

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs

**Policy Initiatives of
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB)
in Promoting Well-being and Interests of Women**

Purpose

The Chief Executive announced his 2005-06 Policy Address on 12 October 2005. The 2005-06 Policy Agenda lists the Government's new and on-going initiatives over the coming years. This note elaborates on the initiatives relating to the promotion of the well-being and interests of women in Hong Kong in the 2005-06 Policy Agenda. It also gives an account on the position reached on initiatives covered in the 2005 Policy Agenda.

2005-06 Policy Address and Policy Agenda

2. The Health, Welfare and Food Bureau is committed and accountable to building a caring and healthy society. In our future, we see community celebrating their rich diversity and recognizing the different strengths of each individual. In this connection, we aim to achieve the goals, amongst others, of enabling women to fully realize their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life.

Initiatives

Promoting Well-being and Interests of Women

3. We are committed to providing an enabling environment for women to develop their full potential and to build up their capacity to face life's challenges and participate fully in all aspects of community life. We need to ensure that women's needs and concerns would not be overlooked but factored into the Government policy formulation and implementation processes as part of our daily work. We also need to tackle the preconceived notions of the roles and abilities of women which tend to restrict the opportunities and options for women and their development.

4. Working together with the Women's Commission, we have adopted a three-pronged strategy of provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women and public education to further promote the development and advancement of women in Hong Kong.

5. The Administration would continue to provide secretariat support to the Women's Commission. In 2005-06 the Commission will continue to focus on three major areas, namely safety (emphasis on family violence against women), nurturing family (emphasis on quality parenting education), and gender awareness, amongst other on-going initiatives. The aim is to build a harmonious and caring society with both genders enjoying same rights, opportunities and status, which coincides with the theme of the Commission "Together We Build a Harmonious Community" as the goal for the next five years. The Government and the Commission would continue to work together to achieve the goal, and partner with different sectors, including women's groups, other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), schools, business sector and academics, in taking forward the various initiatives.

6. The Administration will continue to consult the Commission developing strategies to tackle domestic violence. The Commission has set up a Working Group on Safety, and has arranged a series of sharing sessions with various government departments, women's groups, service agencies and academics. The Working Group is working on the booklet on the strategy and action plans, and would collaborate with various stakeholder groups in taking the matters forward. The booklet is expected to be available by end 2005.

7. We will also continue to assist the Women's Commission to take forward initiatives to nurture caring families in the community. A fact finding research in respect of family friendly employment policies and practices in Hong Kong and another research on core values to be promoted through parenting education are expected to commence within this year. Moreover, a pilot project on quality parenting education is planned to be carried out in a selected local area. Efforts are being made to identify community organizations as collaborators.

Progress Report on Implementation of 2005 Policy Initiatives

Caring and Just Society

8. We indicated in the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau Policy Agenda 2005 "Caring and Just Society" that we are committed to providing an enabling environment to develop women's full potential and to build up their capacity to face life's challenges and participate fully in all aspects of community life. With advice from the Women's Commission, we have made good progress in taking forward the three-pronged strategy mentioned in paragraph 4 above.

Providing an Enabling Environment

Gender Mainstreaming

9. The Administration supports the principle of incorporating women's needs and perspectives in Government policy making, implementation and legislation. An analytical tool in the form of a checklist (i.e. the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist) has been developed. A set of accompanying guidance notes has been produced to familiarize officers with the concepts of gender mainstreaming and provide them with the necessary background information.

10. Since 2002, the Checklist has been applied to 14 policy or programme areas. In 2005-06, we continue to roll out the Checklist to five more policy or programme areas. Moreover, with the assistance of the Women's Commission, we are reviewing the implementation of gender mainstreaming, and the initial results are expected to be available in early 2006. An experience-sharing booklet would also be published to consolidate the experience of the relevant bureaux and departments and further promote gender mainstreaming.

11. All bureaux and departments have also designated "Gender Focal Points" (in most cases, a directorate officer) to serve as the contact/resource person for his/her organization. A Core Group of Gender Focal Points has also been set up to help promote the implementation of gender mainstreaming within the Government.

12. In addition, since 2001, we have provided training to over 1 000 civil servants of different grades to enhance awareness of gender-related issues. We conducted a briefing on gender mainstreaming for Principal Officials and Heads of Departments on 23 September 2005. A similar seminar will be conducted for Members of the Legislative Council shortly.

Empowerment of Women

Capacity Building Mileage Programme

13. A Capacity Building Mileage Programme (CBMP) has been launched since March 2004 to encourage women of different backgrounds and educational levels to pursue life-long learning and self-development. The Programme was initiated by the Women's Commission and implemented jointly by the Open University of Hong Kong and the Commercial Radio, and funded by the Lotteries Fund on a three-year pilot basis. It is a large-scale, flexible learning programme tailored to the needs and interests of women. It

is mainly delivered through radio broadcasting and supplemented by optional learning activities and face-to-face courses delivered by NGOs.

14. Since the launch of the Programme in March 2004, responses from women have been enthusiastic. So far, 18 radio courses and six face-to-face courses have been organised. The course contents are relevant to the daily life and interests of women. They include subjects such as managing interpersonal relationships, finance management, health and other practical issues in daily life. The accumulative number of enrolments in the 18 months is over 6 000, exceeding the first two years' target of 5 100. There is also a large network of audience reached through the radio programmes. Feedback collected from different channels generally reflects that students have benefited from the courses in terms of increased interests in learning, and enhanced confidence and knowledge in resolving problems in daily life.

15. The first graduation ceremony of CBMP was held on 12 May 2005. Some 150 students were awarded with certificates and over 250 guests and relatives of the graduating students attended the ceremony.

16. New radio courses and face-to-face courses would be developed for 2006. The Administration would continue to work closely with the Women's Commission and the parties concerned to enhance the Programme.

Women's Participation in Government Advisory and Statutory Bodies and at the Community Level

17. In respect of enhancing women's participation in decision making, on the advice of the Women's Commission, the Administration has set a gender benchmark of 25% as an initial working target for appointments to Advisory and Statutory Bodies (ASBs). A proactive approach is being taken to reach out, identify and cultivate potential female candidates, and women's participation in ASBs¹ has been improving: from 21 % in December 2003 to 24.8% in June 2005. We would continue to work closely with the Commission and the bureaux and departments to further enhance women's participation in ASBs and at the community level.

Public Education

18. The Administration and the Women's Commission continue to work together to carry out public education activities to promote greater gender sensitivity amongst the general public. These include, amongst others, new

¹ excluding official and ex-officio members.

series of Announcements in Public Interest and a new TV drama series which are under planning. Besides, an orientation game design contest was jointly organized by the Women's Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission to promote gender awareness among university students.

Work Conducted in Other Areas

19. To enhance communication with the non-governmental sector, as well as to create synergy in the work of the Women's Commission and other bodies, the Administration and the Commission seek to establish partnership with NGOs through its various activities. In addition, we need to establish better understanding between the Mainland and Hong Kong on women issues. In this connection, the Administration co-organized with the Women's Commission and the All-China Women's Federation the "Joint Events in Celebration of the Beijing + 10" in April 2005 in Beijing. Over 200 delegates from the Mainland and Hong Kong participated in the event to review the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and exchange views on various women's issues.

20. In addition, the Administration led a 30-strong delegation to attend "The Tenth Anniversary Commemoration of the Fourth World Conference on Women" held from 29 August to 1 September 2005 in Beijing. The delegation comprised representatives of the Women's Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Employees Retraining Board and a number of women's organizations and women related social services agencies. The Conference attracted participants from around the world to share on the theme "Towards Gender Equality and Common Development" and exchange views in advancing the interests and status of women. The Administration also participated in the "Exhibition on the Ten-Year Progress and Development of Chinese Women" to introduce our work in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Second Report of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was also distributed at the event. Copies are also sent to women's organizations in Hong Kong and uploaded on the website of the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau.

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