

WOMEN'S COMMISSION
Secretary's Report

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents for Members' information:-

- (a) the remarks made by the Chief Executive at his Policy Address regarding safeguarding the rights of women in Hong Kong and related briefings held on the policy objectives as regards promoting women's well-being;
- (b) the activities undertaken by the Women's Commission since its fifth meeting;
- (c) the progress of the Thematic Household Survey commissioned by the Census and Statistics Department;
- (d) progress of organisation of gender-related training for civil servants;
- (e) selection of advertising agency for the conduct of the large scale media programme; and
- (f) office removal of the Women's Commission Secretariat.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S 2001 POLICY ADDRESS AND RELATED BRIEFINGS

2. The Chief Executive, in his Policy Address made on 10 October 2001, reaffirmed the role of the Women's Commission in safeguarding the rights and interests of women, and provision of support to help women realise full potential. In pursuing the policy objective to promote the well-being and interests of women in Hong Kong, the Bureau has committed to undertake a number of new initiatives, which are now set out in

the relevant Policy Objective Booklet, a copy of which has been circulated to Members as well as women's groups and service agencies. The Chief Executive also announced the establishment of a "Community Investment and Inclusion Fund" to encourage mutual concern and aid among people and promote community participation in district and cross-sector programmes. The Fund will support projects proposed by members of the community.

3. To explain in greater details the policy objectives and initiatives of the Bureau, the Secretary for Health Welfare (SHW) gave joint briefings to members of major committees and organisations under his purview as well as NGOs (including women's groups), respectively, on 12 October and 22 October 2001. All Members of the Women's Commission had been invited to the two briefings and 12 attended them

ACTIVITIES HELD SINCE THE LAST MEETING

Discussion with Women's Groups and Service Agencies on Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF)

4. Making use of the opportunity of SHW's briefing for NGOs on 22 October 2001, Members of the Women's Commission held group discussions with representatives of women's groups and service agencies to hear their views on the setting up of the CIIF, including the scope, eligibility criteria, vetting and operating mechanism as well as possible areas of co-operation. The response was very enthusiastic. There were 85 participants from 55 women's organisations and agencies attending the session ([summary notes](#) of the session can be downloaded from this site).

Work of Task Forces, Budget Co-ordinating Group and Organising Committee of Women's Commission Convention 2002

5. Members noted at the last meeting that a Budget Co-ordinating Group was being set up. The objective of the Co-ordinating Group is to support the Women's Commission in co-ordinating overall budget and resource requirements of each of the three identified priority areas of work, conventions and other activities identified by the Commission; and to develop guidelines for considering requests for sponsorship. The Co-ordinating Group is convened by Ms Diane Wilcoxson and the first meeting was held on 8 November 2001.

6. Since the last meeting, each of the three Task Forces has met twice. The Organising Committee of the Women's Commission Convention 2002 held its first meeting on 11 September 2001 and has held six more meetings since. Co-conveners of the three Task Forces, the Organising Committee on the Women's Commission Convention 2002, and the Budget Co-ordinating Group will give verbal reports on the progress of work at the coming meeting.

Visits to Local Women's Organisations

7. Since the fifth meeting of the Women's Commission, Members visited eight local women's groups/service organisations, i.e. Mother's Choice, Family Planning Association of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Council of Social Service, Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, St James' Settlement, Baptist Oi Kwan Social Services, Breakthrough and the Hong Kong Women Foundation. Members discussed issues concerning unwed mothers and the services provided for them, experience in promoting women health, collection of maintenance payment, employment, training and retraining of women, experiences in helping women in disadvantaged or difficult position, and parenting education.

8. During the visit to the Tung Wah Group of Hospital (Tung Wah), Members were briefed on the women-related services, including the well-women clinic service. It was agreed that there should be more exchanges of experience between Tung Wah and the Women's Commission on the operation of the well-women clinic and its model, and it would be good to explore the feasibility of integrating such service model with "Healthy City" concept advocated by Professor S H Lee. In this connection, a lunch meeting with Members of the Empowerment Task Force, representatives from Tung Wah and Professor Lee was held on 8 November 2001.

9. The Women's Commission has so far visited 34 local women's groups and service organisations (out of some 180 which we have established contact), most of which cater for the different needs of women on a territory-wide or cross-district basis. As the Commission has visited most of the territory-wide organisations already and in view of the large number of women's organisations that operate on a district or neighborhood level, it is

suggested for Members' consideration that future visits to local women's groups and agencies (probably starting from next year) should be conducted on a district-by-district basis. The Commission could meet various groups in one district to understand the specific issues of concern to women in that district as well as to have a better understanding of women's participation in local community. Subject to Members' views, we will work out the format of these visits in consultation with District Officers.

Meeting with Housing Department

10. A meeting was held on 5 October 2001 between the Commission and Housing Department to discuss housing issues that were of concern to women in Hong Kong. Housing allocation policies for families and women in distress, and the current policies and application requirements regarding conditional tenancy and compassionate rehousing were discussed. Having regard to the concerns and needs of women with marital problems, Members suggested, among others, that the Housing Department should look into the possibility of allowing joint tenancy to a public housing unit, and to widen the eligibility of conditional tenancy to cover women under separation.

Women's Commission Meeting the Media

11. At the fifth meeting of the Women's Commission, Members agreed that informal gatherings should be held with the media regularly to keep them posted of the work and latest development about the Commission. As follow up, a tea gathering was held in the afternoon of 28 September 2001 in the Furama Hotel. Seven Members of the Women's Commission and 17 members from the media (including Apple Daily, HK Commercial Daily, HK Daily News, Hong Kong Economic Journal, Hong Kong Economic Times, Ming Pao, Oriental Daily News, Sing Pao, Sing Tao Daily, South China Morning Post, The Sun, Tai Kung Pao, Wen Wei Po, TVB, Cable TV, Commercial Radio and Metro) attended. During the gathering, issues including gender mainstreaming, formation of co-operatives, quality parenting, parental leave, participation of women at government advisory boards and bodies, training and retraining of women, participation in volunteer work and legal issues pertaining to domestic and sexual violence were discussed. The event was covered in seven local newspapers.

Conference Organised by Equal Opportunities Commission on “Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value” (EPEV)

12. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) organised a conference on EPEV on 5 October 2001 in the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. The objective of the conference was to share practical experience in implementing EPEV. There were two presentations on the practice of EPEV in the private and the public sector. Over 200 participants attended, including some WoC Members and a secretariat staff of the Women's Commission. The EOC is currently conducting a consultancy study on this subject and the findings will be announced sometime next year.

THEMATIC HOUSEHOLD SURVEY – TIME USE SURVEY AND FACTORS HINDERING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY

13. At the last meeting, Members were informed that a Thematic Household Survey on time use and factors hindering women's participation in society would be conducted, and that the Census & Statistics Department (C&SD) were inviting tender proposals from market research companies to conduct the Survey. Members were also informed that they would be consulted on the draft questionnaire and the Secretariat would be represented in the selection process.

14. In this connection, Members may wish to note that having considered the past experience of the companies, the relevance of experience of key personnel, relevance of experience of gender experts and the proposed survey methodology, one of the companies has been chosen to conduct the Survey. As that company (as well as all other proposers) had not displayed an in-depth understanding of gender issues in its submission, a meeting was held on 8 October 2001 where the company was briefed by four Members of the Women's Commission on the key issues involved, i.e. the situation of homemakers, the role of women in the family, and the need to identify measures to promote women's participation in society. The company had been reminded to consult gender experts and knowledgeable professionals in designing the survey. The draft questionnaire to be used at the survey is being prepared and will be circulated to members for comments once available. It is now expected that fieldwork would be conducted in late November and December 2001. Members will be kept informed of the progress of the survey.

GENDER-RELATED TRAINING FOR CIVIL SERVANTS

15. At the third meeting of the Women's Commission held on 8 May 2001, Members were informed that gender sensitive training programmes would be organised to enhance gender awareness within the civil service, and that training programmes were being planned for Administrative Officers, Police Officers, and Social Workers. Members may wish to note that training courses have been held for some 70 staff of the Welfare Worker, Social Work Assistant and Social Work Officer grades on 17 and 24 September 2001. The courses were conducted by the Gender Research Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The response from participants has been positive. Participants generally found the courses useful and the materials covered were relevant to their work. Many considered the course contents interesting and the level reasonable. Two repeated workshops for the above grades are now being planned for January 2002.

16. Meanwhile, a half-day gender sensitive training programme would be offered to 26 Administrative Officers as part of their induction programme on 14 December 2001. Training for about 15 Police officers would be organised on 12 December 2001. Two training courses for police trainers (each provided for about 30 officers) are also being planned for early January 2002. In addition, gender sensitive training programmes for Information Officer and Executive Officer grades are also under preparation and will be offered next year.

SELECTION OF ADVERTISING COMPANY FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION AND PUBLICITY PROGRAMMES

17. The Public Education Task Force has taken action to appoint an advertising company to implement the various publicity and public education programmes. For details, please refer to Paper WoC 27/01 which will be discussed at the same meeting.

18. As there are likely to be many proposals from advertising firms, the Public Education Task Force **suggested** that after initial screening and shortlisting, the Women's Commission as a whole should hear the presentations of the advertising companies, which will be made on 20 November 2001, and select one company for the job.

OFFICE REMOVAL OF THE WOMEN'S COMMISSION

19. Members may wish to note that the Women's Commission Secretariat would be relocated to 20/F Murray Building on 23 November 2001. Members will be advised of the new contact telephone numbers of Secretariat staff separately.

ADVICE SOUGHT

20. Members are invited to:-

- (a) note the Chief Executive's remarks at his Policy Address regarding safeguarding the rights of women in Hong Kong and the related briefings held on the policy objective of promoting women's well-being (paragraphs 2 to 3);
- (b) note the activities undertaken by the Women's Commission since its fifth meeting (paragraphs 4 to 12);
- (c) consider the suggestions that future visits to local women's groups and agencies should be conducted on a district-by-district basis (para 9);
- (d) note the progress of the Thematic Household Survey commissioned by the C&SD (paragraphs 13 to 14);
- (e) note the progress of organisation of gender-related training for civil servants (paragraphs 15 to 16);
- (f) to consider the suggestion that Women's Commission as a whole should hear the presentations of the advertising companies and select one company for the publicity and public education campaign (paragraphs 17 to 18); and
- (g) to note the office removal plan of the Women's Commission Secretariat (para 19).

Women's Commission Secretariat
5 November 2001