

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2467/03-04
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

Panel on Welfare Services

Minutes of meeting
held on Tuesday, 13 April 2004 at 10:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP (Chairman)
Dr Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon LI Fung-ying, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS, JP
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
Hon WONG Sing-chi

Members absent : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee

Public Officers attending : Items II and III
Mr Paul TANG, JP
Director of Social Welfare

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Item II

Miss Susie HO, JP
Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Welfare)

Mr FUNG Pak-yan
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Family and Child Welfare)

Mr Gary CHEUNG
Senior Social Work Officer (Family) 1

Miss LI Shuk-fan
Director, Christian Concern for the Homeless Association

Item III

Mrs Agnes ALLCOCK, JP
Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Administration)

Mrs Brenda FUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Elderly Services)

Mrs Rachel CARTLAND, JP
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Social Security)

Mr LAI Shiu-bor
Chief Social Security Officer (Social Security) 2

Item IV

Ms Sally WONG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Women)

Mr Daniel SIN
Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Women)/Special Duties

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**Deputations/
Academic
by invitation**

: Deputations

Items II and III

Society for Community Organization

Mr NG Wai-tung
Community Organizer

Mr PANG Hung-cheong
Community Organizer

Item IV

Hong Kong Women Workers' Association

Ms WU Mei-lin
Co-ordinator

Association for the Advancement of Feminism

Ms LAM Wai-ha
External Organiser

Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres

Ms LAW Ying-tsz
Centre-in-charge

Ms LAU Chuen-ho
Member

Hong Kong Women Christian Council

Ms WONG Wai-yin
Executive Secretary

Women Affairs Committee of the Hong Kong Federation of
Trade Unions

Ms LAM Kam-yi
Director

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Ms LAI Chui-hung
Associate Director

Women Affairs Committee of the Hong Kong Confederation
of Trade Unions

Ms SHAM Pui-lin
Secretary

Ms IP Pui-yu
Secretary

Ms WOO Ka-lai
Member

Association of Women with Disabilities Hong Kong

Ms WONG Ka-ling
Honourary Secretary

Ms CHAN Ka-yee
Project Officer

Women Continuing Education Group

Ms LEUNG Kam-lun
Group Representative

Ms CHOW Miu-chun
Group Representative

Harmony House

Ms Queenie YUEN
Social Worker

Hong Kong Association for the Survivors of Women Abuse
(Kwan Fook)

Ms LIU Ngan-fung
Chairman

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Academic

Professor LUI Yui-hon
The Open University of Hong Kong

Ms HO Wing-yan
The Open University of Hong Kong

Clerk in attendance : Miss Mary SO
Chief Council Secretary (2) 4

Staff in attendance : Miss Millie WONG
Senior Council Secretary (2) 4

I. Items for discussion at the next meeting
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1927/03-04(01) and (02))

1. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for 10 May 2004 -

- (a) Progress report on the Healthy Ageing Campaign; and
- (b) An update on support for vulnerable elders.

2. Members further agreed to hold a special meeting to discuss family violence, in view of the recent Tin Shui Wai murder.

(Post-meeting note : Two joint meetings of the Panel on Welfare Services and the Panel on Security were held on 26 and 30 April 2004 to discuss strategy and measures to prevent and tackle family violence.)

II. Final report on the “Three-year Action Plan to Help Street Sleepers” and the way forward
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1609/03-04(13) and (14))

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Family and Child Welfare) (ADSW(FCW)) conducted a power point presentation on the progress of

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the Three-year Action Plan to help street sleepers (Action Plan), the findings of the final report of the evaluative research conducted by the City University of Hong Kong and the Social Welfare Department's (SWD) plan to revamp its street sleeper service, details of which were set out in the above Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1609/03-04(13)).

4. Miss LI Shuk-fan of the Christian Concern for the Homeless Association supplemented that midnight outreaching and providing emergency funding support were effective in helping street sleepers who were younger, better educated, in normal health and with shorter duration of street sleeping to live off the street. Miss LI however hoped that aftercare service for accommodated street sleepers could be more than six months, and that experts like Dr WONG Hung of the Chinese University of Hong Kong should continue to be engaged by the Administration to provide advice on street sleeper service. Miss LI further said that she was gratified by the proactive approach adopted by SWD to prevent people at risk from becoming street sleepers by encouraging non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to identify this group of people so that early intervention and timely assistance could be provided.

5. The Chairman then invited representatives of the Society for Community Organization (SOCO) to give their views on the matter.

6. Mr NG Wai-tung presented the views of SOCO as set out in its submission (LC Paper No. CB(2)1609/03-04(14)). In particular, SOCO recommended the following -

- (a) Setting up long-term hostels targetted at street sleepers, taking reference from the practice adopted in the United Kingdom;
- (b) Providing low-rental accommodation, say, in hostel with independent rooms, to low-income street sleepers, taking reference from the practice adopted in Japan; and
- (c) Conducting a study on why people resumed street sleeping for the formulation of policy to address street sleeper problem.

7. ADSW(FCW) responded that in the funding and service agreement to be entered with the three NGOs to operate the three new Integrated Teams for providing one-stop integrated services for street sleepers, providing aftercare service to street sleepers for six months was only the minimum requirement. There was no ruling out that the time required for aftercare service would last one to two years, as experience revealed that some street sleepers would require a longer period of time for them to adjust satisfactorily to the new living environment and re-build their social network with relatives, friends, etc. As regards providing long-term accommodation for street sleepers, ADSW(FCW) said that there was no need for such for the time being as the overall utilisation rate of

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shelters/hostels for the homeless people was about 70% to 80% and their monthly rent only ranged from \$700 to \$1,500. Rooms for single occupancy were also available. In addition, the Agency for Volunteer Service also offered some 300 places through its 26 hostels at a monthly rent of about \$400, and their overall utilisation rate was only about 80%. Street sleepers could stay in these accommodation for up to six months. Where necessary, longer stay could be granted. The Chairman commented that although the rent for shelters/hostels for the homeless people was relatively low, it would still be a heavy financial burden for ex-street sleepers who needed to travel to work having regard to the high transportation fees.

8. Dr LAW Chi-kwong expressed support in principle the revamping of street sleeper services as detailed in paragraphs 17 and 18 of the Administration's paper. To prevent ex-street sleepers from living off the streets again, Dr LAW urged that consideration be given to providing rent subsidy to this group of people. Noting that an annual recurrent subvention of \$6 million was required for the three NGOs to operate the three new Integrated Teams, Dr LAW asked where these resources would come from and whether they would be made available to the NGOs under a lump sum grant (LSG) arrangement.

9. ADSW(FCW) responded that the required resources for the three NGOs to operate the three new Integrated Teams would be pooled from the recurrent subventions of \$3.4 million to St James' Settlement and The Salvation Army for the subvented services including two day relief centres and two urban hostels for single persons no longer required, and savings of \$2.6 million from the closure of the three Street Sleepers Outreaching Teams (SSOTs) of SWD. ADSW(FCW) further said that money provided to these NGOs would be provided under the LSG arrangement.

10. Dr LAW Chi-kwong further asked how subvention to the three NGOs to operate the three new Integrated Teams manpower would be calculated and whether the deployment of the savings of \$2.6 million from the closure of the three SWD's SSOTs to NGOs would only require the approval of the Director of Social Welfare (DSW). In response, ADSW(FCW) said that the required subvention was worked out with each NGO concerned, taking into account the service components and essential staffing requirement. As regard transfer of funding from SWD to NGO, DSW undertook to provide a written response after the meeting.

(Post meeting note : Clarified by SWD, under the one line vote arrangement, DSW, being the controlling officer of the Department, could deploy the resources between subventions and departmental expenses to meet the operational requirements.)

11. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that an analysis of the current 529 cases in the Street Sleepers Registry revealed the following features. Amongst the 444 street sleepers with known age, 234 (52.7%) were aged over 49, and amongst the 432 street sleepers with

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known length of street sleeping, 363 (84%) had been street sleeping for more than one year. In the light of this, Mr LEUNG asked about the measures which would be taken by the Administration to help these people to find employment and live off the street.

12. ADSW(FCW) responded that as exemplified by the Action Plan which had been proven to be effective in helping street sleepers who were younger, better educated, in normal health and with shorter duration of street sleeping to live off the street and become self-reliant, similar integrated approach, i.e. provision of a continuum of services including casework, outreaching, emergency funding, employment assistance, network rebuilding, aftercare, etc. would be used to help those hardcore street sleepers to live off the street and become self-reliant.

III. The provision of disregarded earnings under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme

(LC Paper No. CB(2)1927/03-04(03))

13. Members noted the above Administration's paper on the provision of disregarded earnings (DE) under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme.

14. Mr Wong Sing-chi asked about the measure(s) which would be taken to address the phenomenon of employable CSSA recipients refraining from reporting their new found jobs to the Social Security Field Units (SSFUs) of SWD. Mr WONG pointed out that under the current economic situation, many people could only find short-term or part-time employment which might not always be secured. In order not to have their monthly CSSA payments reduced, some employable CSSA recipients would deliberately choose not to report their new jobs to SSFUs or stay unemployed.

15. DSW commented that although DE should provide CSSA recipients with financial incentives to find employment, there was always the danger that some people might choose to remain on CSSA and top up with some earnings from a casual, low-paid job, and not make a real effort to achieve true self-reliance. Nevertheless, there was no concrete evidence that DE had deterred people from finding work and continue working. The number of employable CSSA recipients had been on the decline in recent months. Although the number of low-income CSSA recipients had increased during the past several months, this might be an indication that with the recovery of the economy, more people could find employment but their earnings could not lift them off the CSSA net. DSW hoped with the gradual recovery of the economy which would lead to the creation of more full-time and higher-paid jobs, the desired effect of DE would become more apparent. In the meantime, SWD would step up actions to help the employable CSSA recipients to find employment. DSW further said that it was the Administration's intention to review the new DE measures, as set out in paragraph 6(a) and (b) of its paper, three years after they had come into operation on 1 June 2003.

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16. Dr LAW Chi-kwong said that the new measure of not providing DE for all categories of recipients in the initial determination of eligibility and in cases which had been on CSSA for less than three months should be expeditiously reviewed. This was because such a measure was at variance with the objectives of DE to meet employment-related expenses and to allow the CSSA recipients to keep a portion of their earnings, thereby providing an incentive for them to find work and continue working. Mr NG Wai-tung of SOCO and Ms LI Fung-ying shared similar views. Mr NG further said that such a new measure was particularly unfair to people who, as soon as they were on CSSA, went out to find employment. This group of people, who were more likely to find employment than people who had been on CSSA for a longer period of time, should be encouraged, instead of being discouraged, to seek employment. The new arrangement would also create hardship for people who relied on their first CSSA payments to make ends meet, as SWD would withhold giving out CSSA payments to these people once it knew that they had found a paid job, the income of which was equivalent to or exceed the amount payable.

17. Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Social Security) (ADSW(SS)) responded that it should be borne in mind that earnings that were disregarded under the CSSA Scheme were in fact revenue foregone in the sense that if a recipient did not have the benefit of DE, the amount of CSSA payments would be reduced. ADSW(SS) pointed out that if existing recipients who had been on CSSA for less than three months were allowed DE, an additional sum of some \$20 million per annum to Government expenditure would be incurred. This had not taken into account the factor that with the more generous DE, more families would be trawled into the CSSA net, thereby leading to additional Government expenditure. This was because the existence of the provision of DE had lifted the CSSA income thresholds for families with employment earnings, thus allowing families with an income that would otherwise be considered sufficient to meet their basic needs to receive CSSA. Ms LI Fung-ying remarked that these explanations failed to justify the implementation of not providing DE for all categories of recipients in the initial determination of eligibility and in cases which had been on CSSA for less than three months.

18. In summing up, the Chairman requested the Administration to advance its plan to review the measure of not providing DE for all categories of recipients in the initial determination of eligibility and in cases which had been on CSSA for less than three months. DSW agreed to consider.

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IV. Empowerment of women

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1927/03-04(04) to (10) and CB(2)1983/03-04(01))

19. Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Women) (DSHWF(W)) took members through the salient points of the above Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1927/03-04(04)) which set out the measures adopted by the Administration regarding empowerment of women in Hong Kong and the initiatives and strategies of the Women's Commission in this area of work. She said that due to time and space constraints, it was not possible to spell out the many initiatives done by NGOs in the paper, but their work should be duly recognised. She looked forward to enhancing collaboration with them in the future.

20. The Chairman invited deputations/individuals to give their views on the issue of empowerment of women.

Views of deputations

Hong Kong Women Christian Council (HKWCC)

21. Ms WONG Wai-yin said that any efforts to empower women to fully realise their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life would be undermined if problems such as difficulties for grass root women to find full-time and decently-paid jobs, lack of childcare support to enable women to become gainfully employed and the seven-year residence requirement for social security benefits, were not satisfactorily addressed. Ms WONG further said that in order to facilitate women to participate more fully in the community and enhance women's participation in decision making, the Administration had accepted the Women's Commission's advice to take gender composition into account when making appointments. An initial working target of 25% had been introduced as a benchmark for women's participation in the advisory and statutory bodies set up by the policy bureaux and government departments. Ms WONG however pointed out that such an arrangement could not achieve the desired effect, as the participation was biased towards women in the business sector or from the middle-class. To remedy the situation, more efforts should be made towards incorporating the participation of grass root women in the public policy-making structure and decision-making process.

Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres (HKFWC)

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1927/03-04(06) and CB(2)2061/03-04(02))

22. Ms LAW Ying-tsz and Ms LAU Chuen-ho presented the views of HKFWC as set out in its submissions. In particular, HKFWC urged the Administration to expeditiously review the existing legislation to enable self and mutual help women groups to form co-operatives, improve childcare services for working mothers, and increase resources to enhance training and education for women.

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Women Affairs Committee of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (HKFTU)
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1927/03-04(07))

23. Ms LAM Kam-yi presented the views of the Women Affairs Committee of HKFTU as set out in its submission. The findings of a recent survey conducted by HKFTU revealed three major problems faced by women. Namely, job opportunities for middle-aged women had become increasingly scarce; income of female workers had been falling; and age discrimination against female workers had become more serious. In the light of this, HKFTU urged the Administration to increase employment opportunities for women through the formulation of a policy which would provide incentives for businesses to invest in developing industries in Hong Kong; expeditiously enact legislation against age discrimination; and adopt measures to enhance women's inner strength, self-reliance and self-confidence. In respect of the latter, HKFTU urged the Administration to provide basic training and continuing education for women with low educational attainment; incorporate gender mainstreaming in Government policy making, implementation and legislation; and engage grass root women in the advisory and statutory bodies set up by the Administration.

Hong Kong Women Workers' Association (HKWWA)
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1927/03-04(10))

24. Ms WU Mei-lin presented the views of HKWWA as set out in its submission. To enhance women's capability to become self-reliant, HKWWA recommended the following -

- (a) Statutory minimum wage and working hours should be established;
- (b) Legislation should be enacted to provide the benefits and rights of employees who did not work for the same employer for four weeks or more and with less than 18 hours in each week;
- (c) Legislation against age discrimination should be enacted;
- (d) Adult education, information technology education, training and retraining for women should be enhanced;
- (e) The Administration should create more jobs, cease to contract out jobs to private firms and take the lead to hire people who had undergone retraining;
- (f) Publicly-fund retirement protection for housewives should be established; and

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- (g) The Administration should set out the minimum sum which a worker should receive upon retirement in order to ensure that low income workers could lead a dignified life in their twilight years.

Apart from empowering women through various measures as detailed in the Administration's paper, more work needed to be done by the Administration to prevent the recent Tin Shui Wai murder from recurring.

Women Continuing Education Group of Yan Oi Tong Community Centre
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1927/03-04(09))

25. Ms LEUNG Kam-lun introduced the submission of Women Continuing Education Group of Yan Oi Tong Community Centre urging the Administration to enable women to pursue adult education during daytime. In so doing, adult education courses should be designed having regard to the special circumstances of women and the present requirements of the job market. Due regard should be given to see that these adult education courses were recognised by employers and could converge with other advanced courses. Childcare support should also be enhanced to encourage and enable more women to pursue adult education. In formulating the policies concerned, views of women from the grass root should be sought.

Women Affairs Committee of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU)
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1927/03-04(08))

26. Ms SHAM Pui-lin took members through the submission of the Women Affairs Committee of HKCTU which urged the Administration to implement the following measures -

- (a) Legislation against age discrimination should be enacted;
- (b) Statutory working hours should be established;
- (c) Retirement protection for all Hong Kong citizens should be established;
- (d) More affordable and comprehensive Women Health Centres should be set up;
- (e) Contracting-out of government jobs should cease and legislation to safeguard the rights of part-time workers should be enacted;
- (f) Cutting back of funding to education should cease;
- (g) Full Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of

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All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in Hong Kong should be expeditiously realised;

- (h) Statutory minimum wage and unemployment assistance should be established;
- (i) Election of the Chief Executive through universal suffrage should be implemented to speed up democratisation of Hong Kong; and
- (j) Affordable adult education for women should be provided.

Ms IP Pui-yu also said that the Tin Shui Wai murder had exposed the shortcomings in the system to help victims of domestic violence who were usually women. Ms IP hoped that the Women's Commission could play a pivotal role in rectifying such deficiencies.

Hong Kong Association for the Survivors of Women Abuse (Kwan Fook)

27. Ms LIU Ngan-fung said that the Tin Shui Wai murder could have been avoided if the Administration had viewed domestic violence from a public health perspective, there were better multi-disciplinary coordination and frontline workers of different disciplines were better trained to handle battered spouse cases.

Harmony House

(LC Paper No. CB(2)1983/03-04(01))

28. Ms Queenie YUEN presented the views of the Harmony House as set out in its submission. In particular, the Harmony House recommended the following -

- (a) Empowerment of women should be an ongoing effort;
- (b) Women on CSSA should be waived of the fees for enrolling in the learning programmes under the Capacity Building Mileage Programme (CBMP) developed by the Women's Commission in partnership with the Open University of Hong Kong, the Commercial Radio and NGOs in the community;
- (c) New arrival women should be apprised of the support and services available in the community for victims of domestic violence;
- (d) Enactment of legislation against molestation and review of the Domestic Violence Ordinance should be made expeditiously;
- (e) Gender equality and anti-violence concepts should be instilled in children

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from the early stage of schooling; and

- (f) "Zero tolerance violence" should be established as a matter of policy. Consideration should also be given to adopting the "pro-arrest policy" practised in Australia to put the responsibility on the Police to arrest the abuser if there was evidence to justify such action.

Professor LUI Yui-hon

29. Professor LUI Yui-hon introduced the salient features of CBMP, details of which were set out in the relevant brochures already issued to members prior to the meeting.

Association for the Advancement of Feminism

30. Ms LAM Wai-ha commented that "增強婦女能力" could not aptly reflect the meaning of "empowerment of women", as the latter did not only involve raising the abilities of women but also involved creating an enabling environment to bring about the realisation of the due rights of women. A case in point was the launching of CBMP to encourage capacity building of women, but with very little regard paid to eliminate the barriers to enable women to fully develop their potentials. Ms LAM further said that although the Women's Commission had pledged to review gender mainstreaming in Government policy making, implementation and legislation in August 2002, no progress had been made in this regard thus far. As the Women's Commission was tasked to advise the Government on a long term vision and strategy to advance women's needs and concerns more effectively, Ms LAM hoped that the Commission would play a more proactive role in addressing the deficiencies in the existing systems which hampered women to fully realise their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life.

Association of Women with Disabilities Hong Kong (AWDHK)
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1927/03-04(05) and CB(2)2061/03-04(01))

31. Ms WONG Ka-ling presented the views of AWDHK as set out in its submissions. Specifically, AWDHK urged the Administration to also incorporate the special needs and perspectives of women with disabilities in Government policy making, implementation and legislation.

Discussion

32. On the criticism made about the term "增強婦女能力", DSHWF(W) explained that the term was used by the United Nations. Its meaning was not confined to that used in the welfare context, and had a broader scope comprising processes at the individual and collective levels. At the individual level, empowerment involved capacity building for women and their self-actualisation. At the collective level, it involved the creation of an

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enabling environment which could facilitate women's advancement.

33. Regarding the concern raised about the difficulty of middle-aged women finding employment, DSHWF(W) said that a more personalised service was provided by the Labour Department (LD) in its Job Matching Programme to help this group of people to find suitable jobs. Apart from this, a number of measures had been introduced by LD in conjunction with the Employees Retraining Board to help women job seekers looking for local domestic helper (LDH) posts, including a "Special Incentive Allowance Scheme for LDHs" to address geographical and time mismatches of the LDH market.

34. As to the lack of protection for part-time or temporary employees, DSHWF(W) said that although employees who did not work for the same employer for four weeks or more and with less than 18 hours in each week, i.e. not employed under a continuous contract, were not entitled to all the statutory benefits under the Employment Ordinance such as maternity leave and annual leave, they were entitled to such basic protection as wage protection and protection against unreasonable/unlawful dismissal. Employees not employed under a continuous contract only constituted a small proportion of the total population of part-time workers. Statistics of the labour force in the second quarter of 2002 revealed that only about 38 800 out of the 130 900 part-time workers were not employed under a continuous contract. DSHWF(W) further said that to extend more statutory benefits under the Employment Ordinance to employees not employed under a continuous contract could not be made instantaneously. On these and other labour-related issues, various factors had to be considered and a balance struck. A consensus needed to be reached amongst the Government, employers and employees.

35. On providing retirement protection to homemakers, DSHWF(W) said that a study was being undertaken by the Administration on the arrangements of financial support for older persons. In the meantime, homemakers could consider joining the Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme if they so wished.

36. Mrs Sophie LEUNG advised, in her capacity as the Chairman of the Women's Commission, that the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist developed to help officials to carry out gender mainstreaming in their respective areas was pilot tested in five policy areas in 2002, and, based on feedback from the pilot test participants as well as other parties, refined in 2003. In 2003, the Checklist was introduced into several more policy areas. Plans were in hand to roll out the Checklist to other areas incrementally. On the suggestion of amending the relevant legislation to enable support/self help groups to form co-operatives, Mrs LEUNG said that the Women's Commission was also discussing the same issue and would be happy to exchange views on the matter with all concerned groups. Mrs LEUNG further said that the CBMP was not the only initiative of the Women's Commission to build the capacity of women. Plans were in hand to roll out other initiatives to build the capacity of women.

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Admin 37. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed regret that the Administration appeared to turn a blind eye to the flaws in the existing policies and systems which were hindering the work of empowering women. Ms Cyd HO and Ms LI Fung-ying shared similar view. At the request of Mr LEUNG, DSHWF(W) undertook to provide a paper reflecting the concerns and suggestions raised by deputations.

38. Referring to paragraph 11 of the Administration's paper which mentioned that the median income of female workers was \$9,000, Ms LI Fung-ying wondered how many women had such income. Ms LI then asked about the measures to address age and sex discrimination against women, such as unreasonable dismissal of pregnant workers.

39. DSHWF(W) responded that the Administration would continue to step up public education to promote gender equality and eliminate age discrimination in employment. DSHWF(W) further said that any person being discriminated against unlawfully because of his/her sex, marital status, pregnancy, disability or family status could lodge a complaint with the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Conclusion

Admin 40. The Chairman shared the views of deputations and members that the Administration had not done enough in areas such as combatting domestic violence, helping middle-aged women to find employment and eliminating age and sex discrimination, and urged the Administration to face these problems squarely with a view to coming up with a strategy to tackle them effectively. The Chairman requested DSHWF(W) to take up the concerns raised by deputations and members to the Administration so that necessary follow-up actions could be taken. The Chairman also requested DSHWF(W) to provide the paper to the Panel referred to in paragraph 37 above before the expiry of the current Legislative Council session.

41. Mrs Sophie LEUNG said that the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau alone could not resolve the problem of helping middle-aged women to find employment, as this problem was largely due to economic restructuring. As the problem straddled various policy areas, the whole of the Government should take the lead in opening discussions with the community at large in formulating a comprehensive policy to address the problem.

42. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:20 pm.