

WOMEN'S COMMISSION
Notes of the 78th Meeting held on 5 February 2015

Present: Mrs Stella LAU (Chairperson)
Miss Annie TAM Permanent Secretary for
Labour and Welfare
(Vice-chairperson)

Ms Teresa AU
Ms Aruna GURUNG
Dr. Maggie KOONG
Ms Angelina KWAN
Ms Leona LAM
Dr. Trisha LEAHY
Ms Juan LEUNG
Ms Yolanda NG
Dr. Lawrence TANG
Mr. Philip TSAI
Ms Sandy WONG
Ms Catherine WONG
Ms WONG Shu-ming
Mr. Robert WONG
Ms Yvonne YEUNG
Ms Rabi YIM
Ms Carol YIP Director of Social Welfare

Absent with Professor Cecilia CHAN
Apologies: Professor Shirley HUNG
Mrs Miranda LEUNG
Ms WONG Siu-wah
Mr. DC CHEUNG

Principal Assistant
Secretary (Constitutional &
Mainland Affairs)5,
Constitutional & Mainland
Affairs Bureau

<u>In</u>	Ms Doris CHEUNG	Deputy Secretary (Welfare) 1
<u>attendance:</u>	Miss Fiona LI	PAS (Welfare)2
	Ms Winnie CHAN	AS (Welfare)2A (Secretary)
	Mr. Ricky CHENG	AS (Welfare)2B

	Mr. Syrus TSUI	AS (Welfare)2C
	Mr. SH LEUNG	RPO (Welfare)2
For Agenda	Mr LAM Kam Chuen,	Senior Statistician (Social)
Item 2	Kenneth	2, Census and Statistics Department
	Miss LAW Yu Ling	Statistician (Social Survey)
		1, Census and Statistics Department
	Dr Sam CHOY	Consultant, MOV Data Collection Center Limited

Item 1: 2015 Policy Address - Policy Initiatives Relating to Women's Development (WoC 01/15)

1.1 The Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare (PSLW) , with the aid of a powerpoint presentation, briefed Members on the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB)'s new and ongoing initiatives relevant to women as set out in the 2015 Policy Address, and highlighted those which were more directly related to women.

1.2 The Chairperson thanked PSLW for providing an overview of the key initiatives under the purview of LWB and those relating to women's development. She added that WoC had been playing an important role in tendering advice to the relevant Government Bureaux/Departments on issues related to women and a number of the initiatives mentioned in the 2015 Policy Address had been discussed and/or recommended by

WoC. WoC should continue to maintain its role as a central mechanism in offering advice to the Government at the policy level to promote the development and advancement of women.

1.3 PSLW said that women-related issues straddled various policy areas and WoC should continue to leverage on the existing efforts and resources in providing their inputs to the Government.

1.4 A Member said that the women's representation at the boards of the listing companies was not satisfactory. As the Government had recently announced raising the gender benchmark from 30% to 35% in making appointments to Government Advisory and Statutory Bodies (ASBs), she asked if WoC should also encourage women participation at the boards of the listing companies to help improve corporate governance.

1.5 PSLW said that the Chief Executive had accepted WoC's recommendation to increase the appointment rate of non-official women members to Government advisory and statutory boards, from 30% to 35%. This demonstrated the Government's commitment to encourage women participation

in public affairs.

1.6 Regarding child care services, a Member said that the demand had been very keen and it was necessary to tackle the issue by phases. As regards the recent violence case against Foreign Domestic Helpers (FDHs), she added that it would be important to introduce a code of practice to better regulate the operation of the employment agencies.

1.7 PSLW said that both long-term and short-term solutions were required for addressing the shortage of child care services. The Government would conduct a consultancy study in 2015-16 and this should help map out the long-term development of child care services. In the meantime, the Government would increase the provision of child care services and extend the service hours at aided child care centres and kindergarten-cum-child care centres in districts with high demand. To foster family support, the Government would also launch a pilot project to help grandparents become well-trained child carers in a home setting.

1.8 Turning to FDH employment agencies, PSLW said that the Labour Department was working on a code of practice. This would help regulate the trade and provide a frame of reference for the Court when adjudicating cases involving the employment agencies.

1.9 A Member appreciated the Government's efforts to meet the demand for child care services. In planning the medium to long-term solutions, consideration should also be given to the downward trend of the number of children in Hong Kong.

1.10 A Member said that to provide 5000 additional EHS places was a bold initiative but service providers might have difficulties delivering it due to the shortage of manpower in the child care sector. It would be important to explore through the consultancy study on child care services how women employment could be promoted while addressing the shortage of manpower in the child care sector. It would also be necessary to consider how services for children of different age brackets, say 0-2, 2-3 and 3-6 could be streamlined. She hoped that there would be further increases in the provision of long full-day child care places in addition to the 100 places to be

provided in 2017-18.

1.11 PSLW thanked Members for their views. She reassured Members that the Government would continue its efforts in working out both the long-term and short-term solutions to address issues concerning child care services.

Item 2: Findings of Time-use Survey (Part One: Women Employment) (WoC 02/15)

2.1 Mr Kenneth LAM, Senior Statistician (Social) 2 of the Census and Statistics Department (SS(S)2), briefed Members on the preliminary findings of Time-use Survey (Part One: Women Employment) vide powerpoint presentation.

2.2 In response to a Member's question on the timeframe for publishing the findings, SS(S)2 said that the analysis for the second part of the Time-use Survey concerning the time-use pattern was complicated given the large volume of data involved. The contractor was processing the data and would brief Members on the findings as soon as they were ready. It was expected that the announcement of the findings of the Survey (Parts One and Two) could be made around mid-2015.

2.3 In response to a Member's enquiry on the reasons why women aged 15 or above were included in the survey, SS(S)2 replied that this was to tie in with the existing labour force statistics. Legally speaking, the minimum age for a person to work in Hong Kong was 15.

2.4 A Member said that the findings would be useful for considering initiatives for encouraging women employment. She suggested that consideration be given to offering flexible working hours to contract staff in the Government Bureaux/Departments as a starting point. She added that consideration could also be given to encouraging women to start up their own business, with reference to the relevant support programmes for the youth for similar purpose.

2.5 PSLW said that the Civil Service Bureau as an employer had been conscientious in promoting family-friendly employment measures. In applying flexible working hours, there were practical considerations to address having regard to the high public expectation that public services should be made available during normal working hours and that the Government expenditure should be reduced to the minimum.

A balance had to be struck. The Labour Department had also been encouraging employers in the private sector to adopt different family-friendly employment measures, including flexible working hours if their circumstances permitted.

2.6 A Member said that considering a substantial amount of part-time workers were female and they were not protected under “continuous employment”, more public education on the protection and rights of part-time workers was necessary.

2.7 PSLW said that the definition of “continuous employment” had been discussed at the Labour Advisory Board (LAB) and views of the employers and the employees were divided. It was a complex issue which required further deliberation at LAB.

2.8 Dr Choy, Consultant of MOV Data Collection Center Limited, observed that women tended to quit their jobs at a relatively young age and the need for taking care of their children was quoted as the main reason by the highly-educated women for leaving the labour market. However, those women might not be willing to return to the labour market even if child

care services were provided.

2.9 A Member said that it was important to explore how to retain women in the labour market as they would not have a strong drive to return to the labour market once they had left. It would be a waste of manpower and education resources if they left the labour market at a young age.

2.10 Several Members echoed that it might be easier to retain women in the labour force than to encourage them to re-join the workforce after they had left the labour market for a few years.

2.11 PSLW said that there were a number of factors e.g. child-bearing age, choice of one's life plan, familial duties, etc. affecting women's decision to join or leave the workforce. Their wishes needed to be respected. The Government should help women to exercise their choices and realise their dreams.

2.12 A Member considered that women's choice of taking up household duties should be equally valued and appreciated, and those women who chose to stay at home and take up household duties should not be criticised. A Member added

that women who chose to leave the job market might be engaged in volunteer work and contributing to the community.

2.13 The Chairperson thanked C&SD for the presentation and Members for their views. She said that further discussions might be carried out at an appropriate juncture.

Item 3: Confirmation of Minutes of the 77th Meeting (WoC 22/14)

3.1 The minutes of the 77th meeting were confirmed without amendments.

Item 4: Verbal Report by Working Groups

4.1 The Meeting noted the verbal reports made by the co-convenors of respective working groups.

Item 5: Secretary's Report (WoC 03/15)

5.1 The Meeting noted the Secretary's Report.

Item 6: Any Other Business

6.1 There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

**Women's Commission Secretariat
April 2015**