

## **Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs**

### **Establishment of a Children's Rights Forum and a Children's Rights Education Funding Scheme**

#### **Purpose**

This paper informs Members of the establishment of a Children's Rights Forum and a Children's Rights Education Funding Scheme to promote children's rights in Hong Kong.

#### **Background**

2. There have been calls for the Government to set up a Commission on Children modelled on the Women's Commission and the Commission on Youth. There have also been calls to appoint a Children's Ombudsman or a Commissioner for Children. The Government is considering the matter, but it would take some time before a decision is taken.

3. During the interim period, the Home Affairs Bureau has decided to establish a forum for the Government to discuss matters concerning children's rights with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and children's representatives.

#### **Children's Rights Forum**

4. The Children's Rights Forum follows the model of the existing four NGO forums under the Home Affairs Bureau, namely:

- (a) the Human Rights Forum (attended by representatives of human rights NGOs);
- (b) the Ethnic Minorities Forum (attended by representatives of ethnic minorities, NGOs providing services to ethnic minorities and human rights NGOs);

- (c) the Sexual Minorities Forum (attended by representatives of gay/lesbian/transgender groups and NGOs concerned about sexual orientation discrimination); and
- (d) NGO Forum on Community Development (attended by representatives of NGOs running Neighbourhood Level Community Development Projects and Community Centres and representatives of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service).

5. The Children's Rights Forum aims to provide a platform for exchanging views on matters concerning children's rights among NGOs, children's representatives and the Government. Membership to the Forum is open to all NGOs interested in the subject issues. We have invited representatives from major organizations which focus on children's rights, as well as children representatives from the Children's Council and the Junior Chief Executives to participate in the Forum. The Forum will meet on a quarterly basis. Members are welcome to propose items for discussion.

### **Children's Rights Education Funding Scheme**

6. With the establishment of the Children's Rights Forum, the Home Affairs Bureau has also set up a Children's Rights Education Funding Scheme on a pilot basis under the Forum to provide funding to community organizations for organizing public education projects in promotion of children's rights. We have allocated \$500,000 to this funding scheme in the 2006-07 financial year.

7. We propose to launch the Scheme in the 2006-07 financial year and to have it run on an annual basis. As mentioned above, the Scheme aims at encouraging and enabling community organizations to hold public education programmes which promote children's rights. It works on the principle of cooperation between the Government and NGOs. Any registered organization or sub-group of a registered organization may apply to the Home Affairs Bureau for funding for their projects. The upper limit of the Scheme's sponsorship for a single project will be \$100,000.

8. The basic rules of the Scheme follow those of our existing Equal Opportunities (Race) Funding Scheme and Equal Opportunities (Sexual Orientation) Funding Scheme, which are set out as follows –

- Projects must be non-profit making and carried out in Hong Kong, and meet the objectives of the Scheme;
- Applicants must be organizations, not individuals, and each organization should submit no more than one project application;
- Assessment of applications is based on the applicant organization’s background and experience, as well as the project’s objective, target audience/participants, cost-effectiveness, feasibility and budget;
- Sponsored projects must be completed by February of the relevant financial year.

9. Our proposed annual processing schedule for the Scheme is as follows –

March	Launch the Scheme and arrange publicity
April	Receive applications
May	Screen all applications and prepare background analysis
June	Assessment by vetting committee
August	Disburse funding (50% of the approved amount)
September	Successful organizations start their projects
February	Receive project reports and disburse the remaining 50% of the approved amount of funding

**Vetting Committee**

10. To ensure transparency and to maintain objective assessment, we will form a vetting committee to assess all applications in accordance with the Scheme’s criteria. The Committee will be chaired by a

representative of the Home Affairs Bureau, and will comprise four to five other members from the Children's Rights Forum.

**Home Affairs Bureau**  
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