

WOMEN'S COMMISSION
Gender Mainstreaming Strategy of Women's Commission

PURPOSE

This paper aims to:-

- (a) present for Members' consideration a framework of the gender mainstreaming strategy as developed by the Gender Mainstreaming Task Force; and
- (b) seek Members' views on and endorsement of the proposed framework and recommendations.

BACKGROUND

2. The Women's Commission held a special session on 12 June 2001 to discuss two of the three identified priority areas of work, i.e. gender mainstreaming and public education. In the area of gender mainstreaming, Members agreed that the Commission should develop a tool to facilitate gender sensitive analysis and approach to policy making within the Government. It was further decided that the Commission should map out a strategy and plan on how to involve government departments, women's groups and relevant organizations in the development and implementation of the proposed strategy. In view of the extent of work involved, the Commission agreed that a Gender Mainstreaming Task Force should be set up to take forward the matter.

3. The Gender Mainstreaming Task Force was set up in July 2001. Its terms of reference, as adopted by the Commission at its meeting on 10 July 2002, is "to take on specific tasks from time to time related to gender sensitive policy making as requested by the Women's Commission, including the development of a checklist of questions to enable gender perspectives to be

suitably taken into account by the Government during policy and legislation review and formulation”. The Task Force has so far held 11 meetings as well as a number of discussion sessions with Government departments and non-governmental organizations.

FRAMEWORK OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING STRATEGY

4. Gender mainstreaming is the integration of gender perspectives in legislation, public policies and programmes. It makes women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all legislation, public policies, and programmes. Through such gender sensitive decision making processes, gender mainstreaming ensures that women and men have equitable access to, and benefit from, society’s resources and opportunities, with the aim of achieving women’s advancement and gender equality.

5. It is the goal of the Task Force to promote gender mainstreaming within the whole Administration. Drawing reference from overseas gender mainstreaming experiences, e.g. Canada, United Kingdom and Sweden, the Gender Mainstreaming Task Force considers that the gender mainstreaming initiative of the Women’s Commission should adopt the following approaches and methods:-

1) Development of an Analytical Tool

6. The Task Force has produced a gender mainstreaming Checklist as an analytical tool to assist government officials to conduct gender mainstreaming and evaluate the gender impact of public policy, programme and legislation throughout the stages of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. At present, the Task Force is pilot testing the gender mainstreaming Checklist on five policy areas, namely “District Council Review”, “Enhanced Home and Community Care Services” for the elderly, “Family Education Programme”, “Health Care Reform” and “Secondary School Places Allocation System”. The pilot test will help the Task Force in assessing the applicability and usefulness of the Checklist.

7. For the current gender mainstreaming pilot test, the Task Force has set up a small resource team to support the participating bureaux and departments. Working sessions are being held to assist the latter during the process. Evaluation of the outcome of the pilot test will be conducted in August 2002. With reference to the feedback received, the Checklist would then be further refined.

II) Capacity Building of Civil Servants

8. To facilitate government officials to adopt gender mainstreaming in the long run, the Task Force considers it important for relevant training to be provided to civil servants to sensitive them on the subject. Indeed, it has been shown at the pilot test that the usefulness of the Checklist in assisting the government officials to consider gender perspectives during policy and programme formulation and implementation has a strong relationship with their level of sensitivity towards gender issues. Hence, capacity building of civil servants is a critical component in the gender mainstreaming strategy.

9. Tertiary institutions are now approached for conducting gender-related training. Such are now provided to staff of Social Welfare Department, Administrative Officers, Station Sergeants, Inspectors and Superintendents of the Police Force, and staff of Education Department. Plans are in hand to provide training to staff of Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Executive Officers and Information Officers. To facilitate the gender mainstreaming pilot test, those grades involved in the pilot test will be offered training as well.

10. Currently, all the UGC-funded institutions (except for HKIEd) are invited to conduct gender-related training programmes. Non-governmental organizations including Rain Lily, Hong Kong Federation of Women Centres, Hong Kong Single Parents Association, Harmony House, and Action for Reachout have been invited to participate in some of the courses. The Task Force supports this approach and suggests to invite those officials who have taken part in the pilot test to take part in these courses so that they could share their experience in the gender mainstreaming exercise with course participants.

11. In connection with the above, Members consider it important that, in the long run, “gender studies” should be embedded in different training programmes offered within the civil service. To maximize the number of civil servants receiving gender-related training, as well as to mainstream civil servant training courses, the Task Force **recommends**:-

- (a) provision of training to “trainers” within the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI);
- (b) approaching CSTDI to conduct repeated sessions of gender-related training while the Women’s Division would focus on initiating new programmes;
- (c) development of training kit(s) (including teaching materials, teacher’s manual and student’s manual etc.) for training in the future;
- (d) development of web-based training materials for putting up at the government cyber-learning centre; and
- (e) commissioning tertiary institution(s) to design some “gender studies” modules for embedment in course materials.

III) Development of a Support Network within the Administration

12. In order for the Administration to take into account fully gender perspectives, the Task Force considers it necessary to develop an effective support network, and provide the necessary assistance and advice. The Task Force **recommends** the following possible means to be further explored:-

- (a) designating certain officers at bureaux / departments as gender focal points, and they should be supported by relevant training;
- (b) building up a gender expert pool with members of local academia and local women leaders in the community. A list of gender experts for gender mainstreaming may also be compiled for the use of the Administration; and
- (c) developing a gender mainstreaming research resource centre, which could be virtual, as well as initiating relevant research.

IV) Collection of Sex-disaggregated Data

13. The Task Force notes that sex-disaggregated data are essential for the provision of a comprehensive picture of the women situation, which is fundamental for gender analysis, and hence a crucial part in conducting gender mainstreaming. It is noted that some bureaux or departments have not been collecting such data. To further roll out the gender mainstreaming initiative, the Task Force **recommends** that all bureaux and departments should be encouraged to collect sex-disaggregated data when gathering human data.

V) Research on Gender Mainstreaming

14. The Secretariat has conducted desktop research on gender mainstreaming in Canada, United Kingdom / Scotland, and Sweden to keep in view the gender mainstreaming initiatives undertaken by other countries, and that the tertiary institutions as well as some non-governmental organizations have also carried out research on this aspect. As resources for supporting gender mainstreaming initiatives, the Task Force **recommends** setting up a list of gender-related research being conducted by the tertiary institutions and NGOs in Hong Kong, possibly with links, with a long term view of this being a database. Further studies on gender mainstreaming will be needed to increase the knowledge base as well. The Task Force therefore considers it desirable to conduct a survey related to gender mainstreaming once a year.

VI) Consultation with NGOs and Academia on Gender Mainstreaming

15. The Task Force has been working together with NGOs in pursuing gender mainstreaming. The Task Force met NGOs and academia to collect their views on the gender mainstreaming strategy, the Checklist, as well as the pilot test on 2 February 2002. A meeting was also held with the Association for the Advancement of Feminism in March 2002 to further discuss gender mainstreaming. It is noted that the NGOs are enthusiastic in establishing partnership and collaboration with the Commission, and Members agreed that NGOs could have a useful role to play in the area of gender mainstreaming by raising gender awareness among the public, being involved in the policy design stage and identifying indicators for measuring the impact of gender mainstreaming. Members **recommend** that the Commission

collaborates with NGOs in this area (e.g. in the form of information sharing, consultation etc.) on the basis of the framework to be developed by the Working Group on Collaboration.

VII) Public Education on Gender Mainstreaming

16. Public education on gender mainstreaming would enhance public support for the gender mainstreaming initiatives which could serve as a driving force. According to the findings of the effectiveness survey for the publicity and public education campaign, only more than half of the general public consider that the Government has taken into consideration the different needs of men and women (56%), their different difficulties (56.8%) and different situations (59.1%) when formulating policies. Nearly 80% of the people find gender mainstreaming necessary for the formulation of policies and legislation.

17. The Task Force **recommends** that a more targeted approach could be adopted in its PR and public education efforts, e.g. by focusing on certain groups of the community such as:-

- (a) opinion leaders;
- (b) members of other major advisory and statutory bodies;
- (c) important community groups which have influence on social values, such as Rotary Clubs and Lion Clubs;
- (d) middle managers; and
- (e) students at university level.

It is the long-term objective of the Task Force that gender mainstreaming should be adopted by the whole community, including NGO and private sectors. The public education activities being carried out by the Commission will help raise the level of understanding of gender mainstreaming among the public.

SECRETARIAT'S ADVICE

18. The Secretariat believes that the strategy proposed above is generally sound and appropriate. However, as the strategy encompasses many aspects of work involving various parties both inside and outside Government, the rolling out of the different components should be carefully worked out, timed and sequenced in order to achieve the best synergistic effect.

WAY FORWARD

19. The gender mainstreaming pilot test will be evaluated in August 2002. The gender mainstreaming Checklist will be further refined by taking into account the feedback received during the pilot test. The Task Force considers it desirable for the Commission to develop a systematic approach for rolling out the gender mainstreaming Checklist after the pilot test. In this connection, the Task Force will adopt the following approaches:-

- (a) incremental approach - to roll out gender mainstreaming to various policy areas on a step by step basis;
- (b) “soft-selling” approach - to emphasize the enhanced effectiveness in implementing initiatives of the bureaux and departments; and
- (c) partnership approach - to assist different sections of the Administration in conducting gender mainstreaming.

The Task Force will further deliberate the roll-out plan of gender mainstreaming in due course.

20. The Task Force **recommends** that the participating bureaux and departments in this round of pilot test should be invited to test the applicability and usefulness of the revised Checklist, whereas the Task Force would appraise their returns and give comments. At a later stage, the Task Force would further identify several other policy areas for adopting the Checklist.

21. In practising gender mainstreaming, Task Force Members consider it necessary to develop an objective measurement to evaluate its effectiveness in assisting policy makers to design and adjust policy to achieve targets more precisely and effectively. Members therefore **recommend** that an evaluation mechanism be developed to measure the impact of gender mainstreaming, e.g. in enhancing public acceptance of policies, in better tailoring policies and programmes to meet the needs of the public. It is considered that the academic and NGO sectors should be involved in this exercise and a consultancy might be required to conduct an in-depth study on the subject.

ADVICE SOUGHT

22. Members are invited to:-

- (a) consider and endorse the preliminary framework of the gender mainstreaming strategy;
- (b) comment on and endorse the recommendations made by the Gender Mainstreaming Task Force (paragraphs 11-15 and 17); and
- (c) advise on the future plans in taking forward work of gender mainstreaming (paragraphs 19-21).

Women's Commission Secretariat
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