

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 Policy Address on 12 January 2005. The 2005 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 Policy Agenda. It also gives an account on the position reached on initiatives covered in the 2004 Policy Agenda.

2005 Policy Agenda

Caring and Just Society

Mission and Vision

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. Family solidarity and a network of mutual care, trust, support and reciprocity embrace all individuals and nurture their healthy development. Policies and systems of health care, social welfare, food safety and environmental hygiene and a safety net are in place to enable and enhance everyone's participation in economic and social life with dignity and self-reliance.

Goals

3. To fulfil our mission and vision, we aim to achieve the following goals -
- Protect and promote the health of the community
 - Assure the safety and quality of our food and provide quality

environmental hygiene services

- Recreate a health care system which provides lifelong holistic care, while being affordable and financially sustainable
- Provide care and assistance for the physical and psychological well-being of the elderly
- Assist the disadvantaged, the poor and the unemployed with an emphasis on enhancing, not impeding, their will to self-reliance
- Promote the well-being and interests of people with disabilities
- Enable women to fully realize their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life.

Initiatives

Promoting Well-being and Interests of Women

4. We are committed to creating 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.

5. On the advice of the Women's Commission, we have adopted a three-pronged strategy of creation of an enabling environment, empowerment of women and public education to further promote the development and advancement of women in Hong Kong.

6. In 2005, the Administration would work with the Commission 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. We and the Commission would also partner with different sectors, including women's groups, other non-governmental organisations (NGOs), schools, business sector and academics, in taking forward the various initiatives.

Progress Report on Implementation of 2004 Policy Initiatives

Caring and Just Society

7. We indicated in the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau Policy Agenda 2004 “Caring and Just Society” that we are committed to creating 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 5 above.

Creation of an Enabling Environment

Gender Mainstreaming

8. 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 familiarise officers with the concepts of gender mainstreaming and provide them with the necessary background information for performing gender sensitive analysis.

9. Since 2002, the Checklist has been applied to 13 policy areas or programmes¹. Plans are being prepared to roll out the Checklist to more policy areas on an incremental basis, and to review the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

10. In addition, since 2001, we have provided gender related training

¹ including the health care reform, the enhanced home and community care service for the elderly, family education, the secondary school places allocation, the District Council review, the review of advisory and statutory bodies, IT education in the community, the design of facilities in public buildings, the provision of public toilets, major publicity campaigns of Information Services Department, the publicity programme on electricity and gas safety, the review of composition of advisory committees of the Office of Telecommunications Authority (OFTA), and its consumer education programmes.

to over 700 civil servants of different grades. Participants generally found the training workshops/seminar useful, the contents interesting and relevant to their work. 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 organisation.

Empowerment of Women

Capacity Building Mileage Programme

11. 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 is 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, incubated by the Women’s Commission and developed in partnership with the Open University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Commercial Radio. It is mainly delivered through radio broadcasting and supplemented by optional learning activities and face-to-face courses delivered by NGOs.

12. Since the launch of the Programme in March 2004, responses from women have been enthusiastic. So far, 12 radio courses and three face-to-face courses were conducted in 2004. The course contents are relevant to the daily life and interests of women, such as managing interpersonal relationships, finance management, health and practical issues in daily life. The total number of enrolments is 3,480, which exceeds the first year’s target of 2,100, not to mention the large network of audience reached through the radio programmes. Feedback collected from different channels 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.

13. Additional radio courses and face-to-face courses would be developed for 2005 and 2006. The Administration would continue to work closely with the Women’s Commission, the Open University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Commercial Radio in enhancing the Programme.

Women's Participation in Government Advisory and Statutory Bodies

14. 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 ASBs. A proactive approach is being taken to reach out, identify and cultivate potential female candidates, and women's participation in ASBs² has been improving: from 21% in December 2003 to 23% in December 2004. We would continue to work closely with the Women's Commission and Government bureaux and departments in this effort.

Public Education

15. The Administration and the Women's Commission continue to work together to carry out public education activities and organise seminars to promote greater gender sensitivity amongst the general public. These include, amongst others, a TV drama series and a forum on preventing sexual harassment in universities co-organised by the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Women's Commission.

Work Conducted in Other Areas

16. 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 this connection, a planning forum was held on 27 November 2004 to exchange views with women's groups and other interested parties on the future work direction. A framework of collaboration with NGOs and other interested parties was also disseminated to women's groups and NGOs in July 2004 to facilitate cooperation.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
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² excluding official and ex-officio members.