centre, and Assisted Reproductive Centre.

The hospital's clinical services also cover medicine, surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, emergency, otorhinolaryngology, head and neck surgery, ophthalmology, dermatology, stomatology, rehabilitation, Chinese medicine, family medicine, integrated physical examination, oncology and anaesthesiology. In addition, the hospital has supporting departments dedicated to various areas including medical imaging, pharmacy, pathology and general examination. The Dr Henry Y. T. Fok Specialist Medical Centre was completed and commenced operation in August 2009 to offer various specialty outpatient services to the public.

Kiang Wu Hospital has four outpatient departments and two emergency departments, on the Macao Peninsula and Taipa, respectively. During 2023, its emergency and outpatient departments treated over 1,437,065 patients, an average of 4,412 each day. Its emergency department and outpatient department on the Macao peninsula treated over 1,267,811 patients during 2023, an average of 3,873 per day; the Taipa Medical Centre received patients seeking emergency and outpatient services on 169,254 occasions, an average of 539 patients per day. A total of 31,233 inpatients were discharged from the hospital during the year.

University Hospital

The University Hospital, an institution under the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) Foundation, was formerly the Chinese medicine clinic of the MUST. In March 2006, the University Hospital was formerly established through the approval of the Health Bureau of the MSAR, with western medicine being integrated with the original Chinese medicine service, further enhancing the scope of medical services. Now the University Hospital has developed into a modern integrated hospital incorporating the strengths of both Chinese and western medicines, and serves as the clinical and teaching base for the Faculty of Chinese Medicine and the Faculty of Medicine of the MUST, making it the only university-supported hospital in Macao.

The hospital comprises various specialties of western and Chinese medicines, providing general outpatient services as well as comprehensive medical services that include integrated tumour treatment, medical beauty and clinical genetics. The hospital also features technology-intensive

facilities that include interventional catheterisation, surgery rooms and an Intensive Care Unit, as well as various service centres including International Medical Service, Specialist Centre of Chinese Medicine Faculty, Executive Health Management Centre, Integrated Rehabilitation Service Centre, Medical Imaging Diagnostic Centre, Clinical Laboratory Diagnostic Centre, Endoscopy Centre, haemodialysis centre, and Medical Cosmetology Centre.

The hospital's inpatient department has 108 beds, with 60 beds in inpatient department and 48 beds in the haemodialysis centre.

Environmental Hygiene

One of the major tasks of the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) is to improve the urban environment, maintain a clean and tidy city, as well as refuse collection. The bureau continues to replace street litterbins with compacting bins and closed refuse tips. In 2023, the bureau installed 129 compacting bins and 119 closed refuse tips, reducing the number of street litterbins from more than 1,600 in the past to 97 at present, which greatly reduces environmental hygiene problems arising from litterbins. The bureau also handles complaints about environmental hygiene, inspects urban hygiene, monitors the waste-disposal franchise company, manages landfills, improves the facilities and distribution of refuse stations, organises city cleaning campaigns to promote awareness of environmental hygiene, maintains and manages public conveniences and prevents rat problems.

The Municipal Affairs Bureau handled 4,773 complaints in 2023.

Cemeteries

Macao has six public cemeteries and 11 private cemeteries. The public cemeteries are Macao St Michael's Cemetery, Macao Our Lady of Piety Cemetery, Sa Kong Cemetery and Carmo Cemetery on Taipa, Municipal Cemetery and Va Ian (Chinese) Cemetery on Coloane. The private cemeteries are the Parsee Cemetery; the Old Protestant Cemetery; Mong Ha New Cemetery; Muslim Cemetery; Kai Fong (Neighbourhood) Cemetery, Pao Choc (Firecrackers) Cemetery, and Hao Si Cemetery on Taipa; and Kok Ip Cemetery, Ha Sac Cemetery, Ka Ho Cemetery and Son I Cemetery on Coloane.

The Municipal Affairs Bureau is responsible for managing public cemeteries and supervising the operation of private cemeteries. To provide a variety of funeral services to residents, it started to provide bone cremation services and green (tree) burial services in September 2014 and September 2015, respectively. In view of the increasing public acceptance of green burials, the bureau introduced garden burials in March 2023. In 2023, the bureau conducted 166 bone cremations and 150 green (tree and garden) burials.

Public Toilets

The Municipal Affairs Bureau has implemented various measures to optimise the distribution and services of Macao's public toilets. At present, the bureau manages 90 street toilets, distributed across various districts and open to citizens and tourists free of charge.

Environmental Protection and Clean City Education

To raise residents' awareness of keeping the city clean, reducing waste at source, and safeguarding against rodents and dengue fever, the Municipal Affairs Bureau continued organising a variety of city cleaning publicity and promotion activities. In 2023, a total of 712 education and publicity activities on environmental hygiene were held, with over 213,000 people participating.

In addition, the Municipal Affairs Bureau has launched a publicity campaign featuring a parent-child element for the public to learn about environmental hygiene.

The Municipal Affairs Bureau formulated special publicity plans for target groups including Macao residents, students, group volunteers, tourists in Macao, non-resident employees and foreigners, and cooperated with other government departments and organisations to organise a variety of environmental hygiene promotion events. The bureau also distributed information on sanitation and publicity activities through various media.

The Municipal Affairs Bureau also continued implementing the “Refuse Collection Facilities Decoration Scheme”, to decorate the closed refuse tips and compacting bin stations.

Environment Information Centre

The Mong Ha Environment Information Centre provided an environmental education venue for schools, groups, and the public, regularly organising workshops and activities about city cleanliness and environmental protection. In 2023, three parent-child activities of the “KABO Study Tour - Seeing Otto Again” were organised. Through the guided reading of the picture book “Seeing Otto Again” with the theme of protecting against rodents, and a live-action performance, children and parents were able to become more aware of environmental hygiene and play active roles in protecting the environment. Meanwhile, the centre continually optimises its facilities, including by designing a series of informational display boards and photo spots (rainbow stairs and hand-painted murals) based on the Macao City Clean-up Campaign mascot, KABO, and adding more interactive educational games, to create an environment suitable for family participation and promote the importance of maintaining city cleanliness and environmental hygiene to participants. In 2023, the centre received 17,069 visitors.

Volunteers for Clean-up Campaign

The “Friends of Macao City” volunteer team was established in 2012. Its members are ambassadors for community environmental hygiene, environment protection and food safety. They spread messages about keeping the city clean, reducing waste at source and obeying environmental hygiene laws among Macao residents, tourists and foreigners living in Macao.

Oscar's Farm

Oscar's Farm is located on Estrada de Choc Van and covers an area of around 133,868 square metres. The farm is now open to the public free of charge, and is among the places in Macao where

livestock can be seen. It is suitable for residents and tourists to enjoy a weekend outing. It employs organic farming, and avoids using pesticides or synthetic fertilisers. It usually collects the faeces of raised livestock and green waste (dead branches and leaves), puts them through a wood grinder, and then regenerates them into natural organic fertiliser through composting.

The farm has facilities including livestock pens, composting areas, charcoal burners, leisure huts, arbours, farming plots and a natural well.

Happy Farm

Happy Farm opened in 2016, with an original area of 5,972 square metres. After expansion work in mid-2020, the total area is now 22,995 square metres with expanded facilities. It serves as a venue for hands-on experience of organic farming, and includes a farming area, a herb garden, a flower garden, a fruit tree garden, a sapling area, a display area for seasonal vegetables, a natural water conservation area and an insect museum – and was established in the hope of allowing visitors to escape from the hustle and bustle of the city, as if walking into the tranquil and pleasant countryside.

The farming area has a large hut for group activities, where hands-on farming experience, workshops and educational activities with themes of greening and environmental protection are organised. Applications to join the farming activities can be made online. Successful applicants need only pay a small administrative fee to join the three to four-month farming activities, with the harvested crops belonging to the applicants. The greening workshops are conducted on-site, and the finished products can be taken home.

Food Hygiene

The relevant laws of Macao stipulate that most imported foods (primarily animal and plant products) are subject to compulsory quarantine and inspection before being placed on the market.

The Municipal Affairs Bureau's quarantine personnel conduct hygiene inspections at the Border Gate Checkpoint, Macao border crossing area of Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, Ilha Verde quarantine station, the New Wholesale Market, the Slaughter House, piers of the Inner Harbour, Ka Ho Harbour, the airport and other quarantine points, covering imported livestock, meat, vegetables, fresh fruits and fishery products, food products originating from animals, and fresh perishable products.

The Municipal Affairs Bureau continues quarantining imported livestock and animal-derived foods, to prevent outbreaks of infectious diseases. Imported food items such as vegetables, fish, fresh and frozen meat, eggs, fruits and canned goods are subject to inspection, quarantine, and monitoring through sampling. The bureau is responsible for food hygiene inspection of shops selling meat, vegetables and fish, and issuing licences to them. It regularly implements concerted efforts focused on hygiene, and has introduced a grading system to monitor the hygiene and safety of live food. In addition, it carries out quality control for food produced in Macao and issues hygiene certificates for food produced in Macao that meets export requirements.

The Municipal Affairs Bureau also ensures food safety by monitoring foods sold in local markets,

inspections, food testing, publicity and education, as well as establishing food safety standards and guidelines according to the Food Safety Law.

By 2023, the Government had established 12 sets and updated two sets of food safety standards: Maximum Residue of Veterinary Medicines in Food, List of Substances Prohibited from Use in Food, Maximum Levels of Radionuclides in Food, Maximum Levels of Bacterial Pathogens in Infant Formula, Maximum Levels of Pathogenic Micro-organisms in Dairy Products, Maximum Levels of Mycotoxins in Food, Requirements on Nutrition Contents of Infant Formula, Standards for Use of Food Colourings in Food, Standards for Use of Sweeteners in Foods, Maximum Levels of Heavy Metal Contaminants in Food, Rules on the Use of Preservatives and Antioxidants in Foodstuffs, and updated Maximum Limits for Pesticide Residues in Foodstuffs and Maximum Residue Limits of Pesticides in Foodstuffs. It also updated the Maximum Residues of Veterinary Medicines in Food. To date, 69 sets of Food Safety Guidelines have been published, to instruct the industry to maintain hygiene and safety during operations.

To enhance food safety, the Municipal Affairs Bureau regularly monitors foods sold in local markets, to understand the level of food hygiene. In 2023, three sampling tests of seasonal foods – Chinese New Year confectionery, sticky rice dumplings of the Dragon Boat Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival mooncakes – were conducted. A total of 170 samples were taken; 10 of these failed the tests, and there was a 94 percent pass rate. Two targeted food surveillance operations were conducted, focusing on Macao souvenirs and food from Portuguese-speaking countries. A total of 300 food samples were taken and all samples passed the test, with a 100 percent pass rate. Routine sampling tests of food sold in the market were conducted throughout the year, with 2,541 samples tested, achieving a pass rate of 98.9 percent.

The Municipal Affairs Bureau performs risk monitoring and assessment in response to overseas food safety issues, and alerts the industry about potential risks to Macao resulting from such issues. In 2023, 23 food safety alerts were issued, and fax, email, and SMS alert services were employed on an on-going basis, to enable prompt responses by the industry.

The Municipal Affairs Bureau continued to educate and communicate with the public about food safety risks. In response to the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water from Japan, Macao has been releasing daily radiation test data on imported Japanese food products, to enhance scientific information. Also, aligning with By-law No. 30/2021 – Registration System for Takeaway Establishments, the bureau continued enhancing the food industry’s understanding of the contents of the by-law, the penalty system, the identification system and the procedures for applying for registration – by employing diverse online and offline promotion methods, to encourage the industry to meet its business responsibilities.

By 31 December 2023, approximately 4,017 takeaway establishments had completed registration and were operational. The Municipal Affairs Bureau will continue to strictly enforce regulatory work, and conduct on-site inspections of each takeaway establishment that applies for registration.

In 2023, 66 talks and outdoor advocacy activities, 12 seminars on food safety risks, 10 food hygiene supervisor courses and 12 Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene Courses were organised for the industry. To educate the public about food safety risks, in 2023 the bureau issued nine risk bulletins and three reports on specific food surveys and analyses, to raise the awareness of the public

and the industry on the hazards and risks of different food products; and continued organising food safety education talks, covering 24 themes in three categories: risk prevention, risk awareness, and food and nutrition. In all, 335 seminars and activities were organised for the public. To support the annual World Food Safety Day in 2023, a “Know More about Food Safety Standards” online quiz with prizes and a dedicated talk on “Exploring the Secrets of Food Safety Standards” were organised, to promote scientific and rational concepts of food safety to the public.

Veterinary Health

Monitoring animal hygiene is an important integral part of preventing animal pandemics and securing public health. The Inspection and Veterinary Control Division, under the supervision of the Municipal Affairs Bureau, is mainly responsible for supervising and managing animal hygiene in Macao. Its duties include animal protection, animal management, prevention and control of pandemic animal diseases, quarantine of imported and exported animals and animal food, and publicity, promotion and civic education regarding animal protection and animal hygiene.

For maintaining public hygiene, public safety, and animal protection, in 2023 the Municipal Affairs Bureau vaccinated 6,058 dogs and 706 cats against rabies for three years, issued 6,711 dog licences, and captured 380 stray dogs and 458 stray cats. It also prosecuted 350 cases violating Law No. 4/2016 – “Animal Protection Law”.

To prevent avian flu, the Municipal Affairs Bureau collects wild bird carcasses from all around Macao on an on-going basis, and in 2023 a total of 547 carcasses were collected. It also collected faecal samples at the habitats of migratory birds and aviaries for avian influenza screening, and during the year a total of 889 wild bird carcasses and faecal samples were screened. The results of all such screenings were negative and no avian influenza was found.

To enhance veterinary health in Macao, Law No. 7/2020 – Animal Pandemic Prevention Law came into effect on 1 September 2020. No local or imported positive cases of avian influenza, rabies, equine infectious metritis, equine infectious anaemia or equine piroplasmiasis have been found during routine disease surveillance work. In 2023, Macao maintained zero cases of African horse sickness, and applied for World Organisation for Animal Health veterinary certification through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

To further improve the animal protection and animal quarantine systems, and promote the development of animal treatment and related businesses in Macao, the Government enacted Law No. 4/2023 - “Law on Veterinary Clinical Care and Commercial Activities”, which establishes a system of admission and supervision of veterinary qualifications, and animal treatment, breeding, trading and boarding establishments. To tie in with the implementation of the Law on 1 April 2024, the Council of Veterinary Medicine Professionals was established on 1 July 2023, to promote and implement the registration of veterinary professional qualifications.

Wet Markets

There are nine wet markets in Macao: seven on the Macao peninsula and one each on the islands of Taipa and Coloane. These house a total of 1,093 market stalls.

In 2023, 778 market stalls were rented on a monthly basis, involving a total of 1,703 operators, of whom 779 were stall tenants, 539 were stall assistants and 385 were employees. In addition, 25 stalls were temporarily closed during the renovation of the Almirante Lacerda Municipal Market. The Municipal Affairs Bureau is responsible for wet market management and tenant management.

The Public Markets Management Regime Law came into effect on 1 January 2022, as did the by-law Complementary Rules for the Allocation and Leasing of Public Market Stalls. The Municipal Affairs Bureau has developed a series of related guidelines and promotional work. During inspections, market inspectors provide guidance and education to stall operators regarding any non-compliant behaviour, and guide them to comply with relevant regulations. Since the implementation of the new law, the operations and services of public markets have been significantly improved, especially in terms of price transparency, environmental cleanliness and tenants' business initiatives.

Hawkers

The Municipal Affairs Bureau licenses, manages and monitors hawkers. In addition, it manages various large temporary sales activities, such as sales of firecrackers and the Lunar New Year's Eve Market, during major Chinese traditional festivals, as well as special markets like the Taipa Flea Market.

By the end of 2023, the bureau had issued 601 hawkers' licences, including 85 cooked food stall licences and 60 special permits, to flower hawkers from Wanzai District, Zhuhai; the total was 29 lower than in 2022, representing a reduction of 4.6 percent.

The Slaughter House

In accordance with relevant regulations, livestock such as pigs, cattle and sheep must be slaughtered at the Slaughter House. The Municipal Affairs Bureau stations veterinarians and quarantine personnel in the slaughterhouse to supervise its operations and hygiene. All slaughtered products must be checked before and after slaughter and certified fit for human consumption before they can be sold. The bureau is also responsible for protecting animal rights, preventing abuse, supervising the transportation of livestock and destroying sub-standard meat. In 2023, the Slaughter House butchered 1,447 heads of cattle and 98,024 pigs; a total of 99,471 animals.

Social Welfare Services

The Government designs its social welfare policies in conjunction with non-governmental agencies, to deliver practical social services that meet residents' needs, aiming to solve individual, family and social problems, raise the overall quality of life, and jointly build social harmony and love-filled families.

Social Welfare Bureau

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) is a government department that helps draft, coordinate, liaise, drive and execute the social work policies and social welfare of the MSAR. It provides individual

and family assistance, and services for children and teenagers, and the elderly. It also offers rehabilitation services, anti-drug-dependence services, problem gambling prevention services, and social rehabilitation services. The social service facilities under its umbrella include the Social Services Centres, a casualty centre for victims of disasters, Assessment Centre for Rehabilitation, Drug Treatment Centres (Methadone), Healthy Life Education Centre and Chi Ai Hin (Problem Gambling Prevention and Treatment).

In 2023, the Social Welfare Bureau allocated about 3.304 billion patacas to the social services sector, representing an increase of 3.85 percent, which includes various subsidies for social services and expenditure on welfare benefits and assistance. The major subsidies and welfare expenditure were as follows:

- The Social Welfare Bureau subsidised 257 social service organisations/facilities/programmes with more than 4,700 beneficiaries, totalling about 1.636 billion patacas;
- The Government continued providing Old Age Allowances to Macao permanent residents aged 65 or above through the Social Welfare Bureau, with each person receiving 9,000 patacas in 2023. There was a total of 131,494 eligible cases (including 5,567 backdated cases from prior years), and the allowances amounted to 1.183 billion patacas;
- The Government continued giving disability gratuities to Disability Assessment Card holders who are permanent residents, with an ordinary gratuity amount of 9,000 patacas and a special gratuity amount of 18,000 patacas in 2023, for a total of 18,160 eligible cases (including 929 backdated cases from prior years), involving a total of 217 million patacas; and
- The Carers Allowance Pilot Scheme launched on 9 November 2020 provides a monthly allowance of 2,175 patacas. As of 31 December 2023, a total of 248 cases had been granted a cumulative total of approximately 11.28 million patacas disbursed.

Law No. 5/2019 - Professional Accreditation and Licensing for Social Workers came into effect in 2020. By December 2023, 2,187 people had been recognised by professional accreditation for social workers, and 1,469 people had valid social worker registration certificates.

The Social Welfare Bureau continued to supervise the implementation of infectious disease prevention and control work in social service facilities, assisting the facilities with hiring epidemic prevention officers, together with epidemic prevention material management, infectious disease emergency response planning, infectious disease surveillance, and notification mechanisms. In addition, the bureau strictly enforced the follow up procedures of the Health Bureau's reports on mass illness cases in social service facilities, and provided technical support to the facilities.

In 2023, in response to the changing situation of infectious diseases in Macao, the bureau updated the key response strategies and related health guidelines, and urged 217 social service facilities to update their contingency plans and conduct table-top drills. An outreach programme on Covid-19 vaccine, seasonal influenza vaccine and pneumococcal vaccine has also been launched in social service facilities, to arrange outreach vaccinations for users of these facilities.

To enhance the capacity of social service facilities in the prevention and control of infectious diseases, the Social Welfare Bureau and the Health Bureau jointly organised an "Epidemic Prevention

Officer Training Workshop” in December 2023 for about 110 social service facility staff. In view of the outbreak of bed bugs in many regions worldwide in the second half of 2023, the Social Welfare Bureau and the Health Bureau jointly organised a “Seminar on Prevention of Bed Bugs”, which was attended by about 90 social service facility staff.

In September 2023, the bureau released additional financial aid to beneficiary families, as compensation for the extra expenditure resulting from the pandemic. In all, 2,193 families benefited, with subsidies totalling 13.5 million patacas.

In 2023, the 24-hour counselling hotline run by the Social Welfare Bureau received a total of 1,475 calls, most of which were related to counselling, health, family relationship, marital relationship and academic/employment matters.

Family and Community Services

The Social Welfare Bureau has established four social services centres and one branch centre in districts, providing individuals and families in need with personal and family counselling, financial aid, round-the-clock support, disaster relief, referral and legal consultation services. The bureau also provides counselling and support for individuals facing domestic violence, and distributes various benefits and allowances including old age allowances and disability gratuities.

In 2023, a total of 2,844 cases were handled by four social services centres and one branch centre, and 7,450 services of different types were provided, resulting in 2,730 families receiving regular subsidies, involving 4,237 individuals.

In 2023, Macao had one public shelter, 11 integrated family and community service centres, 13 community centres, 11 project-based services, and five shelters and temporary shelters, the majority of them being subsidised by the Social Welfare Bureau and operated by non-governmental organisations.

During 2023, 31 people were admitted to the Ilha Verde shelter, and 86 people used the services providing shelter from winter cold and summer heat. The 11 integrated family and community services centres provided services to 1,112,125 people; the 13 community centres provided services to 983,420 people; and the five shelters and temporary shelters provided services for 241 people.

To enhance welfare recipients’ incentives to work and assist them to re-enter the labour market, the IAS and four non-governmental agencies cooperated in implementing the Community Employment Assistance Scheme. By the end of 2023, the scheme had 637 participants. Additionally, by the end of 2023, the Positive Life Programme, which was launched to encourage employment, attracted participation by 1,074 individuals, 421 of whom had already received employment counselling and accepted job referrals.

In 2023, the IAS received 2,479 cases involving notifications through the Family Crisis Hotline. After eliminating duplicate cases, 1,781 cases were identified, including 990 involving family disputes, family conflicts and initial suspected domestic violence, and 791 other cases. Among the 85 preliminary cases of suspected domestic violence, 40 cases were assessed and identified, 26 of which involved spouses, 11 involved children, and three involved violence between family members.

Children's and Youth Services

In 2023, Macao had 61 child-care centres, 39 of which received regular subsidies from the Social Welfare Bureau. Child-care services in Macao offered quotas totalling 8,801, and a total of 5,999 children enrolled in them. One of the centres funded by the bureau also provided parent-child services to 32,547 people during 2023, promoting play time between parents and children and creating harmonious family relationships. The Government provided the Priority Child Care Service for Children from Disadvantaged Families, so that disadvantaged families were given priority in receiving services in subsidised child-care centres.

There are nine homes for children and adolescents in Macao offering short or long-term care and counselling for orphans, as well as children and adolescents who have been abandoned, who lack family care, or who are on the verge of a crisis as a result of family or social conflicts. In 2023, these homes housed 284 children and youngsters.

There are four community youth social work teams in Macao, comprising social workers who conduct outreach work in various places such as amusement game centres, sports grounds and fast-food restaurants. They get in touch with youths who are more vulnerable to life crises and provide counselling services, and assist them with facing personal, family and social problems. The teams also provide youth career development services, support services to families with children and youth at risk, community support services and drug abuse prevention services. During 2023, 11,586 people participated in activities and groups organised by the teams.

There are two Youth and Family Integrated Service Centres in Macao to organise youth development activities, provide youth counselling and supporting services, organise family life education and family activities, and provide family counselling and supporting services, as well as school supporting services. In 2023, the centres had 35,082 members receiving these services.

The Social Welfare Bureau is the only authorised organisation in Macao that deals with adoption services. It handled 20 such cases in 2023. The bureau is responsible for providing assistance to minors who become involved in judicial actions, in accordance with the social protection system. During 2023, the bureau processed 316 such cases. Moreover, the bureau, in conjunction with the community youth social work teams, provides counselling services under the community support scheme to youths between 12 years to 16 years of age who have committed criminal offences or misdemeanours. During 2023, the bureau processed no such cases.

Services for the Elderly

In 2023, the Social Welfare Bureau continued providing subsidies and technical support to community organisations, for establishing various social facilities and support services, and promoting the improvement of services. The aim was to improve the service quality and thus provide appropriate services to elderly persons in need, so they can enjoy their remaining years in comfort. In 2017, the Chief Executive designated the ninth day of the ninth month of the lunar calendar as the Senior Citizen's Day of the Macao SAR, through an executive order.

In 2023, the interdepartmental steering group on Macao's retirement protection mechanism continued to follow up regarding the long-term measures (2021-2025) under the Plan for

Elderly Services for 2016-2025. Of the 100 long-term measures, 69 have been implemented and completed.

To accord priority to senior citizens living in tenement buildings and with financial means for better convenience and quality of life, the MSAR Government proposed the Government-built senior housing project in 2020, which was subsequently launched as a pilot scheme. The project provides 1,815 open-plan residential units with basic amenities and a wide range of gerontechnology facilities, together with diverse ancillary services, to provide a comfortable and safe living environment for the elderly.

The MSAR Government opened the first phase of applications for 759 units on 6 November 2023. As of 31 December 2023, the Social Welfare Bureau had received about 1,500 applications for the first phase of the project, involving about 2,200 applicants. The Government-built senior housing complex is expected to commence operations in the fourth quarter of 2024.

In 2023, Macao had 24 homes for the elderly, providing residential care services for infirm elderly persons; 14 of them are subsidised by the Social Welfare Bureau. These 24 homes for the elderly provided around 2,510 beds, and 2,218 senior citizens were housed in homes for the elderly. In addition, there were eight elderly service facilities providing day-care services to elderly persons with health problems who are unable to take care of themselves. There were 11 other elderly day-care centres, and 25 neighbourhood social centres providing entertainment services for the elderly.

In 2023, 638 senior citizens received services at day care centres, 8,146 senior citizens received services at elderly day centres, and 9,278 senior citizens used the services provided at social centres.

Macao's home care services are provided through one home care service team and seven home care and support service teams operating under the three elderly day-care centres, two daycare centres and two multi-service centres. The teams provide household and home care services to elderly persons who are weak and need others to take care of them, so that they receive proper concern and care. In 2023, a total of 1,374 cases were handled, of which 532 involved senior citizens living alone, and 842 in which the senior citizens were not living alone.

In addition, an elderly caring service network and a supporting network for senior citizens living alone are provided for single elderly people and households with two elderly persons. The services include volunteer visits, caring phone calls and social activities, enabling the elderly to feel that they are cared for by society. In 2023, the two services were provided to 4,411 and 953 senior citizens, respectively.

The Tele-Assistant "Peng On Tung" is a round-the-clock support services through home fixed-line telephones and outdoor watches. Related services also include a hotline service for senior citizens, providing emotional support, regular greetings, a community information service and referral services, and arranging regular visits.

During 2023, the fixed-line and outdoor services provided assistance to 3,997 and 459 senior citizens in need, respectively, of whom 684 were using both services and 1,706 were living alone.

The IAS provided an Elderly Home Safety Evaluation and Equipment Subsidy Scheme for low-income elderly families, elderly persons living alone or households with two elderly persons. The scheme aims to improve home safety by household safety evaluations, and installation of bathroom

equipment and handrails. In 2023, household safety instructions were given to 641 households, and equipment was installed in 630 households.

Senior Citizen's Card

Citizens holding Macao Resident Identity Cards aged 65 or above are eligible to apply for the Senior Citizen's Card. Senior Citizen's Card holders are entitled to the welfare and benefits offered by the public organisations and enterprises that have signed cooperation agreements with the IAS. By the end of 2023, the Social Welfare Bureau had issued a cumulative total of 124,463 Senior Citizen's Cards.

A total of 4,876 senior citizens had obtained their electronic cards. In addition, the card holders can include the electronic card in the electronic card package of the Macao One Account.

Rehabilitation Services

In 2023, the Social Welfare Bureau continued to follow up on the long-term measures (2021 to 2025) under the "Ten-year Plan for Rehabilitation Services 2016-2025", with 69 out of the 81 long-term measures implemented and completed.

In 2023, Macao had 11 rehabilitation homes, of which nine provide accommodation, training, social and leisure activities to mentally handicapped adults or chronic mental patients, and children aged 15 below with mental or physical disabilities; and two combine halfway house and supported hostel for people recovering from mental illness.

Moreover, there are 12 day-centres which provide independent living training, group studies, rehabilitation treatment, regular activities and individual assistance to the hearing impaired, the mentally handicapped, people recovering from mental illness and the visually impaired. In 2023, the 11 rehabilitation homes provided services to 780 people, while the 12 day rehabilitation centres offered services to 11,169 people.

In 2023, there were six sheltered workshops, vocational training centres and supported employment centres in Macao. Services were provided to 447 people. There were also four pre-schools/education centres to provide early special education and training, and assistance for children with development disorders and impaired hearing. In 2023, the four pre-schools/education centres served 536 people.

The rehabilitation bus service in Macao is provided by two agencies. The IAS subsidises the cost of purchasing and operating rehabilitation buses. The service enables people with impaired mobility, physically disabled persons and patients requiring haemodialysis to commute between their homes and hospitals.

A no-reservation feeder service was also provided. The bus service allowed people with disabilities to commute to meet their friends and relatives, participate in cultural, recreational and leisure activities, and handle personal affairs. In 2023, the two agencies served 29,037 passengers.

In 2023, Macao had four comprehensive rehabilitation service centres, including one designed for people with intellectual disabilities. Services provided by the centre include: small scale residential

services to mildly and moderately mentally handicapped people aged between 16 to 55, which in 2023 served 19 people by providing independent living skills training; and providing family resources services to the mentally handicapped and their families, with 16,012 people served in 2023.

The other centre is a comprehensive rehabilitation service centre providing vocational training and rehabilitation services which served 134 people in 2023. In 2023, two new comprehensive rehabilitation service centres were set up, including one providing residential and day activity services for persons with moderate or above intellectual disability aged 16 or above, and day respite services for children and teenagers with developmental disabilities aged between 6 and 15. In 2023, a total of 51 people received residential services, 41 people received day activity services and six people received day respite services.

Another comprehensive rehabilitation service centre, providing vocational training and day activity services, commenced operation in late December 2023, with no intake of service users during that month. The Social Welfare Bureau provides professional assessment services to Macao residents who need to apply for or use rehabilitation services operated by agencies funded by the bureau, so they can find the most appropriate services. There were 185 cases of providing these services in 2023.

As at the end of December 2023, the Disability Assessment Cards received 30,168 new applications and 12,685 renewal applications, and 23,393 new cards were issued by IAS.

Prevention and Treatment of Drug Dependence

The prevention of drug abuse mainly targets school, family and community in organising anti-drug abuse promotion and education activities. The activities aim at widely spreading and promoting the message of anti-drug abuse through seminars, training programmes, advertisements, games, a website, enquiries hotline, reception service and other cultural and leisure activities. Funding and technical support are also available to assist non-governmental institutions in organising anti-drug activities.

In 2023, 2,084 people participated in training courses and seminars on anti-drug abuse, organised by the IAS for schools, the community and professionals. Besides providing primary school students with healthy life and anti-drug education programmes, Healthy Life Education Centre also provides teenagers and the public with various cultural, physical and art activities, with anti-drugs and healthy life messaging. During 2023, a total of 5,159 people participated in its activities.

The Healthy Life Education programme, which is conducted especially for students aged from five years to 12 years, attracted participation by 17,045 primary school students from 67 schools and 572 students participated in two school outreach activities of this programme. The drug education programme “Thinking It Through” for secondary school students attracted participation by 6,718 secondary school students from 13 secondary schools. In addition, six online game activities were held, for a total of 2,548 participants.

To promote anti-drugs education at home and school, the IAS held 10 parent-child seminars, with participation by 267 people.

There are four drug abuse prevention service organisations in Macao, providing services including youth recreation and sports activities, mobile health counselling centres, community promotions,

seminars, group and case counselling, adventures, and parent-child activities, with a total of 79,744 people served in 2023. The subsidised organisations organised healthy campus promotion activities for tertiary students, to disseminate drug abuse prevention messages through the information platforms for tertiary students and various social networking platforms every month, including 24 online game sessions with a total of 16,333 participants; distributed 1,310 necessity packs; organised 40 activities attracting a total of 1,262 participants; and launched a series of anti-drugs publicity campaigns with messaging via comics, reaching a total of 334,686 people through online platforms.

The IAS and two community drug treatment centres provide comprehensive voluntary treatment and rehabilitation services for drug-dependent people. They include outpatient and residential drug addiction treatment, as well as drug counselling services. During 2023, a total of 389 drug addicts sought help, 58 of whom were seeking help for the first time.

In 2023, a comprehensive drug rehabilitation service was provided, including accommodation for 43 people, family support services for 95 people, career development services for 1,293 people, and community outreach services for 5,804 people.

An outreach treatment service for drug-dependent youths and two drug rehabilitation outreach services provided outreach services for 13,304 people; outreach services designed for drug-dependent youngsters and problem juveniles were used by 2,282 people; services designed for the family members of drug addicts were provided to 893 people; and the community promotion activities reached a total of 6,167 people. In 2023, a career development programme for youth abstaining from drugs organised 17 training courses with attendance by 471 people, and provided internships for 33 participants. Eight participants were successfully employed. The retention rate of youth participating in the programme was 99 percent. A range of support was also provided to 181 family members. A total of 17,863 people were served during the year.

To strengthen the follow-up support for rehabilitated drug abusers reintegrating into society, in 2023 the IAS cooperated with private organisations to extend the Methadone Case Support Programme, serving 77 cases on 830 occasions. The IAS also cooperated with the Cultural Affairs Bureau and non-governmental organisations to launch the “Hold on to Hope” Vocational Training Internship Programme, holding more than 12 training sessions with 704 participants, 17 of whom participated in various internships; eight participants were successfully recruited and reintegrated into the community, and the case retention rate reached 100 percent.

Regarding promotion of drug rehabilitation services, the IAS held a sharing session on cooperation in drug abuse prevention services, and launched the Healthy Community Partnership training programme in both online and offline modes, attracting participation by 420 people, to further consolidate cooperation and exchanges with related organisations. Healthcare seminars were also jointly organised with healthcare organisations, attracting a total of 3,074 participants. The IAS continued enhancing the public’s knowledge of the harm caused by drugs and ways to seek help through the “Know Drugs” website, the “Smart Parents” public WeChat account and the “Go Go Goal” mobile app, sharing information about drug abuse prevention and treatment. In addition, the IAS was able to uncover more than 40,000 drug-related discussions and messages using big data, and visited more than 10 popular teenage websites, social media platforms and discussion forums, conducting a total of 132 online outreach sessions and publishing 30 educational posts on drug prevention.

Prevention and Treatment of Problem Gambling

The Chi Ai Hin of the Social Welfare Bureau is a service unit responsible for providing counselling services and professional training to problem gamblers, and implementing community education promoting responsible gambling.

In 2023, the Central Registry System of Individuals with Gambling Disorders received 169 new cases of people seeking assistance. Community organisations were also commissioned to provide a round-the-clock gambling counselling hotline and online counselling service, which received 768 and 2,059 requests for assistance through telephone calls and online platforms, respectively.

To strengthen community education, 11 community talks regarding prevention of gambling disorders were organised, and attended by 475 participants.

The centre collaborated with community organisations in launching the Smart Money Management Programme, and organised 217 classroom sessions for 7,065 students. Two training sessions on teaching kits for teachers were also organised for 197 people. In 2023, the IAS subsidised “Bosco Youth Service Freeland” of the Bosco Youth Service Network, to implement addiction prevention services and activities for young people. During the year, 200 sessions were organised, serving more than 560,000 participants and online viewers.

To enhance the social participation of gaming workers and strengthen their physical and mental health, the gambling disorder prevention and treatment organisations received subsidies to organise educational activities on gambling disorder prevention and treatment, responsible gambling, family education and stress management, and various cultural, recreational, sports and online activities, which were held in 1,176 sessions throughout the year, and reached close to 250,000 people.

In 2023, nine professional training courses were organised, with a total of 293 members of the social service and gaming sectors obtaining certificates. The training courses included the “Professional Certificate in Gambling Counselling (Macao)” and the “Certificate in Macao Responsible Gaming Advisor”, to cultivate local advisor talents, with 34 individuals attaining the advisor qualification.

Regarding responsible gaming, the inter-departmental Working Group on Responsible Gambling, formed by the Macao SAR Government, previously launched the Responsible Gambling Indicators, and carries out phased reviews. In 2023, 13 social service organisations, casinos and other gaming establishments were awarded the “Responsible Gaming Implementation Model Unit” qualification.

In addition, the Report on Responsible Gaming 2023 was published, to provide scientific data and a reference for the prevention and treatment of gaming disorders.

As of 2023, a total of 59 Responsible Gaming Kiosks (including 52 kiosks and seven stations) were set up, with a total of 20,916 accesses throughout the year.

Social Rehabilitation Services

Social rehabilitation services mainly assist the court with implementing non-custodial sentences

and measures, such as parole, supervision for probationers, labour in lieu of penalty, suspension of proceedings, judicial restoration, and implement education and supervision orders for youth offenders, such as rehabilitation, community service order, rule abiding order, probation order and half-way home order, aiming to assist offenders with restoring law-abiding lives and reintegrating into society.

During 2023, 780 and 225 cases of discharged offenders and young offenders were handled, respectively. In addition, a half-way house for discharged offenders and a half-way house for young offenders provided services for 35 people and 18 people, respectively.

Three sets of systematic correctional programmes and activities are designed for the effective implementation and promotion of community correctional work, including the “Correctional Courses” for rehabilitated offenders, the “Crime Prevention for Youth” for juvenile offenders, and the “Correctional Courses” for special offenders. The courses cover personal growth, legal education, civic education, therapeutic courses and groups, and participation in social services. Through diverse education and corrective measures, the service users can develop law-abiding awareness and a positive lifestyle. In 2023, 151 courses and activities were held, with a total of 1,436 participants.

To strengthen the patriotism of rehabilitated persons and assisted youth, the Social Welfare Bureau cooperated with non-governmental organisations to launch a series of patriotic education activities to guide rehabilitated persons and juvenile offenders to gain a deeper understanding of national development, and enhance their sense of national identity, love for the country and abiding the law. In 2023, the activities attracted participation by 663 people, including 468 rehabilitated persons and 195 young offenders receiving counselling.

In March 2023, the Social Welfare Bureau, the Correctional Services Bureau and civil organisations jointly organised the “Assist in Offender Rehabilitation with Care and Inclusiveness” community publicity campaign, to convey the message of care and acceptance of rehabilitated offenders for reintegration into the society to local residents.

In 2023, in collaboration with non-government organisations, the “Life on Two Paths” youth crime prevention programme was launched online and offline. Through online social media platforms and school visits to conduct crime prevention promotions, the programme publicised the “Education and Supervision Regime for Youth Offenders” to the young people of Macao, disseminated messages on crime prevention, and educated young people on the serious consequences of violating the law, to prevent young people from inadvertently committing an offence. During the year, there were 23,088 participants and online contacts.

Social Security Fund

The Social Security Fund Authority is under the supervision of the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, and is responsible for implementing various policy measures concerning social security and managing relevant resources.

The Social Security Fund was set up on 23 March, 1990, with a primary objective of providing social security to local employees at that time. With the exacerbated social phenomenon of ageing, residents’ demand for universal coverage is growing. In November 2008, the Government

announced the Social Security and Old-age Pension System Reform Programme. Its core aim is to build a double-tier social security system, founded on the first-tier social security system, so that all Macao residents can enjoy basic social protection, particularly old-age protection, to improve their quality of life, with more ample protection for retirement life supported by the second-tier, non-mandatory Central Provident Fund.

Social Security System

Law No. 4/2010 – “Social Security System” came into effect on 1 January 2011. It is the first tier of the double-tier social security system. This system operates according to the principle of social insurance covering the entire population of Macao, with the aim of providing residents with basic social security and particularly pension security. Its income derives from contributions from gaming, a one-percent sharing from the recurrent income of the Government’s annual General Budget, three percent of the central executive budget balance by the end of every fiscal year, the contributions of employees, employers and arbitrary contributors, employment fees for non-resident workers, and the income of the investment of the Social Security Fund.

Starting from 2022, the Social Security Fund has fully implemented the “Periodic Adjustment Mechanism of Social Security Fund’s Benefits”, under which pension and other benefits are reviewed and adjusted in a more scientific and systematic manner, thereby ensuring basic pension protection for residents and the sustainability of the social security mechanism.

Contribution

The Social Security System comprises an obligatory contribution system and an arbitrary contribution system. Employees and their employers are required to make obligatory contributions to the Social Security Fund, at an amount of 90 patacas per month (60 patacas by employers and 30 patacas by employees), and other Macao residents who comply with the relevant legal requirements can make contributions by enrolling in the arbitrary system, with the full amount of contributions – 90 patacas per month, to be paid by the beneficiaries themselves.

In 2023, a total of 357,200 beneficiaries made their contributions. They included around 289,500 employees and 67,700 voluntary contributors (including in-service public servants registered in the retirement and pension system). The contributions totalled around 380 million patacas.

Social Security Payments

According to the current social security system, eligible beneficiaries are legally entitled to pensions, disability allowance, unemployment allowance, sickness allowance, birth allowance, marriage allowance, funeral allowance, and compensation for respiratory occupational diseases.

In 2023, pensions and disability allowance were given to 159,000 people, 147,000 of whom received pensions. Besides, allowances were given to 80,000 people. Social security payments totalled about 6.02 billion patacas, including around 5.4 billion patacas for pensions (including an additional payment in January).

Non-mandatory Central Provident Fund System

Law No. 7/2017 – “Non-mandatory Central Provident Fund System” (or non-mandatory CPF) came into effect on 1 January 2018. It is the second tier in the double-tier social security system, aiming at enhancing retirement protection for citizens of the Macao SAR, and to fill a gap in the existing social security system.

The non-mandatory CPF comprises a contribution system and an allocation scheme. An account holder may make regular contributions via a contribution plan, and seek wealth accumulation through investment, to better prepare for a financially sound retirement.

Individual Account of Non-mandatory CPF

MSAR citizens falling into the following categories may become individual account holders of non-mandatory CPF:

1. Aged 18 or above;
2. Under the age of 18, but registered into the social security system in accordance with the law

An individual account of non-mandatory CPF comprises a sub-account managed by the government, a contribution sub-account, and a preserved sub-account.

Contribution System

There are a joint provident fund scheme and an individual provident fund scheme under the non-mandatory CPF. A joint provident fund scheme is designed for employees. The monthly contributions of a participating employee and his or her employer are calculated based on the employee’s basic salary, being equivalent to five percent of the basic salary. The maximum and minimum caps to the contributions are linked to the Law on the Minimum Wage for Employees.

An individual provident fund scheme is designed for all account holders with a monthly minimum contribution of 500 patacas, and a maximum amount linked to Law on the Minimum Wage for Employees, which is currently 3,500 patacas. The contributions can be invested into the pension funds under non-mandatory CPF for wealth accumulation, and managed by qualified fund management entities.

By the end of 2023, there were seven fund management entities providing 43 open-end pension funds. In 2023, 303 employers and a total of around 28,000 employees joined the non-mandatory CPF scheme; about 84,000 people joined the individual non-mandatory CPF scheme; and about 7,500 people opened or retained sub-accounts.

Upon termination of employment, the employee may be entitled to the accumulated benefits in the employer’s part, according to the length of contribution and the applicable vesting schedule. Since an individual non-mandatory CPF account is portable, the benefits in the contribution scheme will not be cleared and withdrawn due to employment termination, and can maintain the account for continued investment.

Allocation Scheme

Account holders who are alive on 1 January in the allocation year, and meet the following requirements within the year prior to the allocation, are eligible for a one-off Incentive Basic Fund of 10,000 patacas:

1. Permanent residents of the Macao Special Administrative Region;
2. Aged 22 or above; and
3. Resided in Macao for at least 183 days.

If the Government's budget implementation in previous fiscal years allows, account holders who fulfil the above requirements may receive the special allocation of funds if there is a budget surplus. These amounts are recorded in sub-accounts managed by the Government. The funds provided may be kept for accumulation, or transferred to the contributor's sub-account or preserved sub-account for investment through proper transfer application.

In 2023, there were 617,029 Provident Fund Individual Account holders, of whom 10,922 initially fulfilled the requirements and were eligible for 10,000 patacas of the Incentive Basic Fund. As the SAR government's public finances did not record a budget implementation surplus in 2022, the special allocation funds for the budget surplus were not released in 2023. At the end of January 2024, the maximum accumulated appropriation and interest income of an account holder's sub-account managed by the Government was 77,000 patacas. If an account owner was eligible for the special allocation of a budget surplus since 2010, and has never transferred out, deposited or withdrawn funds from the government-managed sub-account, the accumulated interest income was up to 16,814 patacas.

Fund Withdrawal

To meet the objective of providing account holders more ample retirement protection, in general, an account holder must be aged 65 or above, and must fulfil other withdrawal conditions, before he or she can apply for fund withdrawal from his or her individual account. In 2023, there were 15,240 approved applications for withdrawals, resulting in a total disbursement of 1.115 billion patacas.



The Islands District Medical Complex

The Islands District Medical Complex – the Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College (Macao Union Hospital) is a large-scale integrated public medical institution set up by the MSAR Government with the country’s support. Operated and managed by the MSAR Government in collaboration with Peking Union Medical College, the Macao Union Hospital commenced trial operations on 20 December. It is one of the major healthcare cooperation projects between the MSAR and mainland China under “One country, two systems”, and is the largest medical complex in Macao.



