

Legislative Council Subcommittee to Study the Subject of Combating Poverty

Women participation in Government advisory and statutory bodies

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the participation of women in the work of public sector advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs).

Background

2. At the Subcommittee meeting on 27 April 2006, members noted our paper on the appointment of women to ASBs (LC Paper No. CB(2) 1706/05-06(01)). We re-affirmed our support for a balanced gender composition of ASBs which would enable the perspectives and concerns of both men and women to be fully reflected through ASBs. We also reported that the initial working target of at least 25% for each gender promulgated in January 2004 (the 25% gender benchmark) for the purpose of appointments to ASBs was achieved in December 2005.

Appointment policy

3. As a matter of principle, each ASB appointment is made on the basis of the merit of the individual concerned, taking into account the candidate's ability, expertise, experience, integrity and commitment to public service, having due regard to the functions and nature of business of the board or committee concerned. The composition of ASBs should also broadly reflect the interests and views of the community, including those of the grassroots and of both genders.

4. We have adopted a progressive approach in increasing women's participation in the work of ASBs while upholding the principle of appointment by merit. Bureaux and departments have been encouraged to take proactive measures to reach out, identify and cultivate women who are willing and able to contribute to the work of ASBs.

When making appointments, the respective appointing authority would consider the current position and the impact of the proposed appointments on gender balance. Bureaux and departments have been asked to encourage women to contribute their curriculum vitae to the Central Personality Index (CPI) maintained by the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), a central database of potential candidates for appointments to ASBs. In providing nominations from the CPI, we also pay special attention to ensure that more women are nominated among prospective candidates who meet the basic criteria provided by the appointing authority for the ASB concerned. We continue, as appropriate, to remind the appointing authorities of the need to increase participation of women in the work of ASBs.

Women participation in ASBs

5. When the 25% gender benchmark was promulgated in January 2004, the women participation rate at that time was only around 22.3%. Through the collective efforts of bureaux and departments, the situation has improved continually and we successfully achieved the target benchmark of 25% gender benchmark in December 2005. As at September 2006, the women participation rate was 25.8%. In terms of numbers, 1 288 of the 5 001 appointed non-official post holders were women.

6. Although the target of 25% women participation has been reached and slightly exceeded, we shall continue to encourage the appointing authorities to further promote women participation in ASBs. We are consolidating the achievement and shall in due course consider raising the target having regard to local circumstances and international practices. However, since the 25% target has only been reached recently, it would be premature to raise it to 40% at this stage, without examining the implications and practicability of the proposal.

Presentation

7. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Home Affairs Bureau
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