

**For Discussion
on 22 October 2009**

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

**Policy Initiatives of Labour and Welfare Bureau
in Promoting Well-being and Interests of Women**

Purpose

The Chief Executive delivered his 2009-10 Policy Address on 14 October 2009. This note sets out the initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) in promoting the well-being and interests of women in Hong Kong.

2009-10 Policy Address and Policy Agenda

2. In 2009-10, the Administration will continue to work closely with the Women's Commission (WoC) to promote the well-being and interests of women through its three-pronged strategy – viz. the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women and public education.

Provision of an Enabling Environment

Gender Mainstreaming

3. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy advocated by the United Nations (UN) in promoting women's interests and gender equality by incorporating the needs and perspectives of both genders as an integral dimension in the decision-making process. It seeks to enable both genders to have equal access to and benefit from society's resources and opportunities, such that women and men can both fully develop their potential and contribute to society.

4. The Administration has, on WoC's advice and with its assistance, implemented gender mainstreaming in various policy and programme areas. WoC has also developed a Gender Mainstreaming Checklist (the Checklist) which comprises a series of simple questions to assist Government officers in applying gender mainstreaming in a more systematic way. To date, the Checklist has been applied to the 30 specific programmes as set out at Annex.

5. In addition, staff of many bureaux and departments have also applied the gender mainstreaming concept in the course of their daily work, taking into account the needs and perspectives of both genders. Some examples of the programmes that have applied the Checklist or the gender mainstreaming concept include:

- (a) **Government Publicity Programme** – the Information Services Department has applied the Checklist to its publicity programme. It has laid down a standard practice that bidders for the Government's outsourcing exercises on the production of publicity items under major publicity campaigns and minor programmes are required to ensure that all work submitted to the Government do not contain any gender bias or inequality and gender stereotyping.
- (b) **Publicity and Public Education Programmes of the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA)** – TELA has applied the Checklist to its publicity and public education programmes pertaining to raising public awareness of the importance of protecting youth from being exposed to obscene and indecent articles. It has ensured that the publicity materials and messages do not contain any gender bias or gender inequality. Furthermore, various channels have been used so that the publicity programmes can be more effectively accessed by women.
- (c) **Services provided to Victims of Domestic Violence and Review of the Domestic Violence Ordinance** – LWB and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) have applied the Checklist in their review of services provided to victims of domestic violence and the Domestic Violence Ordinance. As a result, improvements have been made, among others, to enhance the shelter service for victims of domestic violence such that boys over the age of 12 can be admitted to shelter homes together with their mothers where necessary. SWD and the Police have also strengthened training for frontline social workers, police officers and other relevant professionals responsible for handling domestic violence cases to enhance their gender awareness and sensitivity.
- (d) **Provision of Public Facilities and Design of Facilities in Buildings** – the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), having considered that women usually require longer time than men in using toilets, has increased the water closet compartment ratio (female to male) from 1.5:1 to 2:1 since April 2004 in planning FEHD public toilet facilities. Furthermore, the Buildings Department (BD) issued a practice note in May 2005 seeking to increase the provision of sanitary fittings for females in shopping arcades, cinemas and places of public entertainment. These measures help alleviate the long queuing time for women for using such facilities.
- (e) **Publicity Programme on Electricity and Gas Safety** – the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) has applied the Checklist in devising its publicity programme on electricity and

gas safety. For example, in conducting surveys on household electrical and gas safety, EMSD has collected sex-disaggregated data such that they can monitor the safety knowledge of both genders and devise their publicity strategy accordingly. Noting that many end-users are females, it has made use of different channels, such as posting and distributing publicity materials at busy public locations and public transportation systems, and TV programmes targetted at female audience etc, to reach out to females more effectively.

- (f) **Procurement of uniforms and accoutrements for frontline officers** – the Police Force has applied the gender mainstreaming concept in the procurement of uniform and accoutrements for officers. Both female and male police officers have been consulted. Having regard to the differences in the body shape of male and female and the feedback received, the Force have made suitable improvements to the materials and design of uniform and accoutrements, e.g. improving the design of bullet-proof vest and procuring pistols with handles of different sizes to suit the needs of different officers. These would not only help enhance the safety of frontline police officers, but would also help improve the overall operational effectiveness of the Police Force.

Indeed, in addition to the Police Force, the Customs and Excise Department, the Immigration Department and the Fire Services Department have likewise adopted the gender mainstreaming concept in the procurement of uniform and accoutrements for their officers. Similar positive impact has been observed.

- (g) **Central Fund for Personal Computer** – SWD has applied the Checklist in the operation of the Fund. It continues to ensure that all applicants with disabilities, both female and male, are treated equally in the vetting process. It has also promoted the Fund through the local press and invitations to non-governmental organisations, thus more effectively reaching out to the target groups, including women with disabilities. With these efforts, the ratio of female successful applicants has increased considerably from 26.3% in 2003 to 50.0% in 2008.
- (h) **Leisure and Cultural Facilities** – the Leisure and Cultural Services Department has improved the leisure and cultural facilities under its management to meet the needs of customers of both genders. For example, family changing rooms are now provided at 31 public swimming pools. In the coming three years, family changing rooms will be provided in four other existing swimming pools and seven more newly-built swimming pools. In addition, breast-feeding rooms have been provided in 21 leisure and cultural venues. Breast-feeding rooms will also be provided in 20 newly

built leisure and cultural venues, as well as in nine existing venues being renovated within the coming three years.

- (i) **Vocational training for adult offenders** – the Correctional Services Department (CSD) has since June 2006 introduced full-time technical and commercial vocational training courses for local adult offenders. As a pilot, the training was first provided to male adult offenders and it has been extended to female adult offenders since February 2008. In developing the training programme, CSD takes into consideration the needs of different genders. Surveys are conducted to gauge the vocational needs and preference for vocational training of both female and male offenders; job market data of the respective gender is used as the basis for designing training courses; and the effectiveness of the training courses provided for female and male offenders are separately evaluated.
- (j) **First Aid Services** – the Auxiliary Medical Services (AMS) have since 2005 used curtains when treating injured persons to enhance patients' privacy. Furthermore, every first-aid team would have at least one female member such that patients would, as far as practicable, be examined and treated by AMS members of the same gender during normal first-aid administration.
- (k) **Operational Duties of Immigration Department** – the Immigration Department has adopted the gender mainstreaming concept in deploying staff for escort and search duties. They will ensure that persons involved in the relevant cases are handled only by officers of the same gender. For field operations, where persons of both genders might be involved, operation teams with both male and female officers are deployed to carry out their duties.
- (l) **Tamar Development Project** – the Tamar Development Project comprises the Central Government Complex, the Legislative Council Complex and an open space. The project will have regard to the gender mainstreaming concept and strive to cater for the different needs of female and male users as far as practicable. For example, breast-feeding facilities will be provided; improvement to the design of layout will be considered having regard to needs of users of different genders; and suitable construction materials (e.g. non-reflecting flooring materials) will be considered to cater for the concern of female users.
- (m) **HIV Prevention Programme** – the Department of Health (DH) acknowledged the needs and perspectives of women when developing strategies for the prevention of HIV / AIDS. Before drawing up the "Recommended HIV / AIDS Strategy 2007-2011", a Community Assessment and Evaluation exercise was conducted to

seek feedback and comments on key issues regarding HIV prevention from several sectoral groups key to HIV prevention and care, including women and children as well as female sex workers and their clients. DH had also exchanged views on the subject with relevant stakeholders, including the WoC and women's groups. Moreover, the publicity and information materials produced and services delivered to clients are gender sensitive. DH will continue to adopt the principle of gender mainstreaming in the prevention, control and care of HIV / AIDS.

- (n) **Breastfeeding Promotion and Provision of More Babycare Facilities in Government Buildings and Public Areas** – the Food and Health Bureau embarked on a new initiative in 2008 by inviting the Architectural Services Department, DH, Government Property Agency, BD and Housing Department to formulate the Advisory Guidelines on Babycare Facilities to encourage the incorporation of desirable babycare facilities in government buildings and public areas. The Guidelines were drawn up taking into account the needs and perspectives of both sexes. It includes, for example, a logo using a figure of neutral sex (instead of a woman figure) to allow entry of both males and females into the babycare room. BD will also issue the Guidelines to the private sector for reference.

6. Taking into account the experience gained in applying the Checklist and in implementing the gender mainstreaming concept by the Government over the years, the WoC is revising the Checklist with the assistance of gender experts. The revised Checklist will provide better assistance to Government officers in applying gender mainstreaming in different policy and programme areas.

7. To facilitate promotion of gender mainstreaming in the Government, we have since 2003 established a network of gender focal points (GFPs) in all bureaux and departments. We currently have 72 GFPs, 64 of them are officers at directorate level. The GFPs serve as the resource person for their respective bureau and department and as the liaison points in implementing gender mainstreaming. They also assist in raising awareness and understanding of gender related issues of the officers in their respective organisations. We meet with the GFPs from time to time and maintain with them regular contact. On their advice, we have produced an information leaflet on gender mainstreaming and developed a web-portal on gender mainstreaming as a resource and experience-sharing platform to help intensify understanding of the concept for all civil servants in January 2009. The web-portal provides information on the concept and application of gender mainstreaming and hyperlinks to useful websites. It also sets out nearly 40 examples of different policy or programme areas that have applied gender mainstreaming which the GFPs have helped to collate. The web-portal has also been uploaded to the website of the LWB in July 2009 to enhance the public's understanding of the Administration's work in

promoting gender mainstreaming.

8. We will also continue with the on-going efforts to provide training to civil servants to raise their awareness of gender-related issues and the concept of gender mainstreaming. To date, over 4 200 civil servants of various grades and ranks have attended various classroom gender-related training. A training workshop for the GFPs themselves was also organised in early 2009. We have also collaborated with other bureaux and departments to arrange tailor-made programmes for their staff. Efforts on this front will continue.

9. To promote gender mainstreaming in the community, WoC has established a GFP Network in District Councils (DC)s in late 2008. Each of the 18 DCs has now designated a Member as the GFP to facilitate communication and collaboration between DCs and WoC. Since the establishment of GFP network in the DCs, WoC has visited eight DCs. Feedback from the relevant DCs is positive. They undertake to support worthy projects conducive to the development of women and their well-being in their respective districts where appropriate. Yau Tsim Mong DC has established a dedicated working group on women's affairs. Tsuen Wan DC and Islands DC have also allocated dedicated resources to organise gender-related activities. We will support WoC in working closely with the DC GFPs in promoting the incorporation of gender perspectives in district projects and activities. We will also continue our efforts in sharing the Administration's experience in implementing gender mainstreaming with DCs and other stakeholders in the community.

Empowerment of Women

The Capacity Building Mileage Programme

10. Launched in March 2004, the Capacity Building Mileage Programme (CBMP) is a key initiative of WoC in empowering women. CBMP is implemented jointly by the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK), the Commercial Radio and nearly 80 partnering women's groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

11. 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 NGOs. The courses include subjects such as managing interpersonal relationships, finance management, health and other practical issues in daily life. Since its launch, it has encouraged women of different backgrounds and educational levels to pursue life-long learning and self-development. Up to July 2009, the cumulative number of enrolments exceeded 32 000, not to mention the 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, enhanced confidence and knowledge in resolving problems in daily life, and sharpened communication skills which help improve

their interpersonal relationships in the family and employment contexts.

12. CBMP was first operated on a pilot basis initially. With its proven success in encouraging women's life-long learning, starting from March 2007, the Administration has provided funding to support the continued operation of CBMP, such that the CBMP course fee has been set at a relatively low level to provide affordable learning opportunities for women. In 2009-2010, the Administration will allocate \$20 million in the coming three years to expand the CBMP programme and provide fee remissions to women with financial difficulty so as to encourage more women to pursue continuous learning and self-development.

Women's Safety

13. The Administration is committed to combating domestic violence and spares no effort in strengthening support for victims of domestic violence and families in need. In January 2006, WoC 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, including amending the Domestic Violence Ordinance to enhance the protection for victims of domestic violence, adopting an early intervention strategy, strengthening the direct services and support for victims and their families, improving the handling of domestic violence cases by the Police, developing batterer intervention programme for abusers, and stepping up publicity efforts. Different sectors in society have also played their parts and worked together to build community network and neighbourhood support.

14. WoC published a supplement to the report in August 2009 to take stock of developments and aspects that require continuous efforts. The Administration will continue to support WoC in implementing the multi-dimensional strategy in tackling domestic violence in partnership with all stakeholders.

Public Education

15. Over the past years, the Administration has worked closely with WoC to organise various public education programmes seeking to reduce gender prejudice and stereotype in society and raise public awareness of gender-related issues. These include organising open forums and seminars, producing three television drama series "Women with Dreams" on capacity building and empowerment of women, commissioning radio programmes to promote awareness of gender issues, producing announcements of public interest on television and radio and posters, as well as organising various types of competitions, and celebration events for the International Women's Day on 8 March every year.

16. In August 2009, we assisted WoC in organising its third large-scale conference entitled "Beyond Limits – Women in the 21st Century" to

review Hong Kong's implementation of the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Conference was well attended. It has provided a platform for representatives of women's groups, relevant NGOs, professional bodies, Government officers and students to discuss issues related to the development and well-being of women as well as exchange views on the future direction and strategies to further promote gender equality and the status of women in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government is due to submit its next periodic report as part of the China report on the implementation of CEDAW to the UN in September 2010. As the central mechanism in promoting the development and interests of women in Hong Kong, WoC will work in collaboration with the LWB in consulting women's groups on the draft outline of the report. We will consult the Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs on the draft outline in due course.

17. We also attach importance to the promotion of gender awareness in school education to reduce gender stereotyping of students in their early stages of life and to make a sustainable impact. In October 2008, we supported WoC in organising a debate competition on gender issues for secondary and tertiary students to generate interest, awareness and more thorough understanding of various gender issues among the students. To enhance students' gender sensitivity and concerns to gender issues, we are now working with WoC in planning a new public education initiative targetting students. The new initiative will be launched later in the year.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
October 2009

**Policy and Programme Areas that have applied
the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist**

| Policy/Programme Areas | Bureau/Department |
|---|---|
| <u>2002-03</u> | |
| 1. Health Care Reform | Food and Health Bureau ¹ |
| 2. Enhanced Home and Community Care Services for the Elders | Labour and Welfare Bureau ² and Social Welfare Department |
| 3. Family Education Services | Social Welfare Department |
| 4. Secondary School Places Allocation | Education Bureau ³ |
| 5. District Council Reviews | Home Affairs Bureau and Home Affairs Department |
| <u>2003-04</u> | |
| 6. IT Education in the Community | Commerce and Economic Development Bureau ⁴ , Office of Government Chief Information Officer, Home Affairs Department and Social Welfare Department |
| 7. Review of the Appointment Policy of Advisory and Statutory Bodies | Home Affairs Bureau |
| 8. Design of Facilities in Public Buildings | Architectural Services Department |
| <u>2004-05</u> | |
| 9. Review of Building (Standards of Sanitary Fitments, Plumbing, Drainage Works and Latrines) Regulations – Review on Provision of Sanitary Fitments for Female | Development Bureau ⁵ and Buildings Department |
| 10. Provision of Public Toilets | Food and Environmental Hygiene Department |

¹ Formerly Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

² Formerly Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

³ Formerly Education Department and Education and Manpower Bureau

⁴ Formerly Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau

⁵ Formerly Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau

| Policy/Programme Areas | Bureau/Department |
|--|---|
| 11. Major Publicity Campaigns and Minor Publicity Programmes | Information Services Department |
| 12. Review of Composition of Advisory Committees by Office of the Telecommunications Authority | Office of the Telecommunications Authority |
| 13. Consumer Education Programmes | As above |
| 14. Publicity Programme on Electricity and Gas Safety | Electrical and Mechanical Services Department |
| <u>2005-06</u> | |
| 15. 2006 Population Bi-census | Census and Statistics Department |
| 16. Comprehensive Child Development Service for Children | Labour and Welfare Bureau ⁶ , Education Bureau ⁷ , Department of Health, Social Welfare Department and Hospital Authority |
| 17. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Community Support Project | Labour and Welfare Bureau ⁸ and Social Welfare Department |
| 18. Provision of Infirmity Care Services in Non-hospital Setting | As above |
| 19. Combating Domestic Violence and Review of Domestic Violence Ordinance | As above |
| <u>2006-07</u> | |
| 20. District Administration: Enhancing the Role of District Councils and District Officers | Home Affairs Department |
| 21. Community Rehabilitation Day Services | Social Welfare Department |
| 22. Review of Services for Victims of Sexual Violence | As above |

⁶ Formerly Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

⁷ Formerly Education and Manpower Bureau

⁸ Formerly Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

| Policy/Programme Areas | Bureau/Department |
|---|--|
| 23. Operation of the Multi-purpose Crisis and Support Centre | As above |
| 24. Publicity and Education Programme about the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinances | Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority |
| <u>2007-08</u> | |
| 25. Qualification Framework | Education Bureau |
| 26. Manpower Development Scheme | Labour and Welfare Bureau and Employees Retraining Board |
| 27. HIV Prevention Programme | Department of Health |
| 28. Promotion of Breast-feeding and Provision of More Baby-care Facilities in Government Buildings and Public Areas | Food and Health Bureau |
| <u>2008-09</u> | |
| 29. Provision of Health Services for Women | Department of Health |
| 30. Provision of Market Facilities | Food and Environmental Hygiene Department |