

WOMEN'S COMMISSION

Notes of the meeting held on 3 January 2024

Present:

Ms CHAN Yuen-han	(Chairperson)
Ms Shirley LAM	Permanent Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs (Vice-Chairperson)
Ms Melaine LEE	
Professor LUI Yu-hon	
Ms Winnie NG	
Mr Adrian TAM	
Mr Walter TSUI	
Dr Kitty WU	(Video conference)
Ms Mary HUEN	
Ms JIN Ling	
Ms LAM Wai-ling	
Ms LU Hai	
Mrs Katherine NGAN NG	
Ms Cindy PUN	
Professor SHAM Mai-har	
Dr SO Wing-yee	
Miss Sherry TSAI	
Mr Niki KWOK	Principal Assistant Secretary (Constitutional and Mainland Affairs)5/ Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
Ms Wendy CHAU	Assistant Director (Family & Child Welfare)/Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Absent with Mrs Jennifer CHENG
YU

Apologies: Ms Rita GURUNG
Ms Melissa PANG
Ms Ashley TSE
Ms Vivian WONG
Mrs Viola WONG HO

In attendance: Ms Joyce CHAN Principal Assistant Secretary (Home
Affairs)1/Home and Youth Affairs
Bureau (HYAB)(Secretary)
Mr Kelvin CHEUNG Assistant Secretary (Home
Affairs)(1)2/ HYAB
Mr Toby LEUNG Executive Officer (Home
Affairs)(1)1/ HYAB

For Agenda Item 2: Professor Linda LAM Professor/Department of Psychiatry,
Faculty of Medicine, The Chinese
University of Hong Kong (CUHK)
Mr Derek LEE Principal Assistant Secretary for
Health 3/ Health Bureau (HHB)

- 1.1 The Chairperson welcomed all Members and Ms Joyce CHAN, Principal Assistant Secretary of the HYAB, who recently joined the Women's Commission (WoC) Secretariat, to the meeting.

Agenda Item 1: Notes of Meeting for the Women's Commission Meeting on 2 August 2023 (WoC 17/23)

- 1.2 The Chairperson and Members confirmed the draft notes of the last meeting without any amendment.

Agenda Item 2: Hong Kong Mental Morbidity Survey for Older People (WoC 01/24)

- 2.1 Mr Derek LEE, Principal Assistant Secretary of the HHB, remarked that statistical data was an important tool for policy-making and the Government had already conducted three city-wide mental health surveys, including the present one in which the CUHK was commissioned in 2019 to study the mental health status of the Hong Kong

elderly population. The survey was completed in May 2023 and its results were announced in November of the same year.

2.2 Professor Linda LAM, Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine of the CUHK, elaborated on the details of the survey. She told Members that a total of about 4 800 elderly persons living in the community and residential care homes were invited to participate in the survey. The main objectives were to estimate the prevalence of dementia in the community and residential care homes, the correlation between dementia and the elderly's other physical conditions, diseases, living habits, etc., and the factors which were conducive to the mental well-being of the elderly.

2.3 Professor LAM pointed out the major findings and recommendations of the survey as follows:

- a) factors such as age, gender, heredity, educational level and physical conditions were closely related to dementia;
- b) with regard to dementia or emotional disorder, women had a higher morbidity rate than men;
- c) carers of elderly patients were mostly female, and there was need for improvement in the existing support for them; and
- d) measures such as the establishment of a health promotion platform, the enhancement of early diagnosis and care support as well as the conduct of assessment for high-risk groups were recommended to improve elderly health and alleviate carers' stress.

2.4 Members' views and concerns in regards to the survey results were summarised below:

- a) a Member shared about the stress faced by carers whom he/she knew and concurred that more assistance and recognition should be given to them. In view of the fact that carers were predominantly women, the Member also enquired whether there were any corresponding support measures from the WoC;
- b) a Member pointed out that Hong Kong was facing problems in relation to an ageing population and a high proportion of women in the elderly population, the mental health issue of the elderly population may worsen in the future. The Member opined that the Government should pay more attention to the mental health of women. In this connection, the Member asked whether the Government would follow up on the issue in various ways such as promoting self-screening, enhancing diagnosis and introducing new drugs;

- c) a Member suggested conducting publicity campaigns in schools, enterprises and the community to educate people across age groups for a better understanding of mental health; and
- d) a Member enquired about the reasons for a higher prevalence of dementia and emotional disorders among females than males.

2.5 The consolidated response to Members' views and questions from the Health Bureau's (HHB) and Home and Youth Affairs Bureau's (HYAB) representatives and Professor LAM was as follows:

- a) Hong Kong was prepared to introduce new drugs for the treatment of dementia and there were also technological breakthroughs such as genetic testing for the diagnosis of dementia in recent years. However, it was relatively difficult to design a specific and accurate universal screening system at the community level. Therefore, targeted promotion and education on the prevention of dementia was recommended at this stage;
- b) the higher prevalence of dementia or emotional disorders among females than males in all age groups was probably due to the fact that females, having a stronger emotional expression ability, could better express their individual mental health problems during the survey. At the same time, the higher prevalence among females might also be related to the pressure brought by their dual roles in the family and at work;
- c) in collaboration with relevant government bureaux and departments, the HHB would proactively follow up on the results of the survey and fully utilise the data obtained therefrom to formulate policies and measures related to mental health. Subject to actual needs, the HHB might conduct follow-up surveys on elderly's mental health. The HHB had also launched the "18111 - Mental Health Support Hotline" to provide one-stop, round-the-clock support for people (including senior citizens) with emotional disturbances by offering immediate mental health support and referral services;
- d) it is suggested that relevant Government Breaux and Departments could brief members on the support measures for carers in its working groups; and
- e) the Chief Executive had proposed in his "2023 Policy Address" that the District Care Team members will be provided with mental health support training to assist in the early referral of persons in need in the local communities for support. The Home Affairs Department was discussing with the HHB on how to provide training to Care Teams in identifying persons in need for assistance and make

corresponding referral.

Agenda Item 3: The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address: Family and Women-Related Policy Initiatives of the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (WoC 02/24)

3.1 Ms Joyce CHAN, Principal Assistant Secretary of the HYAB, briefed Members on the HYAB's new initiatives in respect of family and women's development in the Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address as follows:

- a) setting up under the HYAB a dedicated Women Affairs Team and designating the post of Commissioner for Women Affairs to steer the work related to women's affairs;
- b) launching a one-stop family and women information portal to pool together information on family education, marriage, women's health, etc. and share legal information relating to family and women affairs;
- c) organising the first Family and Women Development Summit (the Summit) to collect views for formulating more focused measures to support women's development and promote family education;
- d) launching, through the Community Care Fund, a maintenance mediation pilot scheme to subsidise non-governmental organisations in providing mediation services on maintenance, so as to assist the parties concerned, including women victims of maintenance arrears, to resolve disputes through mediation; and
- e) launching a brand-new five-year Funding Scheme on the Promotion of Family Education by the HYAB and the Family Council in the latter half of 2024 to support non-profit-making community projects to promote family education.

3.2 Ms CHAN further said that the Government would continue to implement the following ongoing initiatives on family and women's development:

- a) regularising the Greater Bay Area Exchange Programme under the Women Empowerment Fund (WEF) in 2024-25 and introducing a new dedicated scheme to encourage women to participate in community services;
- b) promoting gender mainstreaming and facilitating women's participation in the work of advisory and statutory bodies of the Government; and
- c) working closely with the Family Council to assist government bureaux and departments in giving due consideration to the family perspective in their policy

formulation process, as well as organising programmes and activities relating to the promotion of family core values and a culture of loving families.

3.3 Members' views and concerns in regards to the agenda were summarised below:

- a) a Member enquired whether there is any time limit for women who were maintenance arrears to apply for the Maintenance Mediation Pilot Scheme;
- b) a Member enquired whether the newly designated Commissioner for Women Affairs would formulate a blueprint on family and women-related policies and whether inter-departmental collaboration would be involved in the process. The Member also wished to know whether the Government was collecting women-related data;
- c) a Member suggested that the Government should invite the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) and the women's federations of the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area to participate in the Summit);
- d) a Member opined that the Government's current initiatives on encouraging childbearing focused on the Newborn Baby Bonus of \$20,000, which was not adequate in solving the fertility problem. The Member suggested that since childbearing decisions were affected by factors such as healthcare, education and economic policies, a holistic policy formulated through inter-departmental collaboration would be more effective in encouraging childbearing. The Member also suggested that the Government should enhance relevant publicity strategies;
- e) a Member commented that the one-stop family and women information portal should facilitate grassroots women to understand relatively complicated legal information. The Member also suggested that information on encouraging childbearing could be included in the portal; and
- f) a Member pointed out that the Government of the previous term had earmarked \$20 billion for the purchase of premises for the provision of welfare facilities. However, inter-departmental collaboration and various technical difficulties would often be encountered during the process. The Member suggested the Government to make good use of the funds.

3.4 The consolidated response to Members' views and questions from the representatives of HYAB and Social Welfare Department was as follows:

- a) no time limit was set for application for the Maintenance Mediation Pilot Scheme;

- b) the Secretariat would collate women-related data and publish the “Hong Kong Women in Figures” on regular basis for general public’s and Members’ reference;
- c) the series of initiatives to encourage childbearing had been elevated to the Chief Secretary for Administration and Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration for better coordination to facilitate inter-departmental collaboration. The subsidy of \$20,000 for each newborn baby exemplified the Government’s concern for the fertility issue, but it was not the focus of the whole package of initiatives on encouraging childbearing. The Government will continue to introduce a series of measures, including the promotion of family education, After-School Care Programme so as to alleviate the burden of childbearing for parents and promote fertility;
- d) the HYAB had invited the ACWF to the Summit and maintained close liaison with it. Besides, the HYAB is conducting preparatory work for the launching of the one-stop family and women information portal. It will consult the relevant working group of WoC on the information to be provided on the portal; and
- e) the Government faced certain constraints in purchasing premises for providing welfare facilities as a result of various external factors such as the quality of the premise, location, price, statutory requirements, etc. Nevertheless, the Government would continue to make good use of the funds to purchase premises for providing welfare facilities in response to the community’s demand for welfare services.

Agenda Item 4: Progress Report of Working Groups of Women’s Commission (WoC 03/24) and Secretary’s Report (WoC 04/24)

(1) Working Group on Enabling Environment (WGEE)

4.1.1 To enhance the promotion of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to younger students, the Secretariat had appointed a service provider to organise school talks for promoting the CEDAW since September 2022. The related contract expired in July 2023. After reviewing the implementation and effectiveness of school talks, the WGEE decided that school talks for promoting the CEDAW should continue to be conducted for kindergarten and primary students. In November 2023, the Secretariat appointed the service provider to continue organising school talks for promoting the CEDAW in the 2023/24 school year. School talks for the 2023/24 school year were expected to commence in January 2024.

(2) Working Group on Collaboration and Promotion (WGCP)

4.2.1 The application for the WEF (Second Round) was closed on 20 November 2023. A total of 107 applications, including 89 applications for general projects and

18 applications for thematic projects, were received. The WGCP would vet the above applications at its meeting scheduled for 8 January 2024, and the application results were expected to be announced in early February 2024.

4.2.2 The Funding Scheme for Women's Development would come to an end upon completion of all approved projects. The Secretariat would continue to process the reimbursement applications for the approved projects.

(3) Working Group on Empowerment and Training (WGET)

4.3.1 The third programme year of the Capacity Building Mileage Programme in the new contract period covered the three semesters of November 2023, March 2024 and July 2024. The contract stipulated a minimum enrolment requirement of 6 000 participants for 2023-24 (i.e. an average minimum enrolment of approximately 2 000 participants per semester). As of November 2023, there were over 2 550 participants enrolled for the November semester.

4.3.2 At its meeting held on 20 November 2023, the WGET endorsed the proposal made by the Hong Kong Metropolitan University (HKMU) to introduce five new courses and their blueprints for the March 2024 semester, and adopted "Empower Love through Parenting" as the publicity theme of the semester. In response to the suggestions made by WGET members earlier, the HKMU would continue to raise public awareness about the CBMP and boost enrolment in accordance with three directions, namely (i) "develop course themes that better meet societal needs", (ii) "conduct more targeted publicity" and (iii) "enhance liaison with district organisations".

Agenda Item 5: Any Other Business

5.1 This was the last meeting before the change of term of the WoC. The Chairperson thanked all Members for their participation and wished that the three outgoing Members would continue to serve Hong Kong in different positions.

5.2 Ms Shirley LAM, the Permanent Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, expressed her appreciation to Members for their continuous support and assistance to the HYAB in promoting women's development. She hoped that Members would continue to cooperate on the work on women's affairs in the future.

5.3 There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

**Women's Commission Secretariat
May 2024**