

**For Discussion
on 16 October 2006**

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs

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

Purpose

The Chief Executive announced his 2006-07 Policy Address on 11 October 2006. This note sets out the initiatives relating to the promotion of the well-being and interests of women in Hong Kong.

2006-07 Policy Address and Policy Agenda

Promoting Well-being and Interests of Women

2. In 2006-07, the Administration will continue to provide support to the Women's Commission in promoting the well-being and interests of women through its three-pronged strategy of providing an enabling environment, empowering women and public education.

The Capacity Building Mileage Programme

3. A key initiative in empowering women is the operation of the Capacity Building Mileage Programme (CBMP), which is initiated by the Women's Commission and implemented jointly by the Open University of Hong Kong and the Commercial Radio.

4. The CBMP is a 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 non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The courses include subjects such as managing interpersonal relationships, finance management, health and other

practical issues in daily life. Since its launch in March 2004, it has encouraged women of different backgrounds and educational levels to pursue life-long learning and self-development. Up to July 2006, the accumulative number of enrolments exceeded 11,500 and there is also a large network of audience reached through the radio programmes. Feedback from students is that they have benefited from the programme in terms of increased interests in learning, and enhanced confidence and knowledge in resolving problems in daily life.

5. The three-year pilot, which is funded by the Lotteries Fund, will expire by the end of this financial year. The Administration will continue to fund the operation of the CBMP.

Gender Mainstreaming

6. The Administration considers gender mainstreaming a key strategy in providing an enabling environment to ensure that women and men have equitable access to, and benefit from, society's resources and opportunities. Since 2002, the Administration with the assistance of the Women's Commission has applied the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist developed by the Commission to 19 policy or programme areas. In 2006-07, the Administration will continue to introduce the use of the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist in more policy areas on an incremental basis.

7. As part of our efforts to further the implementation of gender mainstreaming, we supported the Women's Commission's initiative to publish a booklet in January 2006 to consolidate the Administration's experience in applying gender mainstreaming.

8. Besides, a core group of designated "Gender Focal Points" (in most cases, a directorate officer) has been set up last year to devise plans to further promote gender mainstreaming within their respective organisations. We have also provided training to civil servants on a regular basis to enhance awareness of gender-related issues. To date, over 1,200 civil servants of various grades and ranks have received such training. A briefing on gender mainstreaming for Principal Officials and Heads of Departments was conducted in September 2005 and a similar seminar for Members of the Legislative Council in November 2005. We will continue to provide training on gender-related issues to different levels of civil servants, from senior officials involved in the formulation of policies, to

frontline colleagues who are involved in the delivery of the services.

Progress on Other On-going Initiatives

Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

9. The Administration is fully committed to discharging its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and continuous efforts have been made to promote public awareness of the Convention. In this regard, a roving exhibition on the progress made in implementing CEDAW and the development of women in Hong Kong was conducted from December 2005 to September 2006. Also, documents relating to CEDAW and the Government's various responses are uploaded onto the websites of the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau and the Women's Commission.

10. In August 2006, a HKSARG delegation attended the hearing of the HKSAR's second report, as part of China's report, under CEDAW by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the Committee).

11. On 31 August 2006, the Committee released the advanced unedited version of its concluding comments on the China's report, including the HKSAR's second report. In respect of the HKSAR, the Committee expressed appreciation of the delegation's comprehensive replies to the questions raised, and the frank and constructive dialogue that took place at the hearing. It also welcomed the active involvement of the civil society in Hong Kong, in particular women's NGOs, in safeguarding the human rights of women. The Committee has highlighted areas that require continuous attention. We will study carefully the Committee's observations and recommendations, and will endeavour to respond positively to the recommendations as far as practicable, taking into account the local circumstances.

Women's Safety

12. In January 2006, the Women's Commission issued a report on "Women's Safety in Hong Kong: Eliminating Domestic Violence", setting out a multi-dimensional strategy to eliminate domestic violence and putting forward 21

recommendations. The Administration has responded positively to the recommendations of the Commission, including reviewing the Domestic Violence Ordinance, strengthening services and support for victims of domestic violence, improving the handling of domestic violence cases by the Police and introduction of two pilot projects of Batterer Intervention Programme. The Administration will continue to support the Commission in implementing the multi-dimensional strategy in tackling domestic violence in partnership with the stakeholder groups.

Nurturing Caring Family

13. The Administration has supported the Women's Commission in taking forward two major initiatives to promote nurturing of caring families. The first is a study on the core life values for parenting education for instilling in children for their personal nourishment. The results of the study were released in September 2006. The second initiative is planning for a pilot project on quality parenting, which aims to establish a support network for parents to share experience and offer mutual help on parenting issues. The pilot project will also provide a platform to promote quality parenting and the importance of instilling the core life values in children and youth. We are now assisting the Commission in identifying community organisations as collaborators.

Women's Commission Conference

14. In June 2006, we assisted the Women's Commission in organising a conference on "Together We Build a Harmonious Community" which was well attended by over 400 representatives of social service agencies, women groups, trade unions, professionals, service businesses and academic institutes. The participants had frank and constructive exchanges in women-related issues including gender mainstreaming, women participation in decision-making, social partnership and empowerment, economic participation, women's safety and health. The discussion would facilitate the Administration and the Women's Commission in mapping out the future strategy to further promoting women advancement in Hong Kong.

Public Education

15. The Administration and the Women's Commission continue to work together to carry out public education and publicity programmes to reduce gender

prejudice and stereotyping, as well as to raise public awareness of women-related issues. These include, amongst others, a new TV drama series “Women with Dreams III” and two new Announcements in Public Interest on “Zero-tolerance for Domestic Violence” and “Nurturing Caring Families”.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
October 2006