

WOMEN'S COMMISSION
Proposed Modus Operandi of the Women's Commission

INTRODUCTION

This paper invites Members to give their views on the proposed modus operandi of the Women's Commission.

BACKGROUND

2. To promote the well-being and interests of women in Hong Kong, the Chief Secretary for Administration announced in May 2000, the decision to establish a Women's Commission. The Commission was formally set up on 15 January 2001. To prepare for the setting up of the Commission, a Focus Group discussion was held on 8 July 2000, which was attended by 120 participants from over 50 women's groups and agencies. The composition, structure, functions and some aspects of the modus operandi of the Commission were discussed. Subsequently, the Secretariat has received a number of submissions.

MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

Frequency

3. In considering the meeting arrangements for the Commission, one important element that needs to be decided is how frequently should the Commission meet. Having taken into account the possible future workload of the Commission as well as the time required to prepare for meetings (and following up on the decisions of the Commission), we propose that the Commission should meet once every two months. The same practice is adopted by the Commission on Youth and the Elderly Commission. If the situation warrants, it would be possible for the Commission to meet more frequently.

Language

4. As regards the preparation of documents for use at meetings of the Commission, we suggest that papers and notes of meetings should be prepared in English. This will allow for speedier production time. We understand that all Members of the Commission can read English without difficulty, and the Secretariat has informally consulted Members on this aspect and the response has been positive. However, papers will need to be translated into Chinese in due course for uploading onto the web-site. This will be done as soon as practicable. As for communication at Commission meetings, we propose both English and Cantonese should be allowed. The Secretariat will arrange for simultaneous interpretation, when necessary.

Support

5. Executive support to the Women's Commission will be provided by the Women's Division of the Health & Welfare Bureau. The structure of the Division is set out in the Legislative Council Establishment Subcommittee paper at [Annex A](#).

COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

6. In view of the role of the Women's Commission as a central mechanism on women's issues and the need to develop and maintain a close relationship with local women's groups, services agencies as well as the public, we propose that all interested parties should be kept regularly informed of the work of the Women's Commission.

Press Briefings / Internet Documentation

7. Taking into consideration the importance of keeping the public abreast of the Commission's work, the need to keep some issues confidential at an early stage, the need to maintain an atmosphere that encourages free discussion and the exchange of views at Commission meetings, as well as the practices of other existing Commissions, we suggest that a press briefing should be held after each Commission meeting at which, the Chairperson will brief the media accompanied by a Government official. Press releases could be issued after Commission meetings as circumstances require. The agenda of the meetings and Commission papers that are not confidential in nature,

should be made available to the public (e.g. by uploading them onto the internet). However, the record of meetings of the Commission should be restricted to Members.

Focus Group Meetings and Educational and Promotional Activities

8. With a view to broadening and strengthening liaison between the Commission and local women's groups in the community, we see merit in the Commission organising regular liaison activities. The first Focus Group meeting held in July 2000 was received very enthusiastically. We propose therefore that similar activities should be organised in the future (e.g. two to three times a year). Members may also wish to consider visiting service agencies which provide services for women.

9. In order to gradually change pre-conceived ideas about the role of women and enhance community awareness on gender-related issues, it will be necessary for the Commission to organise gender sensitive educational and promotional activities, e.g. seminars and publicity programmes. This will be covered in more detail in WoC paper No. 02/01 on "Development of an Action Plan for 2001-02".

Research

10. To have a better understanding on specific women's issues and their needs, it will be useful to commission more in-depth studies and research. This will result in more effective identification of women's needs. Members may wish to comment on this approach.

Formation of Sub-Committees

11. Members will be aware that it is usual for government advisory and statutory bodies to establish sub-committees / ad hoc committees / working groups by co-opting some non-members to work on specific issues, sometimes on an ad-hoc basis. Such an arrangement allows the relevant groups and bodies to tap into more talent in the community, and provide sharper focus on specific issues, especially when experts from relevant fields are co-opted. Members may wish to comment on this approach.

Commission Logo

12. A specific logo for the Women's Commission can help strengthen and sharpen its image. The logo could be applied on a variety of occasions, e.g. publication of reports, production of publicity materials, and organization of activities to bring out the involvement of the Commission. The Secretariat has asked the Information Services Department (ISD) to assist in developing some preliminary designs and four are now attached at Annex B (not attached). Members' views are welcome.

Internet Homepage

13. A homepage of the Women's Commission (i.e. <http://www.women.gov.hk>) has been set up to serve as a focal point for disseminating information concerning the Commission electronically. The terms of reference and membership of the Commission have been put up on the site and links will be established between the site and webpages of other important women's groups and services agencies in Hong Kong. Public documents of concern to women will be uploaded / hyperlinked to this homepage.

ADVICE SOUGHT

14. Members are invited to consider and comment on the following proposals / suggestions :-

- (a) the Commission should meet once every two months;
- (b) the papers and notes of meetings of the Commission should be prepared in English;
- (c) meetings of the Commission should be conducted in both English and Cantonese;
- (d) press briefing should be held after each Commission meeting;
- (e) agenda of meeting and papers that are not confidential in nature should be made available to the public (e.g. by uploading them onto the internet);

- (f) regular liaison activities with local women's groups should be organised (e.g. two to three times a year);
- (g) visits to service agencies which provide services for women should be arranged;
- (h) studies, surveys and research should be conducted on specific women's issues and needs;
- (i) sub-committees should be set up in the Commission to work on specific issues; and
- (j) a logo should be designed for the Women's Commission.

Women's Commission Secretariat
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