

**For Discussion
on 21 October 2011**

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

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

Purpose

The Chief Executive delivered his 2011-12 Policy Address on 12 October 2011. 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.

2011-12 Policy Address and Policy Agenda

2. In 2011-12, 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, i.e. 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 taking into account the needs and perspectives of both genders 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 over 40 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. Examples of the programmes that have applied the Checklist or the gender mainstreaming concept include —

- (a) **Services provided to Victims of Domestic Violence and Review of the former 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. 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 Hong Kong Police Force (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.

In June 2010, SWD launched the Victim Support Programme for Victims of Family Violence to strengthen support for victims of spouse battering and child abuse. In designing the Programme, SWD and the operating non-governmental organisation (NGO) concerned have applied the Checklist and paid due regard to the needs of victims from the gender perspective. For example, staff / volunteers of the same gender are assigned to provide assistance to victims as appropriate. Victims will be advised of the special measures available at court upon applications including the use of screens to shield witnesses and the use of two-way closed circuit television if necessary. Gender-related training is also provided to the staff / volunteers to enhance their gender sensitivity and awareness.

- (b) **Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (WITS) Scheme** – the WITS Scheme aims at helping employed members of low-income households reduce the burden of home-to-work travelling expenses, and encouraging them to stay in employment. In formulating the eligibility criteria of the WITS Scheme, LWB has thoroughly considered the perspectives and needs of both genders. By providing half-rate subsidy to those who work for less than 72 hours but at least 36 hours per month, the Scheme is able to benefit women working part-time.
- (c) **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.

The provision of male and female sanitary fittings in shopping arcades, cinemas and places of public entertainment is based on the assessed number of male and female users of the premises. The Buildings Department (BD) promulgated the “Practice Note for

Authorised Persons and Registered Structural Engineers” (Practice Note) on these premises in May 2005. The Practice Note contained a recommended guideline raising the ratio of female to male users for shopping arcades, cinemas and places of public entertainment from the statutory 1:1 to 1.25:1, thereby raising the level of provision for female sanitary facilities. Having regard to the views of various stakeholders and the standards of provision for male and female sanitary facilities in different countries, BD intends to further enhance the proportion of female sanitary facilities in shopping arcades, cinemas and places of public entertainment, in order to provide greater convenience for female users.

Separately, to ensure that the needs and perspectives of both genders can be better taken care of in the design of public buildings and facilities in future, the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) will apply the Checklist in reviewing its relevant guidelines on project administration.

- (d) **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 35 out of 39 public swimming pools. Such changing rooms will be provided in the remaining and newly built swimming pools as appropriate. In addition, breast-feeding rooms have been provided in 39 leisure and cultural venues. Breast-feeding rooms will also be provided in the remaining and newly built leisure and cultural venues as appropriate.
- (e) **Tamar Development Project** – the Tamar Development Project comprises the Central Government Complex, the Legislative Council Complex and an open space. As a result of applying the Checklist, the project will cater for the different needs of female and male users as far as practicable. For example, breast-feeding facilities will be provided and suitable construction materials (e.g. non-reflecting flooring materials) will be used to address the concern of female users.
- (f) **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 ArchSD, Department of Health (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. They include, for example, a logo using a gender-neutral figure (instead of a woman figure) to allow entry of both males and females into the babycare room. BD has also

issued the Guidelines to the private sector for reference.

- (g) **Government Publicity Programme** – the Information Services Department has applied the Checklist to its publicity programme. Bidders for the Government’s outsourcing work for the production of publicity material are required to ensure that all work submitted to the Government does not contain any gender bias or gender stereotyping.
- (h) **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 stereotyping.
- (i) **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 television programmes targeted at female audience etc, to reach out to females more effectively.
- (j) **Procurement of uniforms and accoutrements** – the Police 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 Police 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 also help improve the overall operational efficiency of the Police.

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

- (k) **Central Fund for Personal Computer** – SWD has applied the Checklist in the operation of the Fund. While it continues to ensure that all applicants with disabilities, both female and male, are treated equally in the vetting process, it has promoted the Fund through the local media and invitations to NGOs, thus allowing the information to reach out to the target groups, including women with disabilities, more effectively. With these efforts, the ratio of successful female applicants has increased from 26.3% in 2003 to 28.5% in 2010.
- (l) **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 training needs and preference 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.
- (m) **Development of Gender-specific Risks and Needs Programme for Women Offenders** – As the re-offending risks and criminogenic needs profile of female offenders are very different from that of male offenders, the Programme is developed to address the specific risks and needs of women offenders in order to help them adjust to their lives in prisons and change their offending behaviour. In designing the Programme, CSD has applied the Checklist to take into account women's needs and perspectives. In addition, training workshops on gender-related issues and appropriate treatment in implementation are arranged for staff.
- (n) **Promotion on Smoking Cessation** – the Tobacco Control Office of DH has launched a promotional campaign on smoking cessation with a gender focus. The campaign, to which the Checklist has been applied, includes the production of gender-specific pamphlet, as well as television / radio / public transport advertisements, etc.. Relevant publicity materials have also been distributed through NGOs which provide services to women. Since early 2010, the Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health has also conducted a Smoke-free Women Campaign with a view to preventing women from smoking and encouraging smoking cessation. A research study will be conducted to understand more about the issue of female smoking and to formulate effective prevention strategies.
- (o) **First Aid Services** – the Auxiliary Medical Services (AMS) have since 2005 used curtains when treating injured persons to enhance

the privacy of patients. 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.

- (p) **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 the subject is 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.
- (q) **HIV Prevention Programme** – 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 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.
- (r) **Village Representative Election** – the Home Affairs Department (HAD) has applied the Checklist in the publicity programmes concerning the village representative (VR) election 2011. To encourage eligible women, amongst others, to register as voters, HAD conducted a publicity campaign from May to July 2010 to promote the election. Apart from setting up a dedicated VR election website, advertising through newspapers, television and radio, and displaying banners, posters and notices at villages in the New Territories, HAD also advertised on television at hours that may attract more female viewers. In addition, HAD and its District Offices have issued appeal letters to rural committees and women's groups in the New Territories to encourage more women to participate in the VR election. HAD also issued an appeal letter to the Heung Yee Kuk to highlight the importance of equal opportunities for both genders.
- (s) **2011 Population Census** – the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) had applied the Checklist to the 2011 Population Census, which took place between 30 June and 2 August 2011 for the purpose of obtaining up-to-date benchmark information on the socio-economic characteristics of Hong Kong population. As a

result, the concept of gender mainstreaming was applied in the questionnaire design, publicity activities as well as the recruitment and training programmes for some 18 000 temporary field workers. For example, C&SD consulted various parties, including WoC, on the questionnaire content, and ensured that gender sensitive questions such as the interpretation of “household head” was presented in a gender-neutral way and that the relevant concepts were clearly explained to the respondents during the data collection process.

- (t) **Enhanced Support Services for Ethnic Minorities and New Arrivals from the Mainland** – HAD has consulted WoC on the enhanced support services for ethnic minorities (EMs) and new arrivals from the Mainland (NAs), including the District-based Integration Programme, Expectation Management Programme and the Ambassador Scheme.

A number of training courses under the District-based Integration Programme are tailor-made to suit the needs of female EMs and NAs, such as training on post-natal care, women health talks, workshops on family care, home safety classes and courses on communication skills, etc.. In order to encourage more EM women to attend the training courses, some of the courses are held at schools or temples as these are the places where EM women are more willing to show up or feel comfortable with. Besides, several women support groups were formed to enhance mutual support among EM and NA women and broaden their social network.

Upon WoC’s recommendation, HAD has included in the Terms of Quotation that bidders of the Expectation Management Programme are required to observe the Checklist in considering the different needs and perspectives of both genders in a more systematic way during the process of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme. HAD will also include such requirement in the Terms of Quotation for the Ambassador Scheme.

6. Taking into account the experience gained in applying the Checklist and in implementing the gender mainstreaming concept by the Government over the years, WoC has revised the Checklist in consultation with stakeholders, including women’s groups, gender focal points (GFPs) and academics specialised in gender issues. The revised Checklist, which has been promulgated since 2009-10, 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 GFPs in all bureaux and departments. We currently have 75 GFPs, and 62 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 regular contact with them. 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 subsequently uploaded to the website of LWB to enhance public understanding of the Administration's work in promoting gender mainstreaming.

8. We will also keep up our efforts to provide training to civil servants to raise their awareness of gender-related issues and the concept of gender mainstreaming. To date, over 5 200 civil servants of various grades and ranks have attended various classroom gender-related training. A training and exchange session for the GFPs themselves was also organised in June 2010. We have also collaborated with other bureaux and departments to arrange tailor-made programmes for their staff. To further enhance gender awareness of civil servants, we have, on the advice of GFPs, launched an online training programme on gender mainstreaming and gender-related issues in March 2010. 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 all DCs. Feedback from DCs has been 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, Shatin DC and Yuen Long DC have each established a dedicated working group on women's affairs. Tsuen Wan DC, Sai Kung DC, Shatin DC, Yau Tsim Mong DC and Southern DC have, over the year, allocated resources to organise women or gender-related activities. We will continue to 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, the Commercial

Radio and nearly 70 partnering women's groups and NGOs.

11. CBMP is a flexible learning programme tailored to the needs and interests of women. It is delivered through radio broadcasting and courses offered face-to-face and on the internet, supplemented by optional learning activities. The courses include subjects such as women leadership, managing interpersonal relationships, management of personal finance, 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. CBMP recorded a cumulative enrolment of over 50 000 since 2004. In addition, according to a survey conducted in the second quarter of 2011, about 1.4 million people had listened to the radio programme in the preceding year of the survey. Feedback from students is that they have benefited from the programme in terms of increased interests in learning, enhanced confidence and knowledge in problem solving in daily life, and sharpened communication skills which help improve their interpersonal relationships in the family and employment setting.

12. CBMP operated on a pilot basis initially. With its proven success in encouraging women's life-long learning, the Administration, starting from March 2007, 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 2009-10, the Administration allocated \$20 million to expand the CBMP programme and provide fee remissions to women with financial difficulty. As a result, the bursary scheme of CBMP has been expanded such that in addition to recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, women from low-income families can also benefit from the scheme. About 1 000 bursary applications have been approved since the introduction of the new bursary scheme in November 2009. Starting from 2012-13, the Government will provide an annual funding of around \$8 million to turn CBMP into a recurrent project. Part of the funding will be allocated to support NGOs in launching courses in English and Putonghua, with a view to facilitating EM and NA women to join CBMP.

Women's Participation in Advisory and Statutory Bodies

13. WoC has been working closely with the Home Affairs Bureau in promoting women's participation in advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs). Taking into account the advice of WoC, the Administration had since 2004 set a gender benchmark of 25% as an initial working target for appointment to ASBs. After a review in early 2010 and on the advice of WoC, the Administration has increased the gender benchmark target for participation in ASBs from 25% to 30% with effect from June 2010. Bureaux and departments are encouraged to reach out, identify and cultivate women who are able and willing to contribute to the work of ASBs. In addition to issuing letters to women's associations and professional institutions, WoC also held meetings with these organisations and invited them to encourage their female members to provide their curriculum vitae to the Central Personality Index maintained by the Administration in order to

further enhance women's participation in ASBs.

Public Education

14. Over the past years, the Administration has worked closely with WoC to organise various public education programmes aimed at reducing gender prejudice and stereotype in society and raising public awareness of gender-related issues. Such programmes include open forums and seminars, television series on capacity building and empowerment of women, radio programmes to promote awareness of gender issues, announcements of public interest on television and radio and posters, as well as various types of competitions, and celebration events for the International Women's Day on 8 March every year.

15. In early 2011, we assisted WoC in producing an informative 5-minute TV series on gender issues. A half-hour TV drama series to portray the common experience of Hong Kong women in the 21st century will also be produced and launched in October 2011. Each episode will describe the situation of women in a particular age group and the common issues and challenges they face with the aim of raising public awareness of gender issues.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

17. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has been extended to Hong Kong since October 1996. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government will provide an update on the administrative, legal and other measures taken to implement the Convention in its third report under CEDAW. It forms part of the combined seventh and eighth report of the People's Republic of China under the Convention.

18. Between 14 June and 31 July, we conducted a public consultation on the draft outline of the report. WoC conducted a public consultation session on 30 June 2010 for interested parties to express their views. The outline was also discussed at the LegCo Panel on Constitutional Affairs on 19 July 2010 and interested parties were invited to present their views at the meeting.. The views have been carefully considered and suitably incorporated into the report of the HKSAR, which will be published for dissemination to the public after the publication by the UN on its website.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
October 2011

**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
23. Operation of the Multi-purpose Crisis and Support Centre	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
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
<u>2009-10</u>	
31. Victim Support Programme for Victims of Family Violence	Social Welfare Department
32. Village Representative Elections	Home Affairs Department
33. Review of the Relevant Guidelines on Project Administration	Architectural Services Department
34. Procurement and Design of Uniforms	Fire Services Department
<u>2010-11</u>	
35. Promotion on Smoking Cessation	Department of Health
36. Pilot Scheme for a Public Access Defibrillators Programme at Environmental Protection Department Premises	Environmental Protection Department
37. Development of Gender-specific Risks and Needs Programme for Women Offenders	Correctional Services Department
38. Promotion on Intellectual Property Rights	Intellectual Property Department
39. Scheduling of Area Traffic Control Centre	

Policy/Programme Areas	Bureau/Department
Duty Roster	Transport Department
<u>2011-12</u>	
40. Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme	Labour and Welfare Bureau
41. 2011 Population Census	Census and Statistics Department
42. Travel Characteristic Survey 2011	Transport Department
43. Enhanced Support Services for Ethnic Minorities and New Arrivals from the Mainland	Home Affairs Department