

Hong Kong Women's Development Goals



婦女事務委員會
Women's Commission

December 2011

Chairperson's Message

Gender equality is an indicator of the progress of social development. While both genders appear to be equal in Hong Kong, hidden sex discrimination is still common, restricting the development of women.

Since the abolition of the mui tsai system in the 1930s up to the early 1970s, a number of legislations were enacted for the protection of women in respect of marriage, education, succession of estate and land, maternity, employment and taxation etc., enhancing substantially the status and interests of women. That said, impediments to further development of women still exist and full development of women's overall potential has yet to be realised. Most of our women still cannot enjoy full flexibility and diversity of choices in their lives.

Women constitute a major force for social advancement and economic development. Family wise, women are the core of the family and they play a pivotal role in nurturing a caring family and bringing up our next generation in a healthy and happy environment. Community wise, women help foster social stability and harmony through participating in community building activities and providing a network of mutual support at the community level. Women also represent valuable resources that must not be overlooked on economic, political and other social fronts. Many international studies have already confirmed that gender equality and women empowerment are the prerequisites for economic and social development. In this light, a planned move on women's development will not only effectively unleash women's creativity and productivity, but also add to the momentum of economic development. As the problem of ageing population is confronting our society, it is all the more necessary to fully utilise the manpower resources of women by promoting women's employment and entrepreneurship with a view to alleviating the pressure arising from a diminishing working population.

Since its establishment in 2001, the Women's Commission (WoC) has been implementing a three-pronged strategy. We place importance on creating an environment to enable women to participate in the community and the economy; advocate a culture of balance between family and work; and promote women's empowerment to assist them in employment and

participation in social decision-making. We care very much about forging a better gender relationship while adopting a zero-tolerance approach against domestic violence and sexual abuses. We also strive to raise public awareness of gender-related issues with the ultimate goal of realising equal opportunities and rights between both genders in decision-making and resources allocation of the society, such that both men and women will be able to fully develop their potential and contribute to the society.

After years of endeavour, we are deeply convinced that a systematic plan is necessary for the effective promotion of women's development. We need to interact closely with groups and individuals interested in women issues to build up a mutual understanding in order to gain an accurate grasp of the gravest concerns and the most urgent needs of women. This way, we will be able to persuade the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (the Government) and the parties concerned to make policy and systemic adjustments that will divert our limited resources specifically to practical areas in which the Government may focus on in meeting women's needs, with a view to creating conditions for women's development and incorporating them into the policy objectives of the Government.

For the first time ever, WoC has decided to formulate a set of "Hong Kong Women's Development Goals". Our aim is to lay a foundation for the long-term development of women in Hong Kong; to address the community's concerns and aspirations about women's issues in a consolidated manner; and to advise the Government on the goals and strategies for women's development. Over the years, WoC has had in-depth exchanges and collaboration with different sectors, especially women's groups, and conducted a variety of surveys and studies on the situations of women in Hong Kong. We are thus confident of having grasped the general picture of what our women are most concerned about and what needs to be resolved as a matter of priority for them. The formulation of "Hong Kong Women's Development Goals" will not only set out the plans and strategies for women's development, but also provide a blueprint for those

who are concerned about women's issues to further promote women's development. Promoting women's development is a long-term task which cannot be completed over-night. However, if a set of short, medium and long-term directions for development are in place, we will be able to follow up the goals at different stages in an orderly and sustained manner.

We hope that the short and medium-term goals and strategies set out in the "Hong Kong Women's Development Goals" are, by all standards, practical and effective, and can as far as possible solve relevant problems at source in a pragmatic and result-oriented approach. Our ultimate objective is to have the "Hong Kong Women's Development Goals" included in the overall development plans in social and economic aspects, such that gender equality and women empowerment will be implemented in the policy blueprint of the Government, with a view to full development of our women's potential and creativity, and consequently a better future for our society.

2012 is a critical year for the development of Hong Kong. The National 12th Five-Year Plan, the new Chief Executive and his team coming into office and the Legislative Council Election offer an opportunity for the community to deliberate the way forward in Hong Kong's development. It is timely for us to announce the "Hong Kong Women's Development Goals", as it will open up a possibility for the pressing issues of women to be covered in election platforms, policy blueprint and Hong Kong's overall development plan. There will also be a hope of the new Government making a stronger commitment on providing a policy environment for women's development.

In formulating the "Hong Kong Women's Development Goals", we started by making reference to the key aspects covered in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We also studied the Programme for the Development of Chinese Women of the State Council, as well as similar programmes in other parts of the world, including South Korea, Taiwan and Japan, etc.. Subsequently, we collected views through a number of consultations and focus group discussions in drawing up the key areas that should be covered as well as the specific goals, strategies and measures for each

key area. All women's groups and social welfare organisations with broad representation participated actively in the entire process. In the light of the above, the recommendations put forward in the "Hong Kong Women's Development Goals" are indeed the full and genuine reflections of the views and comments of stakeholders on how women's development should proceed in Hong Kong. Such recommendations have a high degree of representation and fit in with the reality in Hong Kong.

We attach great importance to the feasibility of all recommendations. Therefore, the relevant Government bureaux and departments form part of our main targets during the consultation process. After all, we will need the full support of the relevant Government bureaux and departments as well as stakeholders to put these recommendations into practice and carry out the various policy improvement schemes and measures. During the consultations, we received positive feedback from the relevant bureaux, departments and organisations. Although some recommendations were not taken on board at this stage, we believe that the relevant parties will agree to the importance and imminence of the views collected and will continue to explore how to respond to such recommendations in considering relevant policies and measures in future.

The process of the formulation of the "Hong Kong Women's Development Goals" has been open and transparent. We have carefully listened to and adequately absorbed the views from all sides, and are sincere in putting forward pragmatic and feasible recommendations tailor-made for the long-term development of women in Hong Kong. WoC's role as a conduit has been effectively brought into play in the process.

WoC will submit the report on "Hong Kong Women's Development Goals" to the Government. I believe a structured mechanism is needed to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the recommendations at different stages in future. I also think that as the next step, WoC should develop such a mechanism, monitor

and evaluate the recommendations together with different sectors of the community to ensure that continuous improvements will be made to our policies, environment and supporting measures in providing adequate opportunities, rights and freedom for the full development of women.

Here, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the groups, organisations, individuals, Government bureaux and departments who / which have been involved in formulating the “Hong Kong Women’s Development Goals”. Moreover, I am very grateful to the colleagues of the WoC Secretariat for their hard work. To take forward this task, a dedicated Task Force comprising several incumbent and former members of WoC was set up. I am deeply moved by the enormous time, attention and efforts devoted by the Task Force members in many rounds of meetings and am deeply grateful for their assistance in completing this task.

The 15th anniversary of the establishment of the HKSAR Government will mark a milestone for women’s development in Hong Kong. It is our conviction that the creation of an environment conducive to women’s development requires the concerted support of all sectors of our community. The “Hong Kong Women’s Development Goals” represent community consensus and common goals which will be useful for the Government and different sectors to respond and endeavour towards the building of a better and harmonious society with gender equality. Promoting women’s development in Hong Kong is no easy task. There is a long road to traverse. That notwithstanding, we deeply believe that with the support of the Government and the whole community, the road ahead will be full of opportunities and hope.



Sophia Kao
Chairperson, Women’s Commission
December 2011

Hong Kong Women's Development Goals

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Executive Summary – A List of Hong Kong Women’s Development Goals and Strategies

Participation in Decision Making

Women’s Development Goal 1:

Enhance women’s participation in decision making in public affairs

Proposed Strategies

- 1.1 Encourage all women to register as voters
- 1.2 Remind political parties of the importance of women’s participation in policy making and encourage them to nominate more female members to run for elections
- 1.3 Enhance the awareness of gender issues of both the election candidates and voters
- 1.4 The Home Affairs Department to issue guidelines to the 18 District Councils (DCs), advising them to approve all leave applications from female DC members due to pregnancy or postnatal care, and to consider proposing relevant amendments with more gender perspective when reviewing the Sample DC Standing Orders in the future
- 1.5 Encourage women, retirees in particular, to participate in public and community service

Women’s Development Goal 2:

Promote a balanced gender composition in advisory and statutory bodies

Proposed Strategy

- 2.1 Enhance public awareness of and interests in advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs), with a view to increasing women’s participation in ASBs

Health

Women's Development Goal 3: Enhance health education of women as well as their understanding of relevant services

Proposed Strategies

- 3.1 Promote healthy lifestyle, including awareness of diet, exercise and mental health
- 3.2 Enhance education on the prevention of injuries due to household duties, and encouraging division of labour of such duties
- 3.3 Produce a guide to women's health services to promote relevant services provided by Women Health Centres (WHCs) and Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs), non-governmental organisations and women's groups and assist the Department of Health in disseminating information on women's health to the public

Women's Development Goal 4: Enhance women's awareness of breast cancer

Proposed Strategies

- 4.1 Strengthen publicity on understanding and preventing breast cancer
- 4.2 Study the feasibility of conducting a survey on public acceptance and the effectiveness of introducing a population-based breast screening programme using mammography

Women's Development Goal 5: Improve medical facilities for disabled women

Proposed Strategy

- 5.1 Increase the number of gynecological examination tables for the disabled in WHCs and MCHCs

Safety

Women's Development Goal 6: **Strengthen support for victims of domestic and sexual violence**

Proposed Strategies

- 6.1 Monitor the implementation of the Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance, as well as the progress made by the Government in respect of legislating against stalking
- 6.2 Monitor the usage of women refuge centres, and increase the number of accommodation places in such centres when necessary
- 6.3 Strengthen the support for new arrival women in order to prevent family tragedies
- 6.4 Enhance training for front-line professionals

Women's Development Goal 7: **Strengthen education for women and raise their awareness of violence and safety, with a view to fostering a culture of "zero tolerance to violence"**

Proposed Strategies

- 7.1 Raise the awareness of working women on sexual harassment, and strengthen their ability in coping with / handling sexual harassment
- 7.2 Assist the new arrival, ethnic minority and disabled women in understanding their rights and support services available to them
- 7.3 Raise women's awareness of their own rights
- 7.4 Enhance education on the prevention of sexual violence/ dating violence in primary and secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions

Education

Women's Development Goal 8: Promote and facilitate all-round and life-long learning of women, and enhance their leadership skills

Proposed Strategies

- 8.1 Provide more publicly-funded degree places or facilitate the development of self-financing degree programmes in order to address the articulation needs of sub-degree graduates
- 8.2 Continue to provide financial assistance as appropriate to help women in need pursue continuing education
- 8.3 Continue to provide flexible courses and further enhance their flexibilities to cater for the needs of homemakers and new immigrant women, with a view to providing them with more channels of learning and acquiring accredited qualifications
- 8.4 Strengthen the Capacity Building Mileage Programme
- 8.5 Study the needs of homemakers in pursuing life-long learning and in re-entering to the labour market

Women's Development Goal 9: Strengthen gender and parent education

Proposed Strategies

- 9.1 Strengthen gender education within and outside schools
- 9.2 Allocate additional resources to strengthen parent education

Economics

Women's Development Goal 10: **Step up measures which are conducive to enhancing women's economic status**

Proposed Strategies

- 10.1 Enhance the promotion of Family-Friendly Employment Policies and Practices
- 10.2 Strengthen diversified and flexible childcare services

Women's Development Goal 11: **Eliminate discrimination against the working ability of women**

Proposed Strategy

- 11.1 Encourage greater promotion opportunities for women in private organisations

Women's Development Goal 12: **Strengthen protection for part-time employees**

Proposed Strategy

- 12.1 Review the employment situation of and protection for employees not engaged under a continuous contract under the Employment Ordinance

System for Women's Development

Women's Development Goal 13: **Study the needs and strategies in further promoting women's development**

Proposed Strategies

- 13.1 Study ways to enhance the collaboration model between WoC and women's groups
- 13.2 Strengthen research on gender-related issues

Women's Development Goal 14: **Further the implementation of gender mainstreaming within and outside the government**

Proposed Strategies

- 14.1 Monitor the implementation of gender mainstreaming
- 14.2 Raise gender awareness and sensitivity of public officers through strengthening relevant training
- 14.3 Strengthen public education and promote gender mainstreaming outside the Government

Chapter 1. Introduction

Objectives and Process of Formulating Hong Kong Women's Development Goals

- 1.1 The Women's Commission (WoC) was established in 2001 to advise the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (the Government) on women-related issues and the formulation of a long-term vision and strategy for women's development and advancement in Hong Kong. The mission of WoC is to enable women in Hong Kong to fully realise their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life. All along, WoC has adopted a three-pronged strategy (i.e. the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women, and public education) to advance the status of women in Hong Kong and promote their well-being and interests.
- 1.2 WoC believes that the elimination of gender stereotype and attainment of gender equality require territory-wide support and collaboration among all sectors, including the Government, women's groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the private sector and the general public. To further promote women's development in Hong Kong, WoC sees a need to formulate a set of forward-looking and strategic goals for the whole community to work towards a common direction.
- 1.3 As such, WoC set up a Task Force on Women's Development Goals (the Task Force) in late 2009 to undertake the work of setting Hong Kong women's development goals (referred to as "women's development goals" thereafter). The membership list and terms of reference of the Task Force are at Chapter 5 and **Annex 1** respectively. In setting such goals, we hope to achieve the following objectives –
 - (a) To advise the Government on the long-term goals and strategies for women's development;
 - (b) To promote the continuous development and enhancement of women in Hong Kong; and

- (c) To help prioritise the work of WoC for the purpose of (b) above.

International Experience

- 1.4 WoC believes that women's development plays an important part in the development of a country or region, and should thus be incorporated into the social and economic development blueprint of all countries or regions. The United Nations (UN) has long since laid down relevant objectives and action plans for the promotion of women's development. At the Millennium Summit held in 2000, all the 191 UN member states unanimously agreed to the formulation of eight Millennium Development Goals, and one of which was to "promote gender equality and empower women". To demonstrate the importance attached to the promotion of gender equality and women's development, UN established in 2011 the UN Women, an entity under UN for the promotion of gender equality and advancement of women's status. Its objective is to seek more effective and sustainable solutions to women's issues through international cooperation and monitoring.
- 1.5 In addition, the significance of women's development has been gaining increasing recognition from regional organisations, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). The Women Leaders Network (WLN) was an entity under APEC responsible for advising APEC on the enhancement of women's economic participation. However, as WLN was not an official body of APEC, its recommendations did not receive due attention from the APEC member states or were not thoroughly implemented. As the host of the APEC meeting in 2011, the United States organised a Women and the Economy Summit in the same year. The Summit incorporated women's issues into the formal agenda, seeking to narrow the distance between the governments and business leaders of all member states and to foster stronger cooperation with a

view to enhancing the awareness within APEC of the importance of women's issues.

1.6 Many countries and places have, with regard to their own situations, put in place different goals and plans to promote women's interests and development. Examples include—

- (a) “Programme for the Development of Chinese Women” in the Mainland China (the Mainland) — as early as in 1995, the National Working Committee for Children and Women under the State Council had already devised development frameworks to set out the key objectives and priority of work for women's development in the Mainland. Subsequently, the “Programme for the Development of Chinese Women (2001-2010)” was formulated and promulgated in accordance with the Outline of the 10th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China. It sets out targets for different stages of women's development in six priority development areas, namely, economics, participation in decision making and management, education, health, law, and environment¹. In August 2011, the State Council promulgated the “Programme for the Development of Chinese Women (2011-2020)”², setting out 57 key objectives and 88 strategic measures covering seven areas, namely, health, education, economics, participation in decision making and management, social security, environment, and law. These objectives and strategic measures include, among others, enhancing women's influence in policy making and management; progressively increasing the proportion of women in various ranks of deputies to the National People's Congress and among members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference;

¹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2003-09/03/content_1061214.htm

² http://www.gov.cn/zwggk/2011-08/08/content_1920457.htm

and progressively increasing the proportion of women's participation in public administration. Also, "Empowerment of Women in All Aspects of Life" has been incorporated as one of the goals into the 12th Five-Year Plan³ of the Mainland;

- (b) "The Policy on Women in Taiwan" — upholding the creed and spirit of the UN World Women's Convention, the Committee of Women's Rights Promotion under the Executive Yuan of Taiwan has put forward the "Policy on Women in Taiwan". It covers eight areas, namely, women's personal safety, education, health, employment and economy, poverty and welfare, political participation, environment, and media. Its objective is to promote wider consideration of gender perspectives in policies and measures for advancing women's development⁴;
- (c) "The Basic Women's Policy Plan" of South Korea — the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family devises and implements the "Basic Women's Policy Plan" every five years, putting forward the general direction of the national women policy and the principles of ten policy plans, including participation in decision making, economy and employment, social and cultural participation, health, etc., and recommending women policy objectives to the Government to promote women's development and gender equality⁵;

³ Section 2 of Chapter 36

⁴ http://wrp.womenweb.org.tw/Page_Show.asp?Page_ID=177

⁵ <http://text.moge.go.kr/moge/data/pdf/050913.pdf>

- (d) “The Basic Plan for Gender Equality of Japan” — “The Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality 2010” formulated by the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office provides a pragmatic action plan for the further promotion of gender equality. It encompasses 15 priority fields, including participation in decision-making, economy and employment, safety, welfare, health and education⁶; and
- (e) The Annual Report of Newfoundland and Labrador of Canada—the Women’s Policy Office reaffirms in its annual report the four strategies for violence prevention, employment, social welfare, as well as leadership and decision-making, and reports on the efforts made in these areas on a yearly basis⁷.

⁶ http://www.gender.go.jp/whitepaper/3rd_bpg.pdf

⁷ <http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/exec/wpo/publications/wpoannrep200910.pdf>

Principles for Formulating Women's Development Goals

- 1.7 In formulating women's development goals, the Task Force has made reference to the experiences in the Mainland and overseas, and conducted extensive consultation and analysis in a serious manner. Our objective is to formulate a set of goals which can respond to the current status and needs of local women, effectively address women's issues of public concern, and facilitate practical follow-ups by all sectors. The Task Force's work is guided by the following principles—
- (a) The proposed goals or initiatives should dovetail with the roles and terms of reference of WoC;
 - (b) The proposed goals or initiatives should be conducive to the development and well-being of women in Hong Kong;
 - (c) In setting the proposed goals or initiatives, consideration should be given to their attainability, relevance, specificity and timing;
 - (d) In setting the proposed goals or initiatives that involve Government departments or NGOs, consultation should be made with the relevant parties; and
 - (e) The goals or initiatives should, as far as possible, be formulated based on relevant statistics and facts.
- 1.8 By formulating the women's development goals, WoC aims to set a general direction for all stakeholders to pursue in promoting women's development, such that the authorities concerned and the public can work in concert towards the same direction. For this reason, most of the recommendations in this report are put forward from a macro

perspective, covering the work of different stages, with a view to achieving the ultimate goal of promoting women's development.

Stakeholder Engagement

- 1.9 WoC has attached particular importance to stakeholder engagement throughout the process. It has listened carefully to the different views and suggestions made in relation to women's development.
- 1.10 The stakeholders engaged in formulating the women's development goals include representatives of various women's groups, NGOs, and relevant Government bureaux and departments. The engagement process does not only allow us to draw on the collective wisdom of different stakeholders on women's issues, but also facilitate the joint actions by all parties concerned in order to achieve the goals. WoC is of the view that while the recommendations on public policies and services should be led by the Government, different quarters of the community should also provide active assistance to facilitate the realisation of these goals.
- 1.11 We had frequent exchanges with the stakeholders in the course of setting the women's development goals. After the Task Force was formed, we met with women's groups and NGOs in early 2010 to introduce this exercise and garner their support for it. The Task Force then organised a brainstorming session with relevant stakeholders, and worked out six key areas (including participation in decision-making, health, safety, education, economics and system for women's development) as the initial framework of women's development goals. To focus our discussions of the relevant issues, WoC set up three focus groups under the Task Force and invited representatives of women's groups and NGOs to join these focus groups for detailed discussion on the six key areas. Exchange and sharing sessions with relevant academics and professionals were also arranged by the Task Force, allowing focus group members to have more in-depth understanding of the issues under discussion. Having considered the views and

comments of all parties concerned, the Task Force compiled on a preliminary basis some proposed goals and strategies under the six key areas, and discussions were held thereon with the representatives of women's groups and NGOs. Timely progress reports and updates were also made to the relevant groups from time to time.

- 1.12 Apart from consultation with women's groups, the Task Force also consulted and exchanged views on WoC's preliminary suggestions with the relevant Government departments and NGOs throughout the process. The departments' feedbacks were generally positive and they also indicated support in principle to WoC's work on women's development goals.

Chapter 2. An Overview of Women and the Development of Women Affairs in Hong Kong

The Changing Role of Women

- 2.1 Hong Kong is a place with a mixture of eastern and western cultures. Over the past hundred years or so, our women have benefited from the progress and opening up of the society, and have been advancing continuously in terms of socio-economic status and involvement in public affairs. Yet at the same time, women's development in Hong Kong is still subject to constraints. The hindrances stem from traditional Chinese culture and thinking, as well as deep-rooted gender stereotype.
- 2.2 In early years, women were mostly family carers. They were responsible for household chores and the management of the daily lives of their family members without remuneration, and very few of them would go out to work. It was not until the 1960s when the vibrant development of Hong Kong's commercial and industrial sectors created a vast amount of blue-collar and white-collar job opportunities that started to lure local women to walk out of the kitchen en masse and find their way towards economic autonomy. That said, working outside, to most of the women, was mainly a way for making ends meet; men were still the main breadwinners of families. Some women would choose to work at home by undertaking processing jobs outsourced from factories. Overall speaking, it was not a norm at that time for women to have career aspirations, seek financial autonomy or become the breadwinner of a family.
- 2.3 As the economy further developed, education became more common and family structure changed, women's role in family, economy and society also began to change. Higher education level, simpler family structure, and better employment opportunities and economic prospects also encouraged more women to participate in economic activities. As time went, on these women had started to provide an indispensable income for their families. Meanwhile, the phenomenon of male dominance was also fading in some sectors. According to the data of the Hong Kong Institute of

Certified Public Accountants, the number of female certified public accountants had increased from 5,300 in 1998 to 13,300 in 2008, representing a rise from 36% to 47% of the total number of certified public accountants. Moreover, figures of the Law Society of Hong Kong and the Department of Health (DH) show that the proportions of female solicitors with a practicing certificate and female registered medical practitioners had also risen steadily to 38% and 27.9% respectively in 2008. On public and community services, local women have also emerged as councillors, senior government officials and even leaders of international organisations. More active participation by women from all walks of life is also seen in the affairs of advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs), political groups and NGOs.

2.4 With the ability to achieve financial independence, women in Hong Kong tend to become more independent and late in getting married. Many of them enjoy singlehood. In 1999 - 2010, the median age at first marriage for women increased from 26.9 to 28.7, while the number of never-married women aged 15 to 65 increased from 660,000 to one million during the period⁸. On the other hand, in view of the growing use of contraception, women in Hong Kong have greater autonomy in deciding whether and when they want to give birth. While this may be a cause of the continuously low fertility rate in recent years, it has enabled women to develop and thrive career-wise.

2.5 In 2010, there were 780,000 married female in the labour force, 22% higher than the 610,000 in 1996⁹. For the married working women, apart from participating in economic activities, most of them are still shouldering the responsibility for taking care of their families and children. To balance

⁸ Page 34 of "Women and Men in Hong Kong – Key Statistics" (2011 Edition)

⁹ Page 93 of "Women and Men in Hong Kong – Key Statistics" (2011 Edition)

the demands of work and family duties, many working women would hire foreign or local domestic helpers. The increase in the number of foreign domestic helpers from about 160,000 in 1996 to 280,000 in 2010 showcases that there is a genuine need for working women with families to have domestic help.

Improvement of Women's Rights and Interests

- 2.6 Over the past few decades, thanks to the common pursuits of women's groups and positive responses from the Government, there have been progressive improvements in the promotion of women's rights and interests in Hong Kong. In the 1970s, the Government started to provide free universal basic education to local boys and girls. In 1972, the Married Persons Status Ordinance (Chapter 182) and Matrimonial Causes Ordinance (Chapter 179) were enacted, enabling married women to hold property and to petition for divorce on the grounds of an irretrievable breakdown of marriage. In 1975, female civil servants began to enjoy equal pay as their male counterparts. In the 1980s and 1990s, legislation was passed for paid maternity leave; the enactment of the former Domestic Violence Ordinance (DVO) (Chapter 189); the passage of the Inland Revenue (Amendment) Ordinance, which provided for separate taxation for married women; the right for female indigenous villagers to inherit land in the New Territories in the absence of a will; and the enactment of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) (Chapter 480). In the 21st Century, the Government set up WoC, made marital rape a criminal offence and further amended the former DVO, etc.. These developments have enhanced the rights and interests of Hong Kong women on various fronts and created a more favourable environment for women's development.
- 2.7 The enhanced involvement of women in economic and social affairs has promoted the awareness and pursuit of women's rights and interests. In the 1990s, local women and community groups campaigned the Government for the extension of the Convention

on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which recognises human rights and freedom of women in the domains of politics, economy, society, culture and civic rights, to Hong Kong. With the consent of the People's Republic of China and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and North Ireland, CEDAW was extended to Hong Kong on 14 October 1996 and has continued to apply to Hong Kong since 1 July 1997. Since then, Hong Kong has been required to submit periodic report, as part of China's Report, to the UN on the progress of its implementation of CEDAW. This has provided an important basis and framework for protection of women's rights and interests. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the CEDAW Committee) considered the reports submitted by Hong Kong in 1999 and 2006 respectively and recognised Hong Kong's efforts in promoting women's development.

Promotion of Women's Rights and Interests in the International Community

2.8 In September 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing, during which the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) were adopted. BPFA, which sets out strategic objectives under twelve major areas, aims to advance women's status and remove all obstacles to their active participation in public and private life. The Government should also observe the principles of BPFA and promote women's interests by implementing policies and measures in various domains. At the tenth and fifteenth anniversaries of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and BPFA¹⁰, the Government and WoC attended relevant

¹⁰ Before the establishment of WoC, the Government also attended relevant conferences at the fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and BPFA in 2000.

conferences, reviewed the scenario of women's development and organised celebration and commemorative activities.

- 2.9 In addition, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meets from late February to early March every year. As a functional commission under the UN Economic and Social Council, CSW is dedicated to dealing with affairs concerning gender equality and advancement of women and serves as the major policy formulation agency for women's issues worldwide. Representatives of member states gather at UN Headquarters in New York every year to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide. WoC representatives attend this annual session to provide updates of women's development in Hong Kong in accordance with the theme set by CSW.

The Mechanism for Promoting Gender Equality

- 2.10 Protection of women's interests and promotion of gender equality are not only required under international covenants, but also under the constitution and laws of Hong Kong. With the reunification of Hong Kong with the Mainland, the Basic Law came into effect on 1 July 1997. Article 39 of the Basic Law stipulates that the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) as applied to Hong Kong shall remain in force and shall be implemented through the laws of Hong Kong. The rights and freedoms enjoyed by Hong Kong residents shall not be restricted unless as prescribed by law. Such restrictions shall not contravene the provisions of ICCPR and ICESCR. The provisions of ICCPR, including the guarantee of non-discrimination on the ground of sex, are therefore safely entrenched in our constitutional instrument. Article 11 of the Basic Law provides that no law enacted by the legislature of Hong Kong shall contravene the Basic Law. Therefore, equality of both genders is not simply a

noble aspiration, but a constitutional requirement that must be observed.

- 2.11 The Green Paper on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men published by the Government in 1993 aroused public concern and discussion on the promotion of gender equality. Subsequently, SDO passed by the Legislative Council (LegCo) in 1995 made it unlawful to discriminate a person on the ground of sex, marital status, or pregnancy in specific areas including employment, education and provision of goods, facilities, or services, etc.. In addition, sexual harassment has also been defined as an unlawful behaviour under this Ordinance. Henceforth, anyone applying a discriminatory practice or publishing a discriminatory advertisement would be acting against the law. The Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO) (Chapter 527) enacted in June 1997 also stipulates that it is unlawful to discriminate a person on the ground of family status in specific areas including employment, education and provision of goods, facilities, or services, etc., thus protecting persons with a responsibility for the care of immediate family members.
- 2.12 The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) is an independent statutory body set up in 1996 to implement, among others, SDO and FSDO. The work of EOC includes, among others, handling complaints, encouraging conciliation between parties in dispute and providing assistance to aggrieved persons with a view to promoting equal opportunities in the community.
- 2.13 Since the 1980s, local women's groups have been advocating the establishment of a central mechanism on women's affairs. In response to the recommendations made by the CEDAW Committee, the Government set up WoC on 15 January 2001. Appointed by the Chief Executive, members of WoC are tasked to offer advice on women issues, and to develop a long-term vision and strategy for the

development and advancement of women. The terms of reference of WoC are at **Annex 2**. The establishment of WoC demonstrates the Government's commitment to further advancing the well-being and interests of women, and forms an important milestone in the history of women's development in Hong Kong.

Current Status of Women's Development in Hong Kong

2.14 Despite the overall improvements of women's status and conditions over the past decades, gender stereotype still exists in aspects such as women's safety, participation in public decision making, economic status, etc.. In addition, as social policies and measures have not fully incorporated gender perspectives, the specific needs of women are overlooked and their further development hindered. For example, the responsibility of family caring still falls mostly on women, and as a result many of them have to give up their career or personal pursuits; the majority of victims in domestic violence cases are women; the proportion of women serving on the board of directors in local listed companies is below 10%; the median income of women is still lower than that of men; there are still more men than women serving as members in the Executive Council (ExCo), the LegCo and the District Councils (DCs); and the proportion of women participating in ASBs is relatively low, etc.. Furthermore, as the average life expectancy of women continues to rise (from 80.7 years in 1991 to 85.9 years in 2010), women's health is no longer confined to a women issue but also an important aspect of our population policy. As such, WoC has identified six key areas in this report to further explore the goals and strategies that are necessary for the promotion of women's development. It is our hope that clearer and better-defined directions can be worked out such that all sectors of the community will have a better grasp of those women issues that should be focused and worked on.



Chapter 3. Situation Analysis and Hong Kong Women's Development Goals

3.1 Participation in Decision Making

Women's participation in decision making is not only a process of social engagement to empower women. It is also an important means to demonstrate equal political rights between women and men. Generally speaking, however, there is much scope for improvement on women's participation in decision making in social and public affairs in Hong Kong.

3.1.1 Political Participation

Current Status

- The Basic Law stipulates that Hong Kong residents shall have the right to vote and the right to stand for election in accordance with the law. The Hong Kong Bill of Rights (Chapter 383) also stipulates that every Hong Kong permanent resident, regardless of sex, shall have the right and opportunity to take part in the conduct of public affairs.
- There are only three female non-official members in ExCo, representing 21.4% of the total number of non-official ExCo members.
- Among the 15 government officials (i.e. Chief Secretary for Administration, Financial Secretary, Secretary for Justice and Secretaries for the twelve Bureaux), only three of them are females.
- While the number of female directorate civil servants had increased from 273 (about 20%) in 1998 to 382 (about 31%) in 2009, the number of female civil servants is still lagging behind than that of their male counterparts.
- Only 38 (18.9%) out of the 201 candidates in the fourth term LegCo election (i.e. 2008 to 2012) were females. Eleven of them were elected, making 18.3% of the 60-member legislature. Although such figures had increased as compared with the third term LegCo election in 2004 (26 female candidates and 11 elected female legislators), the participation rate of women stood below 20%, which was far behind the female's proportion (50%) in the total population of Hong Kong.

- In the DC election in 2007, females accounted for 18.4% (i.e. 167) of the 907 candidates and 19% (i.e. 78) of the 405 elected members.
- At present, DCs draw up their own standing orders on the basis of the Sample DC Standing Orders provided by the Home Affairs Department (HAD). According to section 51 of the DC Standing Orders, if a DC member is absent from meetings for four consecutive months (i.e. around two meetings) without the consent of the DC Chairman concerned, his/her membership will be disqualified.
- 1.67 million women registered as voters in the 2008 LegCo election, representing 49.7% of the total registered voters in the territory. Among the 1.52 million voters who cast their votes, women accounted for about 49%. The percentages were similar to those in the 2007 DC election, with female registered voters and female voters who cast their votes both accounting for nearly half of the totals.
- According to the survey “What do Women and Men in Hong Kong Think about the Status of Women at Home, Work and in Social Environments?” conducted by WoC in 2010 (the WoC 2010 Survey), about 40% of people thought that males outperformed females as political leaders while women performed better in community service. Also, more men than women considered that male political leaders would do a better job than females.

Analysis

Women in Hong Kong lag behind men in terms of participation in decision making. This, to a certain extent, is due to gender stereotype in society. Under the influence of such stereotype, more women are engaged in community service than in politics.

Another reason that explains the low participation rate of women in decision making or public affairs may be related to their ways of expression. According to the WoC 2010 Survey, women tend to express their views and requests in a more quiescent manner, such as by signing petitions via the internet. Comparatively speaking, women's participation in district consultation activities is also lower than that of men. This somehow undermines the society's understanding of women's views and requests.

Women's participation in politics and decision making is also affected by pregnancy and family duties. For instance, a female DC member has reflected to WoC that the requirement under section 51 of the Sample DC Standing Orders is unfavourable to female DC members who are pregnant, have just delivered or are planning for pregnancy, as their membership may be disqualified because of their absence from meetings before and after giving birth. As such, to nurture an enabling culture for women's participation in decision making, we need to put in place institutional arrangements that cater for their specific needs.

3.1.2 Public and Community Service

Current Status

- According to the survey commissioned by WoC and conducted by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) from December 2001 to February 2002 on “Time Use Pattern of Hong Kong Residents Aged 15 and Over”, about 9.5% of females had participated in voluntary work during the 12 months before the survey. This percentage was higher than the 6% for males. These 9.5% of females mainly comprised students (31.4%), economically inactive persons (11.7%), home-makers (9.7%) and economically active persons (7.4%). Retired persons accounted for 4.8%.
- According to the WoC 2010 Survey, more women than men participated in volunteer work, with quite a number of them having attained matriculation level or above.
- Among the females who had participated in volunteer work, those aged 55 or above and aged between 18 and 34 had done longer median hours of volunteer work.

Analysis

Voluntary service is a form of community engagement conducive to both social development and empowerment of individual women. In view of rising education level and independence of women nowadays, retired women may give impetus for society’s development by continuing to contribute their experience and expertise. In this light, recognition should be given to women’s active participation in community and volunteer services. Greater encouragement and support will help motivate more women to take an active part in community and volunteer service.

3.1.3 Advisory and Statutory Bodies

Current Status

- On the recommendation of WoC, the Government set a 25% gender benchmark for the appointment of members of ASBs in January 2004. This was to ensure that either sex will make up at least 25% of the membership of such bodies so that the views and concerns of both genders could be fully reflected.
- On the advocacy by WoC, the Government raised the gender benchmark further to 30% in June 2010. Over the past decade, women's participation rate in ASBs had increased from 19.1% in 2001 to 30%. The changes in women's participation in ASBs are shown in Table 1 below-

Table 1: Non-official Members Serving on Government Advisory and Statutory Bodies by Sex

	Female	Male	Total	Women's Participation Rate
1991	411	2,292	2,703	15.2%
2001	888	3,770	4,658	19.1%
2002	973	3,743	4,716	20.6%
2003	1,050	3,602	4,652	22.6%
2004	1,144	3,586	4,730	24.2%
2005	1,236	3,660	4,896	25.2%
2006	1,289	3,678	4,967	26.0%
2007	1,381	3,822	5,203	26.5%
2008	1,484	3,886	5,370	27.6%
2009	1,567	4,168	5,735	27.3%
2010	1,663	4,051	5,714	29.1%

- As at 31 May 2011, there were about 5,707 non-official members appointed by the Government serving on 440 ASBs - 1,724 of them were females, accounting for 30% of the total number of non-official members appointed by the Government.

Analysis

WoC agrees that appointments to ASBs by the Government should be made on the basis of merit. At the same time, WoC also believes that there is no lack of women with talent, ability and enthusiasm who are willing to serve on ASBs to provide advice on the development and public affairs of Hong Kong. In fact, with the efforts of the Government and WoC, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of women participating in ASBs.

Overall speaking, women's participation in ASBs is on an increasing trend. However, due to various factors such as occupational structure, participation rate remains low in some ASBs. A few ASBs even have no female members at all. In view of the increase in the gender benchmark from 25% to 30% in 2010 and the long-term goal of achieving a balanced participation, we consider it necessary to raise the benchmark progressively, taking into account the actual circumstances of different ASBs.

Apart from gender benchmark, raising women's awareness of and interest in participating in ASBs is equally important. The findings of the WoC 2010 Survey show that 46.5% of people in society knew nothing about Government ASBs, and the proportion of women (50.4%) was higher than that of men (42%). Among the women who indicated some understanding of ASBs but had never participated in any of them, 60.3% declared no interest in joining such, and 73.7% responded that they would not accept appointment even if invited. This shows that apart from enhancing women's participation in ASBs, the Government also needs to step up education and publicity in this respect in order to enhance women's understanding of the structure and operation of the Government, as well as their interests in participation in public service.

3.1.4 Proposed Goals and Strategies

To improve the current situation, WoC considers that the society should foster a culture which encourages women to participate in decision making and public affairs.

Women's Development Goal 1: Enhance women's participation in decision making in public affairs

Proposed Strategies

- 1.1 Encourage all women to register as voters
- 1.2 Remind political parties of the importance of women's participation in policy making and encourage them to nominate more female members to run for elections
- 1.3 Enhance the awareness of gender issues of both the election candidates and voters
- 1.4 The Home Affairs Department to issue guidelines to the 18 DCs, advising them to approve all leave applications from female DC members due to pregnancy or postnatal care, and to consider proposing relevant amendments with more gender perspective when reviewing the Sample DC Standing Orders in the future
- 1.5 Encourage women, retirees in particular, to participate in public and community service

On encouraging women to run for elections, WoC has written to different political parties, urging them to identify and encourage more women to run for the 2011 DC election and the 2012 LegCo election, and to incorporate women's concerns and needs into their election platforms.

We understand that the rules governing absence from DC meetings serve to reflect public expectation on DC members' attendance. Generally speaking, the DC Chairman concerned will approve a member's application, if he/she can provide a reasonable ground (including medical grounds) for the absence. Since DC members may have different understanding and interpretation of the rules, WoC has suggested that HAD should clarify the matter as appropriate and consider amending the wordings concerned when reviewing the Sample DC Standing Orders in the future.

On encouraging women, retirees in particular, to participate in public and community service, we understand that the Elderly Commission will continue to promote the Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project, under which elderly volunteers are trained to help identify needy elders in the neighbourhood. In addition to promoting neighbourhood support and care, the Project also helps enrich the elders' lives and makes use of their strength to bring benefits to the community. In parallel, WoC will also make use of the network of women's groups to encourage more seniors or retired women to actively participate in public services so as to build a caring and progressive community.

**Women's Development Goal 2:
Promote a balanced gender composition in advisory and
statutory bodies**

Proposed Strategy

- 2.1 Enhance public awareness of and interests in ASBs, with a view to increasing women's participation in ASBs

With respect to the suggestion above, WoC and the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) will work closely together to review regularly the gender composition in ASBs and to step up efforts on the related promotion work. To enhance transparency, HAB is considering releasing the participation rates of both genders in ASBs through the internet on a regular basis. WoC will also assist in stepping up publicity to encourage more women to participate in ASBs.

WoC will make sustained efforts in promoting women's participation in decision making to enhance the interest and motivation of women from all walks of life to participate in social affairs; develop a culture to nurture women's interests in public policies; and strengthen their sense of care and belonging to the country and society, as well as their enthusiasm in participating in decision making.

3.2 Health

In Hong Kong, women live longer than men on average. According to C&SD, the average life expectancies at birth of females and males are 85.9 years and 80.0 years respectively. In 2010, the female death rate was 5 per 1,000 women. If analysed by age, the death rates of females were generally lower than that of males in various age groups.

The health status of Hong Kong women has always been a concern of WoC. Despite the longer average life expectancy of females, their health is subject to the challenges of various physical and mental health problems unique to them as a result of their biological differences such as childbirth and menopause. Besides, stress, the role and responsibility of a family carer and poor grasp of health information also constitute obstacles and threats to women's health.

3.2.1 Physical Health

Current Status

- The maternal mortality ratio remains low in Hong Kong at 1.1 per 100,000 registered live births.
- Since 1998, regular breastfeeding surveys have been conducted in all Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) under the Family Health Service (FHS) of DH. The survey results revealed that the ever breastfeeding rate had risen from 50% in 1997 to 77% in 2010. The exclusive breastfeeding rate for four to six months in the corresponding years had also increased from 6% to 14%. Inadequate milk and returning to work are the major reasons for the majority of mothers to stop breastfeeding.
- Since the implementation of the breastfeeding policy in 2001, DH has actively promoted and publicised breastfeeding. A breastfeeding hotline has been set up to answer enquiries from mothers. To create an environment conducive to breastfeeding, public hospitals under

the Hospital Authority (HA) have stopped using formula milk sponsored by milk powder traders and prohibited these traders from promoting their products or distributing free samples of milk powder to staff and postnatal mothers in hospitals.

- Practice of unsafe sex is the main cause for unwanted pregnancy and various sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). According to the survey of “Family Planning Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice” conducted by the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong (FPAHK) in 2007, 80% of married or cohabited women aged 15 to 49 practised contraception. The proportion of those using male condom had steadily increased from 20% in 1982 to 63% in 2007. On the other hand, FPAHK’s “Youth Sexuality Study 2006” showed that 8% of girls in Secondary 3-7 had experienced sexual intercourse. Among them, 47% used male condoms to protect themselves.
- FHS of DH provides women with education on sexual health at various life stages. Safe sex is emphasised to reduce the chance of contracting STDs and developing cervical cancer. Counselling and specialist referrals for women with sexual problems are provided as appropriate. Family planning services are provided at MCHCs to women of child-bearing age to enable them to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of children they plan to have. Appropriate contraceptive methods are prescribed according to individual needs. Counselling and specialist referrals for women with infertility problems, unwanted pregnancy or those seeking termination of pregnancy are made as appropriate.

- A woman may choose to terminate an unplanned pregnancy in accordance with the relevant laws¹¹. Currently, FPAHK provides legal termination of pregnancy to needy women, as well as counselling services before and after the operation.
- According to DH, by the end of March 2010, 19.7% of the 4,544 AIDS infected individuals were females. The male-to-female ratio increased from about 3:1 in 2001 to 4:1 in 2009 as a result of the wider spread of the disease among men who had sex with men. Almost all infected women were the result of heterosexual infections.
- Although the number of annual reports from heterosexual HIV transmission has remained largely stable since 2001, the cumulative number of HIV infected women continues to increase. The Report of “Community Assessment and Evaluation on HIV Prevention for Women and Children in Hong Kong” published by the Advisory Council on AIDS in 2006 has included under its recommended set of guiding principles the key message that gender equity, rights and sensitivity should be incorporated in the development of programmes on HIV prevention, treatment and care. The Government will also enhance programmes on HIV prevention and care for women as necessary.
- Statistics from C&SD released in 2010 indicated that 11.1% of the population aged 15 or above were daily cigarette smokers. Of these daily cigarette smokers, 13.9% were female.

11 According to Section 47 of the Offences Against the Person Ordinance (Cap. 212), termination of pregnancy requires two registered medical practitioners to concur that:

- continuing the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman or of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated; or
- there is a substantial risk that if the child were born, it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormality as to be seriously handicapped; or
- the woman is with child before attaining the age of 16; or
- the woman is the victim of incest, rape, drug rape, intercourse by threats, or intercourse by false pretences, and has made a report to the police within three months after the date of such offences.

Legal termination of pregnancy must not be performed after the 24th week of pregnancy, unless the abortion is absolutely necessary for saving the pregnant woman's life. It must be performed in government specified hospitals or the operating theatres of FPAHK, and by registered doctors.

- According to the Behavioural Risk Factor Survey conducted by DH in April 2010, 31.4% of women aged 18-64 were overweight or obese. These women are prone to have a range of health problems such as coronary heart disease, diabetes and joint disease. The survey also revealed that 75.4% of women consumed less than five servings of fruit and vegetable per day. In the female population, 56.1% and 70.0% reported not doing moderate and vigorous exercise respectively in the past seven days. This is an important contributory factor not only for obesity but also hypertension and injury.

- Currently, both public and private medical sectors provide various female-targeted medical services. For example –
 - ◆ DH launched a population-based Cervical Screening Programme in 2004 in collaboration with both public and private healthcare providers to promote the practice of regular cervical smears to reduce the incidence of cervical cancer in Hong Kong;

 - ◆ MCHCs provide cervical screening and also, in collaboration with the Obstetric Departments of public hospitals, a comprehensive antenatal shared-care programme to monitor the whole pregnancy and delivery process. Postnatal mothers are provided with physical check-ups and advice on family planning. They are also given help and support to adapt to life changes through experience sharing in support groups and individual counseling;

 - ◆ The Government-funded FPAHK provides a range of health services encompassing birth control, sexual and reproductive health check-ups, pre-marital and pre-pregnancy check-ups, menopause service, sex therapy and youth counselling. It also runs seven Women's Clubs in different districts to promote family planning, women's health and family life education at grassroots level; and

- ◆ The robust development of private healthcare services has also provided local women with greater access to health information and service options in recent years.

Analysis

Despite the rapid development of medical technology and services, and the rising standard of therapeutic treatment, active promotion of healthy lifestyle and living habits remains a fundamental approach to improve women's physical fitness and safeguard their health. The lifestyle pattern reflected by the figures under the "Current Status" section may be attributed to busy work life or the personal habits and preferences of individuals. We believe that if women have greater awareness of the possible impact of such a lifestyle pattern on their health, they will make greater efforts to nurture a healthier lifestyle.

Besides, childbirth is a unique experience of women. Pregnant women suffer not only from pre-natal physical changes and pain during labour, but also adjustment problems both physically and psychologically after delivery. Similarly, women who decide to terminate a pregnancy due to various reasons also face considerable pressure physically and mentally. Support from family and others and ready access to accurate and complete information are very important to them.

3.2.2 Mental Health

Current Status

- According to C&SD statistics, the percentage of women diagnosed with mental illness or mood disorders in 2006-07 was 1.4%, which was higher than that of men (1.0%)¹².
- According to the Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention of the University of Hong Kong¹³ (HKU), the suicide rate of women in 2009 was 9.8%, which was lower than that of men (18.4%). Taking the figures of men and women together and analysed by age, elderly people aged 65 had the highest suicide rate (28.9%).
- On average about 50% of postnatal mothers suffer from postnatal blues. These mood swings normally last for three to five days and then settle spontaneously. However, some postnatal mothers will experience persistent depressed mood. According to an overseas study, the prevalence of postpartum depression among women is around 13-15%¹⁴. A local research reveals that about 11-12% of local women suffer from postpartum depression in the first six weeks after delivery¹⁵.
- In addition to providing various antenatal health talks to help pregnant women prepare adequately after delivery, DH also produces information leaflets and VCDs to promote awareness of postnatal mood disorders among postnatal mothers and their families to facilitate early intervention. Meanwhile, emotional

12 *Special Topics Report No. 48*

13 <http://csr.p.hku.hk/WEB/big5/statistics.asp>

14 *National Screening Committee. Evaluation of Screening for Postnatal Depression Against the NSC Handbook Criteria [Internet]. 2001.*

http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/screening/adult_pps/shakespeare_final_paper.pdf

National Health and Medical Research Council. Postnatal Depression: A Systematic Review of Published Scientific Literature to 1999. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2000.

15 *Lee DT, Yip SK, Chiu HF et al. Detecting postnatal depression in Chinese women. Validation of the Chinese version of the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale. Br J Psychiatry. 1998;172:433-7.*

Lee DT, Yip SK, Chiu HF et al. Screening for postnatal depression: are specific instruments mandatory? J Affect Disord 2001; 63(1-3):233-8.

support services are also provided to postnatal mothers by DH, HA and NGOs, etc..

- Anorexia is also a kind of mental illness. According to the Mental Health Association of Hong Kong¹⁶, 85% of anorexic patients have an onset of symptoms at the age of 13-20, and most of them are females. Usually, young girls eat too little for fear of gaining weight, leading to an excessive drop of weight and an adverse impact on the normal functioning and development of their bodies. Concentration difficulties or even mood disorders may also arise.
- DH has produced a variety of education materials on mental health, including leaflets and resources targeted at women. These education materials provide health information directly to the public on the one hand, and facilitate the promotion of mental health by other organisations on the other. Relevant information is available to all clinics/health centres and the public or can be downloaded from the webpage. DH also operates a 24-hour health education hotline for public enquiry.

16 http://www.mhahk.org.hk/chi/sub4_1_info_b4_7.htm

Analysis

Women's health may be subject to some psychosocial problems, such as mood disorders related to pregnancy; marital, in-law and parental relationship problems; or adjustment issues at menopause. Moreover, single mothers or women in poverty face stresses from life, and young girls may be stressed by the various changes during adolescence as well as the gender stereotyping towards their body shape. If these stresses are not properly relieved, emotional problems like depression or anorexia may arise, leading to serious emotional disorders or suicidal tendency if they are not treated properly. We understand that psychological risk assessment, counselling and group education activities for women are provided by the health centres under DH, and referral to community services are arranged as appropriate. The departments and organisations concerned also provide various treatment and rehabilitation services to mental patients. In recent years, there has been an increasing awareness of emotional health in the community. We encourage those who suffer from emotional disorders to seek help early, so as to prevent the problem from deteriorating. More efforts should also be made to promote awareness of mental health among women.

3.2.3 Housework-related Injuries

- According to the Injury Survey 2008 conducted by a private research agency as commissioned by the Surveillance and Epidemiology Branch of the Centre for Health Protection under DH, among the 460,000 injury episodes¹⁷ which took place in the 12 months before enumeration, 20.4% (or 94,000) of them were classified as domestic injury episodes.
- Among the 6.74 million population, 1.3% afflicted injury episodes in a domestic setting¹⁸ in the 12 months before enumeration. The proportion of females (1.9%) was significantly higher than that of males (0.6%).
- Among the 94,000 domestic injury episodes, 39.1% of them were mainly due to falls. It was followed by sprain (25.1%) and cutting / piercing (13.8%). Most of these injury episodes took place in the living room (39.6%), kitchen (22.1%), bedroom (16.5%), bathroom and toilet (12.6%).
- According to the Survey, over two-fifths (42.8%) of the domestic injury episodes occurred when the injured persons were engaged in unpaid work such as taking care of children and preparing food. Analysed by gender, a higher proportion of domestic injury episodes in females took place when the persons injured were engaged in unpaid work (50.1% for females vs. 19.9% for males).

¹⁷ In this survey, an injury episode was defined as "an unintentional injury that is serious enough to limit the normal activities of a person".

¹⁸ Domestic injuries can take place at the injured's home or other persons' homes.

Analysis

Currently, most home-makers are females. Many of them have suffered from strain injuries after years of home-making which involves manual work and repetitive actions such as laundry, cleaning or cooking. Injuries will result if the affected parts or tissues of their bodies do not get timely rest. This will not only produce prolonged pain but also affect one's daily living and mobility.

As the pain caused by household injuries is more of a chronic symptom, added with the heavy responsibility of taking care of their families, housewives would usually neglect the damages to their health caused by such injuries. In fact, these injuries can usually be prevented by appropriate stretching exercises and proper posture at work. The health conditions of women can be greatly improved if they have an early awareness of the potential danger involved in the daily household chores and the ways to prevent strain injuries. Meanwhile, encouraging men to share housework will also help reduce household injuries of women.

3.2.4 Services and Information

Current Status

- At present, there are three Woman Health Centres (WHCs) and ten MCHCs in Hong Kong which provide woman health services. HA and other subvented or private medical service institutions also provide various woman health services.
- According to DH, the utilisation rates of the three WHCs and ten MCHCs in 2010 were 87% and 74% respectively.
- A comprehensive health promotion and disease prevention programme is provided to all women at or below 64 years of age to cater for their changing needs in different life phases from late adolescence/young adulthood to middle-age and those associated with role changes. The programme aims to empower women to make life choices that are conducive to their health and seek appropriate healthcare or social services when necessary, through the provision of accurate and updated information on all woman health issues as well as relevant community resources. It covers three main areas, namely sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial health and personal relationship, as well as physical health and lifestyle.
- In addition to producing promotional leaflets and publications, DH also disseminates information on health services to women through various channels. For instance, FHS of DH has launched a YouTube channel, the Breastfeeding Hotline, the Cervical Screening Information Hotline and the Health Information Hotline. Various audio-visual resources relating to woman health services are also provided on the Internet.

Analysis

We note that women, mothers in particular, tend to neglect their own health and devote their attention only to the caring of their families. Another factor that prevents women from paying attention to their health may be poor access to health information. This is especially the case for women at the grassroots level. For instance, women who intend to have a body check may not know the presence of any women health service institutions nearby, and the relevant information and charges. Those who are less well-off may, as a result, delay seeking diagnosis and treatment. Hence, WoC is of the view that a simple and user-friendly guide that comprises information on women's health services provided by DH, NGOs and women's groups will facilitate access to health information and services by women.

3.2.5 Breast Cancer

Current Status

- Both breast cancer and cervical cancer are common cancers among women. In order to reduce the incidence and mortality rates of cervical cancer, DH launched a population-based Cervical Screening Programme in March 2004 in collaboration with other healthcare service providers to promote the practice of regular cervical smears in Hong Kong. As a result, women's awareness of cervical cancer prevention has been greatly enhanced.
- Breast cancer has become the most common cancer among local females since the early 1990's. In 2008, it accounted for 22.8% of all new cancers in females diagnosed in Hong Kong. 2,616 new cases of female breast cancer were diagnosed and the crude incidence rate¹⁹ was 71.1 per 100,000 female population. The age-standardised incidence rate was 49.9 per 100,000 standard population. In the past two decades, the incidence rate showed a drop in the age of patients²⁰.
- Breast cancer is the third leading cause of cancer deaths among females in Hong Kong, after lung and colorectal cancers. In 2010, a total of 561 women died of this cancer, accounting for 10.7% of all cancer deaths in females. The crude death rate of breast cancer was 14.9 per 100,000 female population.

¹⁹ Crude incidence rate refers to the number of new cases of breast cancer per 100,000 female population

²⁰ As incidence rates of most diseases are strongly age-dependent, with risk rising with age, direct comparison of crude incidence rates over time may be very misleading if the underlying age composition of the population being compared has also changed. Age-standardised incidence rates, which remove the impact of the change in age composition, can facilitate the monitoring of incidence rates' trend in the long run. Age-standardised incidence rates are based on a new world standard population specified in GPE Discussion Paper Series: No.31, EIP/GPE/EBD, World Health Organization, 2001.

Analysis

Despite the upward trend of the incidence rate of breast cancer, breast cancer survival rates are getting higher due to improved treatment and early detection. There is strong and growing evidence suggesting that positive changes to our way of life can help reduce the risk of having breast cancer. According to the World Cancer Research Fund Hong Kong and DH, only about 4% to 9% of breast cancer cases are hereditary, and many of the factors contributing to a higher risk of breast cancer are linked to our lifestyle, including overweight or obesity, lack of exercise, alcohol drinking or no breastfeeding after delivery. The chances of developing breast cancer increase with age, and women who have never given birth are more vulnerable to the cancer. In addition, according to a survey of the Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation²¹, being under a high level of stress for a long period of time is also one of the main contributing factors to breast cancer.

Developing a healthy lifestyle is indeed important to the prevention of breast cancer. This corresponds with Section 3.2.1 in this Chapter. Most of the breast cancer patients can be cured successfully if their conditions are detected early. Hence, awareness of breast health and early identification of breast problems form the second-line defence against breast cancer. According to the recommendations of DH, women should be familiar with the normal look and feel of their own breasts. Medical advice should be sought immediately when abnormalities such as breast lumps, swellings, discomforts, or changes in size, shape and skin conditions of their breasts are detected.

21 *Breast Cancer facts in Hong Kong Report : Report No.3, p.112*

We consider that early examination, diagnosis and treatment are important to fight against breast cancer. They can reduce the trauma and financial burden incurred by treatments like surgery and chemotherapy to the patients, their families and society, and also reduce the loss of life. Apart from promoting the importance of breast awareness, WHCs also provide mammography screening service for women with high risk of breast cancer. However, as this is not a population-based screening programme, some women are not aware of such service. In addition, the charges (which cost about several hundred dollars) may also make it less likely for low-income women who are not supported by the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme to receive mammography screening.

3.2.6 Disabled Women

Current Status

- The Government's policy is that no one should be prevented from obtaining appropriate medical services due to lack of means. Currently, all persons, whether with disabilities or not, are entitled to equal access to appropriate medical services.
- FHS of DH provides, through its 31 MCHCS and three WHCs, a comprehensive range of health promotion and disease prevention services for children aged between zero and five and women, including those with disabilities, at or below 64 years of age.
- By the end of 2010, the number of wheelchair accessible gynaecological examination tables has increased to six in WHCs and MCHCs.

Analysis

To facilitate access of persons with disabilities to healthcare services, most of the MCHCs and WHCs have provided barrier-free access in the relevant buildings. As an on-going effort, we consider that the Government should continue to improve facilities for persons with disabilities to facilitate their use of healthcare services. Specifically, for women with disabilities, WoC suggests continuously monitoring the utilisation of wheelchair accessible gynaecological examination tables in WHCs and MCHCs and the needs of women with disabilities, as well as increasing and improving the relevant facilities and services as appropriate.

3.2.7 Proposed Goals and Strategies

Women's Development Goal 3:
Enhance health education of women as well as their understanding of relevant services

Proposed Strategies

- 3.1 Promote healthy lifestyle, including awareness of diet, exercise and mental health
- 3.2 Enhance education on the prevention of injuries due to household duties, and encourage division of labour of such duties
- 3.3 Produce a guide to women's health services to promote relevant services provided by WHCs, MCHCs, NGOs and women's groups, and assist DH in disseminating information on women's health to the public

On promoting healthy lifestyle, WoC notes that healthcare providers also provide health education and promote healthy lifestyle when providing healthcare services to the public. Besides, DH has launched the 'EatSmart@school.hk' and 'EatSmart@restaurant.hk' campaigns at the school and community levels to educate people on balanced diet and related knowledge, with a view to creating a culture of healthy eating in Hong Kong.

On dissemination of health service information, with the assistance of DH, NGOs and women's groups, WoC has published the "Guide to Women Health Services" in December 2011 for distribution to the public through NGOs and women's groups. The relevant information has also been uploaded onto WoC's website for public reference.

Women's Development Goal 4: Enhance women's awareness of breast cancer

Proposed Strategies

- 4.1 Strengthen publicity on understanding and preventing breast cancer
- 4.2 Study the feasibility of conducting a survey on public acceptance and the effectiveness of introducing a population-based breast screening programme using mammography

DH educates women on the importance of primary prevention of breast cancer through its clinical services and health educational programmes. Some basic examples of preventing breast cancer include adopting a diet rich in vegetables and fruits, avoidance of alcohol, regular physical exercises, weight management and on-going breastfeeding. DH also promotes the importance of breast awareness. By encouraging women to pay attention to the look and feel of their breasts at different times of the month and with advancing age, women can observe their breast condition so that any abnormal changes can be detected early and immediate medical attention sought. For women with high risk of breast cancer, screening mammography is provided at WHCs. WoC will endeavour to collaborate with the Government in enhancing public education on the prevention of breast cancer.

Women's Development Goal 5: Improve medical facilities for disabled women

Proposed Strategy

- 5.1 Increase the number of gynecological examination tables for the disabled in WHCs and MCHCs

3.3 Safety

Safeguarding women's safety has always been one of the major areas of WoC's work. To UN Women, ending violence against women is also one of its focus areas²². Resolution 63/155 of the UN General Assembly reaffirms the obligation of all States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It also recognises that violence against women is rooted in historically unequal power relations between men and women and that all forms of violence against women constitute a major impediment to the ability of women to exercise their full capabilities.

The UN Secretary-General stated in his report A/65/208²³ published in August 2010 that many countries had adopted a widened definition of violence against women to include domestic violence, sexual violence and sexual harassment which take the forms of both physical and psychological abuse.

All along, WoC has been paying due attention to the incidences of such violence in Hong Kong. In addition to working closely with the Government and relevant NGOs to monitor the situation, WoC has also done a lot of work to combat domestic violence, which remains the subject of public concern.

WoC published two reports entitled "Women's Safety in Hong Kong: Eliminating Domestic Violence" and "Women's Safety in Hong Kong: Eliminating Domestic Violence – An Update and the Next Step" in 2006 and 2009 respectively. These publications set out WoC's recommendations on women's safety covering 21 areas, such as law reform, services, publicity, professional knowledge sharing, training, etc., which were arrived at after consulting 50 relevant groups and Government departments, as well as the progress made after the recommended measures by WoC were taken on board by the Government. One of the recommendations made by WoC and accepted by the Government was the amendments to the former DVO.

²² http://www.unwomen.org/focus-areas/?show=Violence_against_Women

²³ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/470/40/PDF/N1047040.pdf?OpenElement>

With reference to the advice of WoC and other relevant parties, the Government has made strenuous efforts in supporting victims of domestic violence and counselling batterers concerned. Examples include the implementation of the Batterer Intervention Programme, Anti-violence Programme, Victim Support Programme for Victims of Family Violence (VSP), as well as the enhancement of hotline services for handling domestic violence cases, and the strengthening of manpower and relevant training for professional social workers in dealing with domestic violence cases.

3.3.1 Legal Protection

Current Status

- Despite being an international metropolis, Hong Kong is still affected in many ways by the traditional Chinese thinking of male supremacy over female. As a result, victims of domestic conflicts are mostly women.
- The current legislative framework for tackling domestic violence comprises criminal sanctions against acts of violence as well as civil remedies for victims of domestic violence.
- The criminal legislative framework targets acts of violence. In other words, the enforcement authorities may, irrespective of the relationships between the abusers and the victims, if any, and independent of where the acts of violence occur, hold the abusers liable for criminal sanctions under the Offences Against the Person Ordinance (Chapter 212) or Crimes Ordinance (Chapter 200).
- As regards the civil legislative framework, the Protection of Children and Juveniles Ordinance (Chapter 213), Mental Health Ordinance (Chapter 136) and Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance (DCRVO) (Chapter 189) provide victims of domestic violence, including children or juveniles, mentally incapacitated persons, as well as individuals in specific

relationships, with additional civil protection.

- DCRVO has come into effect from 1 January 2010. The scope of DCRVO has been extended to cover spouses, former spouses and their children; persons in same-sex and heterosexual cohabitation relationships; persons in former cohabitation relationships and their children; as well as persons in immediate and extended familial relationships. Under the Ordinance, they are provided with civil remedies and may seek protection against molestation by applying for injunction orders.
- In 2010, 3,338 domestic violence cases²⁴ and 11,254 domestic incident cases²⁵ were handled by the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police).
- Since November 2006, a series of improvement measures have been implemented to strengthen the capabilities of the Police in handling and investigating domestic violence reports. Among others, the Police have established a three-tiered structure to handle domestic violence reports by investigation units at different levels, taking into consideration the seriousness of the cases and the existence of high risk factors in the family concerned. Designated Domestic Violence Investigation Units, comprising specially trained officers with strong investigative background, have been set up at all Police Districts to investigate serious domestic violence cases. Moreover, a “One Family One Team” approach has been adopted, i.e. the same investigation unit will take over all cases involving the same family, in order to enhance the unit’s ability in identifying the risks of the family concerned.

24 Any incident involving an assault or breach of peace between persons generally regarded as having marital or intimate partner relationships, including spouses, spouses who are separated or divorced; cohabitants or former cohabitants (irrespective of their sex) and lovers or former lovers having continuous relationship (irrespective of their sex).

25 Any incident between persons having marital or intimate partner relationships where no criminal element is involved, such as disputes, nuisances and conflicts of non-violent nature.

- The Department of Justice (DoJ) has also implemented a number of measures to fast-track cases of domestic violence. For instance, prosecutors are requested to provide legal advice on domestic violence cases within seven working days upon receipt of the case files from the Police. If delay is unavoidable, the Police will inform the victims and explain the reasons for the delay. Prosecutors will ensure that all procedures in the court can be done in a fast-track manner. The prosecutors will also apply for an early trial date, and seek to make an application for the witnesses/victims to give video statements in parallel as appropriate. Besides, domestic violence cases will be heard in Chinese where possible in order to save time for translation.
- In September 2009, the Director of Public Prosecutions under DoJ issued “The Statement on the Treatment of Victims and Witnesses” (the Statement), which aims to provide guidelines to ensure that prosecutors focus on the interests of victims and witnesses and pay full regard to their rights in handling criminal cases. For instance, the Statement provides that prosecutors should seek to expedite the processing of cases, particularly those involving children and other vulnerable witnesses. Where justified, prosecutors should make appropriate applications to the court for measures to address the specific needs of witnesses, such as use of screens to shield witnesses while testifying, and use of two-way closed circuit television to enable witnesses to give evidence outside the courtroom. In addition, prosecutors should also endeavour to ensure that witnesses are aware of the arrangements at the court, the availability of facilities, and the progress of the cases; and that witnesses have their rights to privacy and confidentiality respected.
- Victims of domestic violence who pass both the means and merits tests are eligible for legal aid. Such an arrangement is similar to other applications for legal aid for civil proceedings. In case of emergency, the Legal Aid Department will arrange an interview with the victim as soon as possible to conduct the tests

concerned and take statements, thereby fast tracking the proceedings.

- According to the Report on Stalking released by the Law Reform Commission (LRC) in 2000, stalking may be described as a series of acts directed at a specific person that, taken together over a period of time, causes him to feel harassed, alarmed or distressed. While stalking is a gender-neutral behaviour, women are the victims in most cases. Some may be celebrities, others may have intimate relationships with the stalkers, or may not even know the stalkers.
- LRC points out that the stalker can be prosecuted only if his or her act falls within the scope of a criminal offence. But stalking can occur without breach of the peace or threats of violence. A stalker can harm his or her victim by simply observing or following the victim without making any threat. Existing law is inadequate in dealing with stalkers who harass their victims by following, sending fax, voice-mail, e-mail on the Internet, etc..

Analysis

As DCRVO has been enacted for just about a year and its effectiveness has yet to be observed, WoC considers that we should continue to monitor its implementation.

Since the publication of the Report on Stalking, views on legislating against stalking are diverse. Some raised concerns about the possible impact of the proposed legislation on news reporting. Legislating against stalking is a complicated and serious topic which requires thorough discussions among members of the society in order to reach a consensus. That said, WoC considers that this is an important issue that must be addressed seriously both from the perspectives of safeguarding women's safety and personal privacy. Some developed countries, such as Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, have in fact enacted legislation against stalking. As the LRC report has been published for quite some time, WoC considers that action needs to be taken as soon as possible to invite public discussion on this issue.

3.3.2 Refuge Centres for Women

Current Status

- According to the figures provided by the Social Welfare Department (SWD), battered spouse cases constitute the bulk of local domestic violence cases. Victims of these cases are mostly women. The number of newly reported cases of spouse battering had increased from 2,150 in 2000 to 2,643 in 2010. Although the percentage of female victims during the period had dropped from 93% to 84%, women were still the majority among these victims.
- For women and their young children who are experiencing domestic violence and in urgent need of accommodation, refuge centres are important temporary shelters for them to separate temporarily from the batterers, so that they can stay calm to handle their relationship with the batterers, and to make plans concerning the long-term welfare of their children and themselves.
- Currently, there are five SWD-subsidised refuge centres for women operated by NGOs. These centres are located throughout the territory. In 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, 1,588, 1,452 and 1,309 women were admitted into these centres respectively. In view of the service needs, SWD set up the fifth refuge centre for women in late 2009, thereby increasing the overall service provision to 260 places. The average utilisation rate of the five centres has currently reached 80%.
- SWD set up the Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre (CEASE Crisis Centre) in 2007. The Centre provides 24-hour hotline and outreaching services for victims of domestic violence, victims of sexual violence and individuals/families in crisis. It also provides short-term accommodation for those in need.

Analysis

In view of the fact that the majority of victims of battered spouse cases are women, WoC is concerned about the sufficiency of places offered by these refuge centres. In this respect, WoC notes that the new refuge centre for women has considerably eased the pressure of service demand.

There exists an inter-referral system among the five refuge centres for women. In particular, if a centre is full and cannot accommodate an applicant in need, it will proactively refer the applicant to another centre with places available for admission. Where necessary, the five refuge centres for women will also work closely with other crisis intervention centres offering residential places, such as the CEASE Crisis Centre and Family Crisis Support Centre, to provide short-term accommodation services for women in need.

WoC agrees that this flexible arrangement can facilitate the effective use of resources, and it notes that there have been no cases of denied admission due to lack of places since the operation of the fifth refuge centre for women. Nevertheless, as it takes considerable time to set up a centre, the Government should continue to closely monitor the utilisation of the centres and the trends of domestic violence cases in order to make early arrangements whenever necessary. For instance, arrangements with regard to the design and environment of the refuge centres should be made such that the number of accommodation places can be increased flexibly to cope with any sudden increase in demand. Also, the Government should review whether there is a need to establish the sixth refuge centre for women in the course of time.

3.3.3 Battered New Arrival Women and Ethnic Minority Women

Current Status

- About 42,000 persons come to Hong Kong on one-way permits every year, of whom about 70% are women. Most of them are in their thirties, have received secondary education in the Mainland and are married to Hong Kong residents.
- At present, non-Chinese females account for about 8% of the total female population. They include Filipinos (106,000), Indonesians (86,000), Indians (10,000), Nepalese (8,000) and Pakistanis (4,700)²⁶.
- The number of cross-boundary marriages between Mainlanders and Hong Kong residents is growing. Reports of domestic violence in these families are often heard.
- In addition to family support, crisis intervention and specialised services, the Government also provides measures and services to assist new arrival women to adapt to the local environment. In this regard, HAD has been collaborating with local organisations to provide adaptation courses and community activities for new arrivals. A Service Handbook for New Arrivals has also been compiled. In parallel, local women's groups provide district-based support networks by organising different activities targeting new arrival women from the Mainland.

Analysis

New arrival and ethnic minority women face a number of problems including language barrier, the lack of community and family support network, inability to obtain information on community support and services, the imbalance of power relationship between the two genders, low employability and economic dependence on their husbands. They may easily become victims of domestic violence when family problems arise and they may not know how to seek timely assistance. Hence, WoC considers that particular attention should be paid to these groups in dealing with domestic violence.

3.3.4 Professional Training

Current Status

- The Government has applied the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist (the Checklist) in reviewing the policies, legislation and services relating to domestic violence, and has enhanced training on gender sensitivity at the same time.
- In respect of professional training in handling cases of domestic violence and sexual violence, SWD provides about 6,000 to 8,000 training places each year for frontline professionals such as social workers, psychologists, medical personnel, teachers and police officers, etc..
- After applying the Checklist, SWD has provided training to staff and volunteers of VSP in order to enhance their gender awareness when implementing the programme.

Analysis

We consider that SWD should enhance the gender sensitivity of social workers and be mindful of the power relationship between the two sexes in order to make the most appropriate welfare plan for victims. For example, social workers should be more proactive in providing information to victims, so that they will be aware of the option of applying to the court for testifying behind a screen to avoid direct contact with batterers, thus sparing them from any dreadful memories or fear. WoC also considers that social workers of SWD and NGOs, as well as other relevant professionals, should participate actively in training courses on domestic violence, sexual violence and gender awareness.

3.3.5 Sexual Harassment

Current Status

- Unlike physical violence in general, sexual harassment can be committed through offensive, insulting or threatening language, eye expression or pictures of a sexual nature that cause disturbance, uneasiness and even fear to victims (who are mostly females).
- SDO is an anti-discrimination law enacted in 1995. Pursuant to the Ordinance, discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status and pregnancy as well as sexual harassment are unlawful. In 2008, the Government amended SDO to extend unlawful sexual harassment to cover any act rendering the environment in which a person works, studies or undergoes training sexually hostile or intimidating.
- According to the WoC 2010 Survey, 27% of people considered that sexual harassment against female employees was very common in the workplace.
- According to EOC's statistics in terms of the number of complaints received concerning the administration of SDO, sexual harassment ranked second after pregnancy discrimination.
- Employees subjected to sexual harassment are usually reluctant to complain to their employers. Hence, absence of complaints does not necessarily mean non-existence of sexual harassment. Some victims may think that there is no point in complaining, or the complaint will be trivialised or the complainant subjected to ridicule. Others may fear reprisals. These may explain the difference between the number of sexual harassment complaints received by EOC and the result of the WoC 2010 Survey. That said, assistance to the victims may be provided by EOC through the conciliation mechanism as provided for under SDO.

Table 2: Sexual Harassment Cases Received by EOC (2000-2010)

	Female	Male	Not Applicable (Note)	Total
2000	79	5	9	93
2001	79	8	2	99
2002	75	4	1	80
2003	103	33	0	136
2004	78	1	1	80
2005	56	4	0	60
2006	83	2	0	85
2007	99	5	0	104
2008	87	1	1	89
2009	103	6	0	109
2010	79	4	0	83
			Total	1,018

Note: Complaints made by organisations or representatives of the aggrieved.

Analysis

Sexual harassment is an act of insult and disrespect towards a person of either gender. It creates a hostile working or study environment, causes physical and mental harm to the one being harassed and affects his/her performance at work or school. Therefore, sexual harassment must not be overlooked. There is a general misconception that making sexual jokes is acceptable. To avoid such problem from deteriorating, gender education is the most fundamental solution.

Given the vast number of working women in Hong Kong, WoC believes that the figures above reveal only the tip of the iceberg of the sexual harassment problem. The low reporting figures may be due to victims' reluctance to report, or their lack of understanding of what constitutes sexual harassment. In this regard, EOC has put in strenuous efforts in organising various kinds of training seminars focusing on sexual harassment at work, devising code of employment practices, and arranging various types of publicity and educational activities in order to arouse public awareness of sexual harassment and encourage victims to report.

Employers are encouraged to put in place policies and measures relating to sexual harassment so as to safeguard employees' rights at work.

3.3.6 Women's Awareness of Their Rights and Violence Prevention

Current Status

- To ensure women's safety and protect them from any form of violence, the fundamental solution lies in fostering a culture of "zero-tolerance to violence" in our community, strengthening education on gender equality and raising the awareness of women, particularly the more vulnerable groups such as the new arrivals, ethnic minority and disabled women of their entitled rights.

Analysis

WoC is aware of the pervasive violent culture on the internet, in the mass media and society. Besides, violent incidents between persons in intimate relationship occur from time to time, and it appears that the parties involved are getting younger. In recent years, the numbers of young girls participating in prostitution through internet activities and compensated dating are also on the increase. While such behaviours should definitely not be encouraged, we are also concerned about the safety of the girls involved. We consider that parents, schools and the society should closely monitor the development of the situation, and the Government should strengthen inter-departmental collaboration to combat compensated dating. We understand that the Family Council has conducted a relevant study on the subject.

3.3.7 Proposed Goals and Strategies

Women's Development Goal 6: Strengthen support for victims of domestic and sexual violence

Proposed Strategies

- 6.1 Monitor the implementation of DCRVO, as well as the progress made by the Government in respect of legislating against stalking
- 6.2 Monitor the usage of women refuge centres, and increase the number of accommodation places in such centres when necessary
- 6.3 Strengthen the support for new arrival women in order to prevent family tragedies
- 6.4 Enhance training for front-line professionals

As regards strengthening support for new arrival women, we understand that HAD will conduct surveys to assess the service needs of new arrivals on a regular basis. WoC suggests that gender perspectives should be incorporated into the surveys to identify the different needs of male and female new arrivals. Furthermore, the survey results should be shared with NGOs and women's groups, such that the latter can design activities and measures which will better suit the needs of new arrival women, and assist them in obtaining the necessary information and strengthening their family relationship, with a view to preventing violent incidents from happening.

**Women's Development Goal 7:
Strengthen education for women and raise their awareness of violence and safety, with a view to fostering a culture of "zero tolerance to violence"**

Proposed Strategies

- 7.1 Raise the awareness of working women on sexual harassment, and strengthen their ability in coping with / handling sexual harassment
- 7.2 Assist the new arrival, ethnic minority and disabled women in understanding their rights and the support services available to them
- 7.3 Raise women's awareness of their own rights
- 7.4 Enhance education on the prevention of sexual violence/dating violence in primary and secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions

Besides assisting new arrival women in understanding their rights and the services available to them, a more important way to assist them is through empowerment. To further assist them to adapt to and integrate into the local society with a view to minimising family disputes arising from cultural and environmental differences, the Government should render necessary assistance to prepare them well for living in Hong Kong before arrival. In this connection, WoC is pleased to note that HAD is planning on a series of support measures for new arrivals, which include setting up a dedicated team to enhance the support services for them and launching the following projects in 2011-12 —

- District-based Integration Programme – providing adaptation courses, family/women mutual help networks and home visits for the new arrivals in districts with higher service demands (e.g. Kwun Tong, Sham Shui Po, Kwai Tsing and Yuen Long, etc.);

- Expectation Management Programme – organising activities for prospective migrants to help them better understand the living environment in Hong Kong before they make an informed decision to relocate; and
- Ambassador Scheme – arranging people with similar background and experience to reach out to the new arrivals and provide them with neighbourhood support.

WoC believes that these measures would help provide appropriate assistance to most of the new arrival women. We encourage local women's groups to play an active part in providing support to new arrival women. For instance, new arrival women who have settled in Hong Kong for a certain period of time can become ambassadors under the ambassador programme. They can help build a mutual care network among women through participating in community service. Women's groups may also play a bridging role in guiding new arrival women to find appropriate assistance.

WoC will continue to liaise with EOC in tackling sexual harassment in the workplace. As most of the big corporations have put in place policies or measures for handling sexual harassment, we suggest that efforts be focused on promoting the prevention of sexual harassment among employers and employees of small and medium enterprises. EOC may provide information and advice on the relevant legislation and procedures, etc., while WoC may assist in further disseminating relevant messages through the network of women's groups. In addition, WoC may conduct public education from the perspectives of women's empowerment and mutual respect for both genders. It may also collaborate with EOC to enrich the module on handling sexual harassment under the Capacity Building Mileage Programme (CBMP) in order to better educate women on how to deal with sexual harassment.

WoC will continue to step up its public education efforts with a view to reinforcing mutual respect for both genders, and discouraging any form of sexual harassment including those committed through language. Besides, we will continue to raise women's awareness of their rights and interests, and help disseminate information on services for the new arrivals, women's rights and prevention of sexual violence that are provided by Government departments and relevant organisations.

3.4 Education

Education is critical to women's development. In an era of knowledge-based economy, a woman's education level is directly relevant to her employability and financial autonomy. The possession of knowledge is also a crucial factor to a woman's ability in and aspiration for decision making. In this light, equal education opportunities are of utmost importance to the long-term development of women and the society.

In Hong Kong, women and men enjoy equal opportunities for education. Statistically, women's overall education level is lower than that of men, because elder women had fewer opportunities to receive education when they were young. As society progresses, significant improvements have been made in terms of education for women. In 2009, over 70% of Hong Kong women had received secondary or post-secondary education. In recent years, women are even getting ahead of men in education.

3.4.1 Mainstream Education

Current Status

- The Government had provided nine-year free education through public sector schools since 1978. As a result, the opportunities of receiving primary and junior secondary education for females of different social strata have greatly improved.
- With the implementation of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) Academic Structure from the 2008/09 academic year, free education has been extended to 12 years to cover also senior secondary education. Under the NSS academic structure, all male and female students need to study four core subjects, namely, Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies.
- Local schools at the secondary, post-secondary and higher education levels have upheld a gender non-discriminatory policy. Students, irrespective of gender, are admitted primarily on their academic achievements and hence boys and girls may compete for school places on a level playing field.
- According to the information provided by the University Grants Committee (UGC) (Table 3 below), female students studying in sub-degree, first degree, and taught postgraduate degree programmes have outnumbered male students. Females also outnumbered males continuously in the post-secondary programmes over the past ten years. In research postgraduate programmes, however, the proportion of female students (43%) is lower than that of male students (57%).

Table 3: Number of Students in University Grants Committee-Funded Programmes by Level of Study and Sex

Level of Study	Sex	Number of Students							
		1986/87	1991/92	1996/97	2001/02	2006/07	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Sub-degree Programmes	F	8,949 (30.3%)	9,619 (36.3%)	13,896 (60.8%)	10,299 (66.0%)	6,346 (65.3%)	4,617 (65.0%)	4,519 (64.5%)	4,973 (64.0%)
	M	20,551 (69.7%)	16,877 (63.7%)	8,970 (39.2%)	5,316 (34.0%)	3,375 (34.7%)	2,490 (35.0%)	2,490 (35.5%)	2,794 (36.0%)
First-degree Programmes	F	5,373 (37.8%)	13,689 (43.5%)	24,052 (49.6%)	25,605 (53.3%)	27,831 (53.0%)	29,316 (53.3%)	30,110 (53.2%)	30,516 (53.0%)
	M	8,829 (62.2%)	17,797 (56.5%)	24,473 (50.4%)	22,449 (46.7%)	24,682 (47.0%)	25,734 (46.7%)	26,500 (46.8%)	27,049 (47.0%)
Taught Postgraduate Programmes	F	1,186 (37.1%)	1,775 (32.5%)	3,819 (36.2%)	5,321 (48.5%)	2,673 (57.3%)	2,343 (59.3%)	2,166 (60.0%)	2,204 (61.6%)
	M	2,012 (62.9%)	3,680 (67.5%)	6,720 (63.8%)	5,638 (51.5%)	1,995 (42.7%)	1,608 (40.7%)	1,445 (40.0%)	1,374 (38.4%)
Research Postgraduate Programmes	F	101 (20.0%)	369 (24.5%)	1,068 (29.5%)	1,686 (39.4%)	2,413 (42.2%)	2,525 (42.4%)	2,688 (42.5%)	2,796 (42.9%)
	M	403 (80.0%)	1,136 (75.5%)	2,552 (70.5%)	2,598 (60.6%)	3,303 (57.8%)	3,434 (57.6%)	3,634 (57.5%)	3,729 (57.1%)
Total	F	15,609 (32.9%)	25,452 (39.2%)	42,835 (50.1%)	42,911 (54.4%)	39,263 (54.1%)	38,801 (53.8%)	39,483 (53.7%)	40,490 (53.7%)
	M	31,795 (67.1%)	39,490 (60.8%)	42,715 (49.9%)	36,001 (45.6%)	33,355 (45.9%)	33,266 (46.2%)	34,069 (46.3%)	34,946 (46.3%)
Total		47,404	64,942	85,550	78,912	72,618	72,067	73,552	75,435

Remarks:

1. Figures in brackets are the percentages of male and female students taking the programmes in the academic year.
2. Figures may not add up to totals due to rounding.

Analysis

Women are provided with equal opportunities in receiving local mainstream education. As the number of girls receiving senior secondary education increases, the demand for post-secondary and higher education also increases. WoC notes that the number of female students enrolling in sub-degree programmes is not small, yet publicly-funded degree places are limited and unable to meet the articulation demand of sub-degree graduates. From the perspective of women's development, WoC considers that more degree places should be provided for people who are capable of and willing to pursue further studies at university level.

3.4.2 Continuing Education and Vocational Training

Current Status

- At present, the Government provides continuing education and vocational training opportunities mainly through the Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses (FAEAEC), Project Yi Jin (PYJ), Vocational Training Council (VTC), Employees Retraining Board (ERB) and Continuing Education Fund (CEF).
- The FAEAEC under the Education Bureau (EDB) provides financial assistance to adult students attending designated evening secondary courses run by the Approved Course Providers (ACPs) in designated centres. Graduates of these courses will be awarded a qualification equivalent to senior secondary level under the mainstream education. All students having fulfilled the attendance requirements as confirmed by ACPs will be reimbursed 30% of the tuition fees paid. Needy students having passed the means test administered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) will be reimbursed half or even full of the tuition fees. In the past five years, about half of the students attending evening secondary courses under FAEACE were women.
- Apart from evening adult education courses, PYJ is an alternative pathway to attain recognised qualifications. Launched in 2000, PYJ provides practical training for interested secondary school leavers and adults. It consists mainly of practical subjects and focuses on the enhancement of students' language proficiency and information technology application. Satisfactory completion of the PYJ programme will be regarded as comparable to five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). Although this academic qualification cannot be used for admission to Secondary 6, the member institutions of the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions have agreed to recognise PYJ qualification as meeting the entry requirements of their certificate, diploma, pre-associate degree programmes and other programmes offered by the institutions requiring an entry qualification of five passes in HKCEE. Students may move

up the continuing education ladder by pursuing further studies in higher diploma/associate degree and degree programmes.

- Although PYJ is a self-financing programme, students in need can be supported by the Government through various means such as fee reimbursement and the Non-means Tested Loan Scheme. With the implementation of the NSS academic structure, EDB and the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions are considering and designing a programme based on the PYJ model to provide a new programme for adult students, including women and students under the NSS academic structure. Students completing the new programme will obtain a qualification equivalent to Level 2 in five subjects in the Hong Kong Diploma in Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE).
- VTC offers a wide range of vocational education and training opportunities for students to receive appropriate vocational education and training according to their interests and strengths. Among its training programmes, the number of female students in child education and community service, business administration, hospitality and tourism courses is relatively high. VTC will offer financial assistance such as fees remission, deferred payment or payment by instalments to students with financial difficulties. Students may also apply for financial assistance under the subsidy schemes of SFAA.
- In the past, the major service targets of ERB were unemployed persons aged over 30 or above with an academic qualification below Secondary 3. In the light of the Government's decision to expand the scope of its service targets in October 2007, ERB's service targets now cover persons aged 15 or above and with education attainment at or below sub-degree level. ERB also addresses the training and employment needs of different disadvantaged groups, including ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, persons rehabilitated from work-related injuries, new arrivals and ex-offenders, etc..

- Since its establishment in 1992, ERB has provided about 1.6 million training places. About 1.4 million persons have completed the relevant courses, in which 75% were women. ERB offers courses in about 30 industry areas, many of which can assist students in obtaining recognised or professional qualifications. Among these courses, household services, beauty, healthcare, retail and hospitality are the most popular ones to women.
- ERB provides free full-time placement-tied courses and training for unemployed persons. Training institutions will provide students who have completed the courses with a three-month employment follow-up service and assist them in securing employment. The average employment rate of these students is about 81%. ERB also offers half-day or evening Generic Skills Training Courses and Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus Courses to enhance students' competitiveness. Unemployed and low-income persons can take these courses free of charge, while others may obtain fee remission from ERB subject to their income level.
- Established in 2002, the \$5 billion CEF has provided financial support to women from all walks of life to pursue further studies. All Hong Kong residents and holders of one-way permits from the Mainland aged between 18 and 65 are eligible to apply for financial assistance from CEF to enroll in courses provided by different designated institutions in subjects covering logistics, financial services, business services, tourism, language, creative industries, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills for the workplace, etc.. In July 2009, the Government further injected \$1.2 billion into CEF. As at 31 August 2011, there were over 570,000 successful applications for opening a CEF account, 60% of which were from women. This is a reflection of the strong demand from women for continuing education.

Analysis

WoC considers that continuing education and vocational training are more significant and relevant than mainstream education in enhancing the capabilities of women to achieve women empowerment. The needs for continuing education and vocational training are particularly strong among people with low educational attainment, new arrival women and homemakers, who were unable to complete or attend mainstream education for various reasons.

WoC believes that education is an effective means to alleviate the problem of women in poverty. Enhancement of educational qualifications and skills can help low-income women secure employment, improve their economic situation, as well as enhance their confidence and sense of belonging to the community. We consider that it is of utmost importance to assist those vulnerable women to pursue continuing education to ensure that they will not be deprived of the opportunities for self-empowerment and advancement due to lack of means.

Apart from financial considerations, flexibility and recognition of the continuing education programmes are also major factors that affect women's pursuit of continuous learning. As most of the new arrival women and homemakers are responsible for taking care of their families and children, they may not be able to take evening secondary courses and obtain a secondary education qualification. Nevertheless, these women need to obtain recognised qualifications in Hong Kong for the purpose of seeking employment.

In this connection, WoC is pleased to note that ERB has provided full-time half-day and evening courses for persons including women who are interested in pursuing further studies. In 2010, ERB introduced a pilot course known as "Certificate

in Foundation Skills for Employment” in Sham Shui Po, Tuen Mun, Tung Chung, Tin Shui Wai and Eastern Hong Kong Island to provide comprehensive basic skills training for new arrivals (women in particular), and assist them in self-enhancement and improve their employability. Taking into account that the new arrivals enrolling in the said course come mainly from grassroots families, and they may be in financial difficulty and require community support, free childcare service from existing operators of the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) under SWD are provided to trainees through referrals by ERB during the training period as necessary. To benefit more new arrivals, ERB has expanded the course and service to other districts in 2011-12. This measure has fully responded to the needs of women and is truly commendable. It should be further promoted for others to follow suit.

3.4.3 Qualifications Framework (QF)

Current Status

- Established in 2008, QF is a seven-level hierarchy, covering qualifications in the academic, vocational and continuing education sectors, thereby facilitating the interface between academic and vocational sectors.
- The qualifications commonly acquired are classified into various levels under QF: doctoral degree (level 7), master degree (level 6), bachelor degree (level 5), sub-degree (level 4) and HKDSE (level 3), etc..
- Each level of QF is differentiated by its generic level descriptors which describes the common features of qualifications at the same level. Industries may draw up competency requirements at various QF levels, known as “Specification of Competency Standards”, according to the generic level descriptions. These competency standards represent the industry benchmarks for the skills, knowledge and attributes required to perform a job at certain level, and enable employers, employees and those with learning aspirations to better understand the industry benchmarks.
- The Qualifications Register (QR) established under QF is a database providing information on whole or modular qualifications at various levels, learning programmes and details of education and training providers for free access by the general public. All qualifications put on QR are quality-assured.
- As at September 2011, 17 industries (including beauty, banking, Chinese catering and property management which employ significant numbers of females) have formed their Industry Training Advisory Committees to gradually develop competency standards and implement the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism to recognise existing workers’ skills, knowledge

and work experience, thereby sparing them from pursuing continuing education from scratch.

- ERB is committed to strengthening the quality assurance mechanism of its courses. Most of the courses offered by ERB have been included under QF and uploaded onto QR.

Analysis

Although there are a number of adult education or vocational training courses available in the market, not many women can fully understand the qualifications awarded by these courses, or how the qualifications obtained may help them in employment. As such, they are unable to make considered choices in selecting suitable training courses to meet their learning or occupational needs. Some working women who have accumulated considerable experience encounter the same problem as they are not aware of their level of qualifications in their own industry.

We consider that there is a need to enhance women's understanding of QF in order to facilitate their study and training arrangements. We believe that a better understanding of QR and the competency standards of the relevant industries will help women make an informed decision in pursuing further studies for the purpose of seeking employment or career advancement.

3.4.4 Capacity Building Mileage Programme

Current Status

- Launched in March 2004, CBMP is a key initiative of WoC in empowering women. CBMP is implemented by the Open University of Hong Kong, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Commercial Radio as well as about 70 women's groups and NGOs.
- CBMP is a flexible learning programme tailored to the needs and interests of women. It is delivered through radio broadcasting, face-to-face courses and online courses offered on the internet, supplemented by optional learning activities. CBMP courses cover various subjects such as managing interpersonal relationships, personal finance, health and other practical issues in daily life. Since its launch, it has encouraged women of different backgrounds and educational levels to pursue lifelong learning and self-development.
- CBMP has recorded a cumulative enrollment of over 50,000 since 2004. In addition, according to a survey conducted in 2011, about 1.4 million audiences had listened to the radio programme in the preceding year of the survey. Feedback from students was that they had benefited from the programme in terms of increased interests in learning, enhanced confidence and knowledge in problem solving in daily life, and a positive change in their thinking and attitudes towards life.
- CBMP was operated initially on a pilot basis. With its proven success in encouraging women's lifelong learning, starting from 2007 the Government provided funding to continue the operation of CBMP as a means of providing low-cost learning opportunities for women. In 2009-10, the Government allocated \$20 million to expand CBMP and provide fee remissions to women with financial difficulty. As a result, the CBMP bursary scheme has

been expanded such that in addition to CSSA recipients, women from low-income families can also benefit from the scheme. As at July 2011, about 1,600 bursary applications had been approved since the introduction of the new bursary scheme in November 2009.

Analysis

CBMP has been remarkably successful in empowering women and assisting them to pursue life-long learning. The existing funding for CBMP will be exhausted by the end of the 2011-12 financial year. In view of the proven success of the programme and its achievements in empowering women, the Government has, on the advice of WoC, agreed to provide recurrent funding for CBMP from 2012-13.

3.4.5 Gender Education

Current Status

- At present, gender education is incorporated into different modules of the mainstream curriculum.
- Students are educated on values such as respect for others, gender equality and anti-discrimination through various subjects or courses starting from primary education. The General Studies in primary schools, and Moral, Civic and National Education in secondary schools are some of the examples. In addition, the Revised Moral and Civic Education Curriculum Framework 2008 promotes seven priority values of students. The two priority values, namely “Respect for Others” and “Care for Others”, aim to cultivate among students mutual respect between both genders.
- As students grow, more discussions on gender issues will be provided to them under the topic of “personal development and interpersonal relationship” under the Liberal Studies subject of the NSS academic structure. This will help enhance their gender perspectives and awareness.
- ERB organises training courses for teachers on sex education. They include gender-related topics such as “Understanding Sex Identity” and “Stay Along with Persons of Same or Opposite Sex with Respect”, etc.. Relevant teaching materials are provided for use and reference by teachers.
- Some higher education institutions offer gender-related general studies and specialised programmes in their university degree programmes including gender research programmes at postgraduate level.

- WoC has maintained liaison with EDB to eliminate gender stereotype in textbooks. In this regard, improvements have been made and gender stereotype in the content of textbooks, particularly in the pictures and examples contained therein, has been reduced substantially.

Analysis

Education plays a pivotal role in promoting gender equality. In today's open society, it is not uncommon to see media reports exaggerating the body shape of females or indirectly encouraging violence against women. These reflect not only the problem in the morality and values of our society, but also disrespect to women. In order to change this, WoC considers it essential to strengthen gender education. The most effective way is to cultivate an awareness of mutual respect between genders among our citizens since their childhood.

Sole reliance on the existing formal curriculum may not be adequate in effectively instilling the concept of gender equality into the young minds. Schools should also promote gender equality in informal learning activities with a view to creating an environment conducive to gender equality. WoC has been advocating the inclusion of modules on gender equality and gender awareness education in the Liberal Studies subject under the NSS academic structure. In addition, professional training of teachers should be strengthened to enhance their gender concepts so as to help students eliminate gender stereotyping and prejudice.

Higher education institution is the cradle of talents and a platform for the young generation to reflect on the social situation of our society. We encourage more tertiary institutions to provide general and specialised programmes on gender issues, so as to provide students with more opportunities for in-depth discussion of and reflection on gender issues.

3.4.6 Parent Education

Current Status

- To many housewives, parenting is one of the most stressful duties.
- WoC has conducted a study on quality parenting and implemented the Quality Parenting Pilot Scheme through DCs in the past few years to promote the concept of quality parenting at district level.

Analysis

In promoting quality parent education, WoC has placed special emphasis on gender perspectives and reinforced the message that both father and mother should play an equally important role in educating their children. Besides, men should be encouraged to participate more in family education. In so doing, WoC seeks not only to eliminate gender stereotyping, but also to encourage both men and women to fully perform their parental duties. For men, they would have more opportunities to develop an intimate relationship with their family members and enjoy spending time with them. From the perspective of maintaining family harmony, men's continual commitment would result in better family relationship and a more even distribution of power among members, thereby reducing the risk of family problems. For women, their husbands' participation in parenting would help relieve their stress, which may arise from managing their work and family duties at the same time, thereby providing greater room for them in developing their career, social network and personal interests. All in all, the obligations and responsibilities of parenting should be jointly shared by both parents.

In addition to emphasising gender perspectives in parent education, we consider that parent education is not only about parenting skills but also instillation of core life values and role

modelling by parents. It is important to establish a platform in the community to promote exchanges and mutual support among parents. In 2010, WoC prepared a conclusion paper to sum up the relevant experiences obtained in this respect. It has submitted the paper to the Family Council for reference.

3.4.7 Proposed Goals and Strategies

Women's Development Goal 8:
Promote and facilitate all-round and lifelong learning of women, and enhance their leadership skills

Proposed Strategies

- 8.1 Provide more publicly-funded degree places or facilitate the development of self-financing degree programmes in order to address the articulation needs of sub-degree graduates
- 8.2 Continue to provide financial assistance as appropriate to help women in need pursue continuing education
- 8.3 Continue to provide flexible courses and further enhance their flexibilities to cater for the needs of homemakers and new immigrant women, with a view to providing them with more channels of learning and acquiring accredited qualifications
- 8.4 Strengthen the Capacity Building Mileage Programme
- 8.5 Study the needs of homemakers in pursuing life-long learning and in re-entering the labour market

Regarding the articulation needs of sub-degree graduates, we understand that the Government has allocated several pieces of land for the development of self-financing degree programmes. It is estimated that the percentage of sub-degree holders progressing to degree programmes will increase from the current 27% to about 33% in the 2015/16 academic year. By then, more female students will benefit from the increased opportunities for higher education.

On strengthening CBMP, WoC is pleased to note from the Chief Executive's 2011 Policy Address that the Government has taken on

board WoC's suggestion and made a long-term financial commitment to fund the continuation of CBMP. We will continue to further strengthen the programme in order to benefit more women.

Besides, WoC may conduct a study on homemakers' needs for continuous learning and re-enter the labour market for the purpose of assisting relevant government departments, organisations and agencies in understanding homemakers' needs and organising training courses suitable for them.

Women's Development Goal 9: Strengthen gender and parent education

Proposed Strategies

- 9.1 Strengthen gender education within and outside schools
- 9.2 Allocate additional resources to strengthen parent education

On strengthening gender education within and outside schools, we recommend strengthening the context of gender education in the curriculum guide or the curriculum itself. We also suggest that relevant academics in gender studies should help develop supplementary teaching materials²⁷ to provide primary and secondary school teachers with more in-depth and complete teaching materials on gender education. Besides gender education for students, WoC also recommends that enhanced gender training be provided to teachers. We understand that EDB organises gender-related seminars for teachers from time to time, such as the Forum on the Implication of Gender Equality Education in School Curriculum in early 2011. We suggest that more gender experts should be invited to provide training for serving teachers. WoC is willing to assist the authorities concerned in finding the right personnel in this field as necessary.

²⁷ The academics concerned can apply to the EDB for a one-off grant under the Quality Education Development Fund if necessary.

To promote gender equality effectively, students should have the opportunity to learn the subject in a relaxed environment outside classrooms. Over the past few years, WoC has worked emphatically on publicity and public education in schools, organising various activities such as essay competition, design competition, debate competition and short video filming competition, targeting at primary, secondary and tertiary students. These publicity efforts serve to publicise CEDAW on the one hand, and promote the awareness and respect of women's rights on the other. Looking forward, WoC will consider making use of the multimedia to further strengthen gender education outside schools.

On strengthening parent education, we recommend that the Government should consider allocating additional resources for further promotion of parent education, as well as conducting a study on the current situation of parent education and identifying areas for improvement. Moreover, the networks of DCs and NGOs should be leveraged to promote the concept of quality parenting at the district level, and encourage males to be more involved in sharing parenting responsibilities.

We strongly believe that by intensifying and promoting the above measures, women can enjoy a smoother pathway for their whole development and life-long learning and to fully develop their potential.

3.5 Economics

Building women's economic autonomy is key to the enhancement of their status. Apart from the perceived supremacy of men, the lack of economic independence of women in the early days also contributed to the traditional thinking that women need to depend on men. Apart from empowering women with knowledge and skills to facilitate their participation in the labour force, an institutional set up and social system and environment conducive to women's economic development is also very important for the improvement of women's economic status. In a highly developed economy like Hong Kong where the number of talented women is booming, "glass ceiling" remains a barrier for many working women. How to enable women to fully exercise their capabilities in economic activities is an issue that must be looked into by those who are concerned about women's interests.

Greater economic participation of women is beneficial to the development of a more robust economy with level playing field. It helps create greater business opportunities and enhance the competitiveness of enterprises and the economy through innovative thinking and better use of resources. Therefore, women's economic participation helps promote economic prosperity, and is indeed an important investment for the future of Hong Kong. Women's participation at various economic segments, including the decision making and management level, is beneficial to the sustainable development of our economy.

3.5.1 Labour Force Participation

Current Status

- The participation rate of female labour force in Hong Kong increased gradually from 45.6% in 1998 to 48.4%²⁸ in 2010. In comparison with other developed countries, Hong Kong stood at the same level as Japan²⁹, but the percentage was lower than that of the United States (59%)³⁰ and Singapore (57%)³¹.
- In 2010, the majority of the female labour force was aged between 20 and 49³². Women aged 20 to 29 had the highest labour force participation rate (71.5%) while that of women aged 30 to 39 was 70.8%³³.
- In the past decade, there was a steady increase in the labour force of women aged 30 to 49 and aged 60 or above³⁴.
- On the whole, the unemployment rate of women was lower than that of men.
- Generally speaking, the median income of women was lower than that of men. In 2010, the median income of women stood at \$10,000, which was lower than that of men at \$12,000³⁵. This difference was attributable to many factors including the gender difference in terms of industrial and occupational distribution, educational attainment, working experience, job nature, etc.. Analysed by the educational attainment and sex, the median monthly employment earnings of women at all levels of educational attainment were lower than that of men.

28 Excluding foreign domestic helpers

29 Statistics Bureau, Japan, 2010

30 U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2008

31 Excluding foreign domestic helpers

32 Excluding foreign domestic helpers

33 Excluding foreign domestic helpers

34 Excluding foreign domestic helpers

35 Excluding foreign domestic helpers

- According to C&SD's statistics for 2010, women accounted for 45% of the approximately 1.58 million employed persons³⁶ in Hong Kong working 40 to 49 hours a week³⁷; 40% of the approximately 570,000 employed persons working 50 to 59 hours a week; and 32% of the approximately 500,000 employed persons working 60 hours or more a week.
- According to C&SD's statistics for 2010, 780,000 economically active women in the labour force were married, with about 570,000 never married, and 130,000 widowed/divorced/separated³⁸.
- Many Hong Kong women are engaged in part-time jobs. According to a survey conducted by C&SD in 2009³⁹, about 580,000 part-time employees cited taking care of housework or children, elderly, disabled or sick members at home as the main reasons for not working longer hours. They accounted for 56.5% of the total number of female part-time employees. Only 1,600 males (2.8%) cited the same reason for not working longer hours. Other major reasons for not working longer hours cited by Hong Kong women were educational pursuit (8.3%), failure to find jobs of longer working hours (8.3%), and custom of trade or arrangement of the companies (7.1%), etc..

36 *Excluding foreign domestic helpers*

37 *Hours of work in all jobs during the seven days before enumeration*

38 *Excluding foreign domestic helpers*

39 *Special Topics Report No. 52*

Analysis

While there has been improvement in women participation rate in the labour force, more can be done. Women are generally promoted at a slower pace than men, partly due to inherent discrimination against them in the workplace, and partly due to their role as family carers as they may leave their work for family duties, particularly after giving birth. This may have an undue influence on their career. Moreover, the lack of comprehensive and affordable childcare and elderly services may also constitute an obstacle to the career advancement of women.

In conducting statistics or surveys, married women taking up the role of family carers are simply regarded as full-time carers, irrespective of whether they wish or have tried but fail to seek employment. In conducting future surveys related to women's employment, these respondents should be asked whether they are willing to accept job offers in order to reflect whether they become full-time family carers because of failure to secure employment.

3.5.2 Family-friendly Employment Policies and Practices

Current Status

- Family-friendly Employment Policies and Practices (FEPP) refer to policies and practices provided by employers to help employees balance work and family responsibilities by offering more choices of flexible and varied work arrangements and other forms of support, such as flexible working hours, family leave and employee support schemes (e.g. childcare support services), etc..
- WoC started to show concern to this subject as early as in 2006, and at that time, it announced the results of a research study entitled “Family-friendly Employment Policies and Practices in Hong Kong” jointly conducted with EOC. The study revealed a low awareness of FEPP among employers and a low prevalence of FEPP in Hong Kong. On the other hand, responses from employees clearly demonstrated support for the wider adoption of FEPP. To further promote this concept, WoC produced and widely distributed promotional materials on FEPP to human resources professionals and the business sector in 2007. The concept was also promoted to these two groups at conferences and other occasions.
- The Government has been actively promoting FEPP in recent years. As the largest employer in Hong Kong, the Government has implemented five-day week by phases since July 2006 to alleviate work pressure of employees and improve the quality of their family life while maintaining the overall quality and efficiency of public services.
- The Labour Department (LD) is one of the facilitators of FEPP. By means of briefing sessions, sharing sessions, roving exhibitions, seminars, promotional publications and DVDs, it encourages employers to adopt FEPP such as special leave and flexible working arrangements, having regard to the circumstances of individual employees as well as the operational needs of their organisations.

- Private organisations have also adopted various FEPP in recent years, including five-day week, paternity leave, compassionate leave and flexible shift work, etc..
- The Family-Friendly Employers Award Scheme, launched by the Family Council in 2011, aims to raise awareness in the business sector of the importance of family core values and enlist business support in fostering a pro-family culture and environment. The award scheme also gives recognition to companies and enterprises demonstrating a family-friendly spirit as a promotion of family-friendly employment policies and practices. Over 1,000 enterprises participated in the scheme in 2011.

Analysis

On one hand, FEPP helps alleviate the dual pressure from work and family of working women while creating a win-win situation for both employers and employees on the other. For employees, a good work-family balance is conducive to personal as well as career development. For employers, FEPP will be a boost to the recruitment and retention of talents, staff morale and productivity, labour relations, and reputation of the corporation.

According to the WoC 2010 Survey, about 71% of people agreed that employers or supervisors were willing to approve leave or time-off applications for their staff to handle family matters. 69% of people agreed that employers would allow staff to work flexitime upon mutual agreement. However, the survey results also showed that these two situations “do not always happen” or only “happen occasionally”.

Paternity leave is one of the FEPP issues that has drawn heated public discussion and received close attention of WoC. Giving birth is important to both the mother-to-be and her family. While women need to cope with various changes in their body and their daily life, their husbands also need to assume a greater role and obligation in the family. Providing paternity leave and facilitating husbands to take care of their wives after delivery is a gesture of caring employers. It also encourages men to share the caring responsibilities towards their families and children.

3.5.3 Childcare Services

Current Status

- According to C&SD, the labour force participation rate of ever-married females was 45.7% in 2010, which was considerably lower than that of never-married females (66.5%). This reflects that many married women tend to leave the labour market temporarily or permanently.
- Various childcare services targeting different age groups are provided by the Government through NGOs. While the Government's policy is that it is the parents' responsibility to take care of their children, childcare services are provided to support those who are unable to fulfill this childcare duty temporarily because of work or other reasons.
- NGOs provide a wide range of day childcare services, including: Stand-alone Child Care Centres and Child Care Centres attached to Kindergartens for children aged under three; the Occasional Child Care Service and Extended Hours Service, Mutual Help Child Care Centres, and NSCCP for children aged under six; and After School Care Programme (ASCP) for children aged six to 12.
- Child Care Centres provide full-day childcare and education services for young children. The Occasional Child Care Service of Child Care Centres / Kindergarten-cum-child Care Centres provide full-day, half-day or two-hour sessions for young children whose carers are unable to take care of them for occasional short periods. Some Child Care Centres and Kindergarten-cum-child Care Centres provide Extended Hours Service to meet the special needs of working parents and families. Mutual Help Child Care Centres are established in local communities on a self-financing and non-profit-making basis. They operate in the mode of mutual help childcare groups with parent volunteers providing temporary childcare services.

- NSCCP, launched in 2008-09, provides needy parents with more flexible childcare services in addition to the regular childcare services. It fosters mutual help and care in the neighbourhood at the same time. NSCCP offers two service components: the home-based care service for children aged under six, and the centre-based care group for children aged between three and under six. Service operators recruit and train carers in the neighbourhood to take care of children in the service centres or the carers' homes.
- It is the policy of SWD to ensure access to childcare services for those in need. Low-income families with social needs may apply for fee remission for such services from service operators and relevant government agencies/service units.
- ASCP, a half-day support service provided by NGOs on a self-financing and fee-charging basis, provides proper care during after-school hours for children aged between six and 12, such that these children will be taken care of when their parents are unable to do so owing to work, employment-related training or other reasons. The services include homework guidance, education, skill learning and social activities. SWD provides Fee Waiving Subsidy Scheme under ASCP is set up by

Type of Services	Total capacity
Stand-alone Child Care Centre ⁴⁰ (Aged under 3)	690
Extended Hours Service (Aged under 6)	1,230
Occasional Child Care Service (Aged under 6)	494
Mutual Help Child Care Centre (Aged under 3/6)	300
Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (Aged under 6)	440*

* minimum capacity

40 The utilisation rate of Stand-alone Child Care Centres was 98%. Child Care Centres attached to Kindergartens also provided around 22,000 places for children aged under three (overall utilisation rate was 72% in September 2010). These Child Care Centres attached to Kindergartens are subject to supervision by the Joint Office for Pre-primary Services under EDB. In addition, private Stand-alone Child Care Centres provided about 2,300 places as at March 2011.

SWD for low-income families. Under the Scheme, those families in need may apply directly to service operators for fee waiving subsidy in full or in half.

- Capacities of the above services between April 2010 and March 2011 are shown below –
- Overall speaking, there is spare capacity in Child Care Centres (including Stand-alone Child Care Centres and Child Care Centres attached to Kindergartens) for families in need of childcare services. Besides, various types of flexible childcare services for children aged under six are in place to meet the working or family needs of parents. Short-term or temporary childcare services are provided in different time slots. In the light of varied demands in different districts and with reference to the experiences of various kinds of childcare services in the community, SWD launched a more flexible district-based NSCCP in 2008-09.
- In view of the favourable outcome of NSCCP, the Government has decided to regularise the project in 2011-12 and extend its scope of services to cover all the 18 districts so as to benefit more families in need. Upon its territory-wide implementation, NSCCP will provide no less than 720 childcare places in total.

Analysis

As unleashing the labour force of women is one of the major purposes of childcare support, the provision of diversified and flexible childcare services is therefore a step in the right direction. The demand of needy parents should be taken into account when devising service plans. The Government should provide women and parents with clearer and more comprehensive information about the childcare services available in districts, and strive to enhance their flexibility. At the same time, collaboration with NGOs and women's groups should be strengthened so as to leverage their strong local networks in delivering childcare services appropriate to the needs of different districts.

3.5.4 Promotion Opportunities

Current Status

- According to the WoC 2010 Survey, over 70% of people considered that men usually stood a better chance of promotion than women. They also considered that being women was an obstacle to their career development. The survey also revealed that over 70% of people agreed that discrimination against women in the workplace was still common. Besides, family responsibility was the major reason that kept women from work and career advancement. According to the survey, 26.6% of women did not wish to be very successful at work, reflecting the belief shared by some in our community that there were conflicts between commitments at work and at home.
- According to the same survey, less than one-third of the married/cohabiting women had tried to get back to work after leaving the job market for some time. Among those who resumed work, 36% stated that their new post/rank was less favourable, and 40% said that their salary was lower than before.
- According to C&SD's statistics, among the employed population in 2010, the male to female ratio of managers and executives was 7:3, and that of professionals was about 6:4. The proportions of female employees working as clerks, workers in elementary occupations and associate professionals were relatively higher at 72.6%, 64.2%, and 44.5% respectively.
- According to a report released by Community Business in November 2009⁴¹, only 8.9% of the total board positions in the listed companies of Hong Kong were taken up by women.

Analysis

Despite vigorous promotion of equal opportunities by EOC and the Government, WoC finds that gender stereotyping is still common in the workplace, and “glass ceiling” remains an obstacle to women reaching more senior positions. This may be partly attributable to women’s role as family carers which prevents women from committing fully to work, or discourages employers from promoting female employees in full confidence.

Though comparable to Australia (8.3%), the female representation on the boards of listed companies in Hong Kong lags far behind the United Kingdom (11%), Finland and Norway (40%). Considering that women make up about half of the local labour force and that over half of the university graduates each year are women, the figure of 8.9% is certainly on the low side.

According to a study conducted by Catalyst Research, the Fortune 500 companies with the highest women representation on their boards of directors have markedly outperformed their competitors by 42% on sales profitability, 66% on invested capital returns and 53% on equity returns. WoC believes that eliminating prejudice against women’s working capability and gender stereotyping will enable more women to assume more prominent roles in economic activities.

3.5.5 Part-time Employees

Current Status

- According to the General Household Survey⁴² conducted by C&SD between April and June 2009, about 159,000 serving employees worked part-time⁴³ during the survey period, which accounted for 5.1% of the total employees in Hong Kong.
- Except for employees aged 15 to 29, female employees in other age groups had higher participation rates in part-time employment than their male counterparts. The overall participation rate in part-time employment of female and male employees were 6.6% and 3.6% respectively.
- The majority of female part-time employees were aged 30 to 59. Among them, 17% were aged 30 to 39, 37% (40 to 49) and 26% (50 to 59).
- The majority of female part-time employees worked mainly in the following sectors: retail, accommodation and food services (32%); public administration, social and personal services (32%); and finance, insurance, real estate, professional and business services (13%). They included workers in elementary occupations (36%), service and shop sales (26%), clerks (22%) and professionals and associate professionals (13%).

⁴² *Special Topics Report No.52: Part-time employment*

⁴³ *Part-time employees referred to employees with their main employment at the time of enumeration fulfilling the following criteria: (a) the number of usual days of work per week was less than 5 (for a person with a fixed number of working days per week); or (b) the number of usual hours of work per working day was less than 6 (for a person with a fixed number of working days per week); or (c) the number of usual hours of work per week was less than 30 (for a person without a fixed number of working days per week). However, persons who usually worked 24 hours per shift were excluded, regardless of the number of usual days of work per week. Moreover, full-time students being on summer vacation and taking up a summer job at the time of enumeration were also excluded.*

- About 68% of female part-time employees were married. In terms of education, most of these female employees had attained secondary/matriculation (51%) or primary (25%) education, while 23% of them had attained post-secondary qualification.
- Overall speaking, part-time employees of both sexes had relatively lower educational attainment as compared with all employees. Among employees at different levels of education, those with no-schooling or pre-primary education had the highest rate of taking up part-time employment (12%), followed by employees with primary education (10.7%).
- All employees covered by the Employment Ordinance (EO) (Chapter 57) are entitled to protection provided for under the Ordinance, irrespective of their sex, duration of employment and hours of work per week in items such as payment of wages, restrictions on wage deductions, granting of statutory holidays, and protection against anti-union discrimination, etc.. Employees engaged under a continuous contract, irrespective of whether they work full-time or part-time, are further entitled to other employment benefits, such as rest days, paid statutory holidays, annual leave, sickness allowance, severance payment and long service payment, etc., subject to their meeting the relevant eligibility criteria under EO. According to EO, an employee engaged under a continuous contract is defined as one who has been employed continuously by the same employer for four weeks or more, with at least 18 hours worked in each week.
- Of the 159,000 part-time employees, 31.8% usually worked less than 18 hours per week. 16.4% of part-time employees had been working in their present job for four weeks or less⁴⁴. The above figures covered both male and female employees.

⁴⁴ Including part-time employees who were employed for a fixed period of four weeks or less according to the terms of employment, as well as those who newly joined a job for at most four weeks at the time of enumeration.

Analysis

According to C&SD, while most of the part-time employees worked 18 hours to less than 30 hours per week, 31.8% of part-time employees (about 50,000) worked less than 18 hours per week. They included both male and female employees. Because of their relatively short working hours per week, employees who worked less than 18 hours per week were probably unable to meet the definition of continuous contract under EO and not entitled to the protection of sickness allowance, severance payment, long service payment, etc. provided for under the Ordinance.

WoC notes that these female part-time employees are generally middle aged with low educational attainment, and unable or unwilling to take up full-time job probably because of family commitments. Owing to a combination of these factors, they have limited choice in employment as well as bargaining power on the terms of employment benefits. As such, statutory protection is an important way for them to be entitled to a certain level of employment benefits. The current requirements for an employee to be provided with statutory employment benefits by his/her employer upon the fulfilment of a continuous contract is less commonly adopted in other jurisdictions. The Government should explore different options for enhancing labour benefits of part-time employment, including providing part-time employees with pro-rata entitlement of the benefits and protection as offered under a continuous contract.

3.5.6 Proposed Goals and Strategies

Women's Development Goal 10:
Step up measures which are conducive to enhancing women's economic status

Proposed Strategies

- 10.1 Enhance the promotion of Family-Friendly Employment Policies and Practices
- 10.2 Strengthen diversified and flexible childcare services

In addition to further promoting the merits of FEPP to employers and the community, we also suggest that the Government should carefully consider the possibility of introducing statutory paternity leave. WoC understands that a topical study on paternity leave in Hong Kong which looks into the overseas practices and experiences, local prevalence, and the possible social and labour implications involved is being conducted by LD. Legislation for paternity leave should be pursued after the completion of the study and collecting views from the community as appropriate. In the meantime, more efforts should be made to promote family-friendly employment initiative. The Government should, in particular, educate employers that implementation of FEPP will help enhance the sense of belonging of employees and retain talents while incurring only a minimal share of the overall operating cost of the enterprises.

**Women's Development Goal 11:
Eliminate discrimination against the working ability of women**

Proposed Strategy

- 11.1 Encourage greater promotion opportunities for women in private organisations

We should promote pluralism among corporations to enhance, at the management level, recognition of the benefits of gender diversity to corporate competitiveness and business growth. It is also imperative for our community to encourage corporations to increase female representation at the senior management level (including in boardrooms).

In response to the public consultation on corporate governance reform of listed companies, WoC wrote to the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited (HKEx) on 18 March 2011 and suggested formulating guidelines for listed companies to set the minimum female representation in boardrooms at 25% initially, subject to subsequent incremental reviews. WoC also suggested that HKEx should consider formulating code of practices, requiring listed companies to introduce gender diversity policies and disclose the information on gender ratios of the management and staff.

Women's Development Goal 12: Strengthen protection for part-time employees

Proposed Strategy

- 12.1 Review the employment situation of and protection for employees not engaged under a continuous contract under the Employment Ordinance

Recently, there are calls for the review of the definition of continuous contract under EO and improving the protection and benefits for employees not engaged under a continuous contract. WoC also recommends that the Government should examine and analyse the data collected for the purpose of a review on the continuous contract requirements. Considerations should be given as to whether protection and benefits for employees not engaged under a continuous contract should be strengthened, making reference to the situation of employees engaged under a continuous contract under EO. In view of its complexity and far-reaching implications, the review should give due regard to opinions from across the community, and the Government should maintain close communication with both employees and employers, with a view to striking an appropriate balance between the interests of employees and the affordability of employers.

In parallel with the review, WoC recommends that the Government should step up publicity on the employment rights of employees not engaged under a continuous contract. For instance, relevant promotional materials should be translated into different languages progressively to enable ethnic minority women to understand their rights and benefits under EO.

3.6 System for Women's Development

Prior to the establishment of WoC, local women's groups have played a pivotal role in promoting women's development and gender equality, and contributed significantly to advancing women's rights and interests in the early days. Since its establishment in 2001, WoC has been playing a bridging role and maintaining close liaison and collaboration with women's groups, relaying their views and providing advice on various women-related issues to the Government. It has also assisted the Government in developing long-term strategies to promote the interests and well-being of women, as well as monitored the progress of relevant policies and practices.

Gender equality forms a cornerstone in the pursuit of freedom, human rights, progress and harmony. In this connection, in considering the enhancement of women's status, we must not overlook the need to review the effectiveness of the existing mechanism in promoting women's development.

3.6.1 Women's Commission, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Beijing Platform for Action

Current Status

- WoC was established by the Government in January 2001 as a high-level central mechanism in response to the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee. Appointed by the Chief Executive, WoC comprises official and non-official members from different sectors. It is tasked to take an overview over women's issues and develop a long-term vision and strategy for the development and advancement of women. It receives secretariat support from the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB).
- One of WoC's major tasks is to monitor the development of all women-related policies, and assist the Government in implementing CEDAW and BPFA.
- Since the establishment of WoC, the Government would consult it on the implementation of CEDAW in Hong Kong whenever periodic reports are prepared. WoC has also provided assistance in collecting views from women's groups on the report outlines. After submission of the reports to UN, WoC attends UN hearings with Government officials to help reflect the progress of implementation of CEDAW in Hong Kong.
- WoC has also closely followed up on the implementation of BPFA in Hong Kong and taken part in relevant international conferences and activities.

- WoC also helps publicise CEDAW and BPFA through various public education activities so as to enhance public awareness of their contents and promote public concern about women's issues.

Analysis

WoC has maintained close liaison with the Government and provided advice on women-related issues. As a central mechanism, WoC plays a proactive role through keeping abreast of the international trends and directions in women's development and giving advice to the Government on women's advancement.

3.6.2 Women's Commission and Women's Groups

Current Status

- WoC adopts a three-pronged strategy, namely the provision of an enabling environment for women's advancement, empowerment of women through capacity building and public education, to promote the interests and well-being of women.
- WoC has been offering advice to the Government on strategies, policies and initiatives concerning women. This helps ensure the integration of women's needs and perspectives into the policy-making process, so as to provide an enabling environment for women.
- WoC is committed to empowering women by encouraging them to pursue life-long learning, protecting women's safety, and increasing women's participation in decision-making. It has also made unsparing efforts in educating the public, in particular the youngsters, on gender awareness and respecting women's interests through different channels such as forums, newspapers, radios, televisions and school activities.
- WoC also attaches great importance to collaboration with different sectors of the community. It maintains communication with local women's groups, and acts as a bridge to relay the concerns of the women's sector to the Government as appropriate.
- To keep abreast of the latest development of women's issues beyond Hong Kong, WoC participates in regional and international conferences every year, including the session of CSW and the APEC Women Leaders Network Meeting. It also meets with women's organisations from the Mainland and overseas, with a view to drawing on international experiences, new concepts, initiatives and development trends for reference.

Analysis

WoC has been playing an active and effective role as a central mechanism to advise the Government on women-related matters from a macro perspective. Since its establishment, WoC has advised the Government on a wide range of policy issues covering areas such as welfare, education, public decision making, safety, employment, sustainable development and health.

Collaboration between WoC and women's groups is necessary for the effective performance of the bridging role of WoC. In Hong Kong, there are hundreds of women's groups. They are different in scales, operating focuses and modes, and are located in different districts over the territory, forming a huge and complex network. Because of the wide diversity of their work and experience, a positive and strong synergy will be created for the promotion of women's development if the network is put to effective use.

Over the years, WoC has been collaborating closely with women's groups to enhance women's status in Hong Kong. Apart from regular exchanges, WoC has also engaged them in a wide array of activities. For example, WoC produced a series of 5-minute TV programmes in 2007 to showcase and give due recognition to the contributions of women's groups in empowering women. In August 2009, WoC organised a large-scale conference entitled "Beyond Limits – Women in the 21st Century". Over 25 women's groups and NGOs took part in the pre-conference activity in which presentations on different facets of Hong Kong women in the 21st century were given. We also invite representatives of women's groups to participate in forums and exchange visits to the Mainland or overseas organised by WoC from time to time.

We consider that there is still room for closer collaboration between WoC and women's groups. Given the diverse backgrounds and characteristics of local women's groups, the kind and level of support they need understandably varies. On the other hand, WoC, as a high-

level central mechanism, needs the assistance of women's groups in taking forward its visions and tasks at the district level. Against such backdrop, we envisage a need to examine how to strengthen the mode of collaboration between WoC and women's groups. We expect that greater synergy will be achieved if WoC is able to provide resources for women's groups to undertake projects conducive to promoting women's interests, and empowerment and development of women. Meanwhile, more attention and support from the Government and different sectors of the community for the development of women's groups will also help cultivate an enabling environment for their greater involvement in building a harmonious society and fostering gender equality.

3.6.3 Resources for Women's Development

Current Status

- The Government earmarks a recurrent funding of about \$20 million every year to support the activities of WoC for the advancement of women's interests and well-being, including the funding for CBMP which is designed to empower women. The above provision also includes the Secretariat's expenditure.
- Relevant Government departments also collaborate with and provide funds for women's groups and NGOs to launch different kinds of activities or women-related services as appropriate. For example, LWB provided funding to women's groups to organise public education activities about CEDAW. Also, SWD provides funding support to the CEASE Crisis Centre, which aims to provide support and intervention services to victims of domestic violence and sexual violence.
- A number of funding mechanisms are already in place in the community for NGOs and women's groups to apply for resources for their activities. For instance, with the support of the \$300 million Community Investment and Inclusion Fund established by the Government, a women's group has set up a mutual support network for single parents to mobilise women's resources to provide after-school care services. Other funding resources include the Community Chest, the Lotteries Fund, the Sir Robert Ho Tung Charitable Fund, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, etc..

Analysis

Women of Hong Kong are taking on more diversified roles nowadays. WoC considers that to help them meet the challenges in society, more resources should be provided to them to facilitate their development and empowerment. While WoC appreciates that considerable resources have been committed by the Government and relevant organisations to provide services and assistance to people in need (including women) in different areas, resources designated for women's development in Hong Kong are still inadequate, making it difficult for WoC and women's groups to advance their work in this regard.

3.6.4 Gender Studies

Current Status

- Researches and studies on gender issues provide valuable reference for the formulation of public policies. In this light, WoC conducts researches and studies from time to time to gauge the changes of the needs and status of women in Hong Kong.
- Major surveys and studies conducted by WoC over the past few years include—
 - ◆ Thematic Household Survey – Time Use Survey and Factors Hindering Women’s Participation in Society (published in September 2003);
 - ◆ Survey on the Effectiveness of Publicity and Public Education (findings published in December 2003);
 - ◆ Survey on Family-friendly Employment Policies and Practices (jointly conducted with EOC in June 2006);
 - ◆ A study on women’s development in Hong Kong, covering a review on major milestones, Hong Kong female forerunners in the past century, progress of women in Hong Kong over the past two decades, and the development of women’s groups in Hong Kong (findings released at the Exhibition on Women of Hong Kong – A Century of Contribution and Development in 2007);
 - ◆ A telephone survey on community perception of gender issues, covering gender stereotyping, gender mainstreaming, empowerment and contribution of women, and major concerns of Hong Kong women in the coming five to ten years (findings released in March 2009) ; and
 - ◆ A large-scale household survey showing what women and men thought about the status of Hong Kong at home, in the workplace

and in social environment (findings released between late 2010 and early 2011).

- WoC also maintains close liaison with C&SD in the collection and analysis of gender statistics, and assists the latter in compiling the “Women and Men in Hong Kong – Key Statistics”.
- EOC, as the statutory body responsible for the implementation of SDO and FSDO, also conducts researches and surveys on gender equality and gender issues. Examples include the “Study on Public Perception of Portrayal of Female Gender in the Hong Kong Media”, the “Telephone Survey on Women’s Knowledge of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women”, a report entitled “A Baseline Survey of Equal Opportunities on the Basis of Gender”, and the “Survey on Public Attitudes towards Sex as a Genuine Occupational Qualification”.
- Scholars interested in gender issues conduct research and analysis on the subject from time to time. In particular, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and HKU have each set up a gender research centre. Individual academics of other tertiary institutions also examine gender issues within their expertise.
- Over the years, women’s groups have actively conducted multi-faceted and in-depth researches and surveys on women-related issues to enhance public concern about gender issues.

Analysis

Gender researches and surveys are important as they can reflect the underlying social attitudes and concepts of society, raise public awareness of gender stereotyping, and examine the changes in public perception of gender issues. Such information is instrumental to the work on women-related issues. Therefore, WoC has actively worked on researches and surveys over the years and shared the results with all sectors of the community, so as to facilitate public understanding and discussion of gender issues. We consider that such efforts should be continued and strengthened. The information and data collected should be consolidated and analysed systematically with a view to providing useful reference for the formulation of public policies.

3.6.5 Gender Mainstreaming

Current Status

- Gender mainstreaming is a global strategy advocated by UN for the promotion of women's advancement and gender equality. It was firmly established in BPFA adopted at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. Many countries have adopted gender mainstreaming in their policy making processes since then.
- Gender mainstreaming is the integration of gender perspectives and needs in legislation, policies and programmes in any area. It makes women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all legislation, policies and programmes. Through such processes, gender mainstreaming seeks to ensure 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.
- On WoC's recommendation, the Government has progressively implemented gender mainstreaming in different areas since 2002. WoC has developed a Gender Mainstreaming Checklist (the Checklist), which comprises a series of simple questions to assist government officers in applying gender mainstreaming in a more systematic way.
- So far, the Checklist has been applied to more than 40 policy and programme areas related to women, covering welfare, public building design, rehabilitation services, participation in public policy making, statistics, healthcare, publicity and education, village representative election, etc.. In addition to the application of the Checklist, government officers have also applied the gender mainstreaming concept in various areas.

- Based on the Government's practical experience in applying gender mainstreaming, WoC revised and enhanced the Checklist in 2009 in consultation with academics specialised in gender issues.
- A Gender Focal Point (GFP) network has been set up at each Government bureau and department since 2003. Most of the GFPs are directorate officers, who serve as the resource persons and contact points within their respective organisations for the implementation of gender mainstreaming. GFPs meet from time to time to discuss how to further promote gender mainstreaming and gender awareness in the Government.
- WoC is an important partner of the Government in promoting gender mainstreaming. A WoC pamphlet entitled "Gender Mainstreaming – Hong Kong Experience" was published in 2006 to reinforce and promote the Government's experience in applying gender mainstreaming. Also, WoC maintains exchanges with bureaux and departments to review their application of gender mainstreaming and provide advice as appropriate.
- Another major role of WoC is to promote gender mainstreaming beyond the Government to other organisations and the community. Since 2008, WoC has established a network of GFPs in DCs. Each of the 18 DCs has now designed a GFP to facilitate communication and collaboration between DC and WoC. In addition, briefings and discussions will be conducted during WoC's regular visits to DCs on the implementation of gender mainstreaming and programmes for women's development and well-being.
- WoC has recently extended the promotion of gender mainstreaming to ASBs.

Analysis

Women and men have different life phases, needs and experience. Because of such differences, policies and measures which apply universally to women and men may create different impacts to them. Therefore, we need to make gender an independent consideration so as to prevent any unfair treatment between women and men. This is the spirit of gender mainstreaming. WoC believes that gender mainstreaming should not be confined to the Government. It should be understood and implemented across the community so as to create an environment where men and women live in equal terms. WoC will, on one hand, monitor the implementation of gender mainstreaming within the Government and, on the other, actively promote this important concept to all in the community through public education.

3.6.6 Gender Training

Current Status

- Over 5,200 civil servants of various ranks and grades have attended classroom training on gender issues. Apart from the mass seminars organised by the Civil Service Training and Development Institute which are open to all grades and ranks in the civil service, tailor-made programmes are also arranged by LWB in collaboration with bureaux and departments for their staff. In addition to introducing the gender-related concepts, the programmes are also tailor-made to meet the needs of staff according to their respective working environment and job nature, aiming to enhance staff's gender sensitivity in the workplace and facilitate the application of gender mainstreaming in their daily work. Some departments and grades have also incorporated training on gender-related issues into their regular training programmes.
- The Government has also developed a web-portal on gender mainstreaming for reference by all civil servants and the general public. The web-portal serves as a resource and experience-sharing platform to help civil servants to intensify their understanding of gender mainstreaming. It provides information on the concept and application of gender mainstreaming as well as hyperlinks to useful websites, and sets out examples of different policy or programme areas that have applied gender mainstreaming.
- To strengthen understanding of gender concepts among civil servants, the Government has promulgated an online training programme since 2010 to provide a more flexible mode of training on gender awareness.

Analysis

It is essential to enhance the gender awareness and sensitivity of public officers in order to ensure the smooth and extensive implementation of gender mainstreaming in various policy areas. For this purpose, gender training is a crucial and on-going task. We consider that more efforts are required to enhance training for public officers, and we encourage more departments to incorporate gender training into their regular training programmes.

3.6.7 Proposed Goals and Strategies

Women's Development Goal 13:
Study the needs and strategies in further promoting women's development

Proposed Strategies

- 13.1 Study ways to enhance the collaboration model between WoC and women's groups
- 13.2 Strengthen research on gender-related issues

Regarding collaboration with women's groups, WoC will, on a pilot basis, provide funds for women's groups to carry out specific projects to promote women's interest. Further development of the mode of collaboration between WOC and women's groups will be examined.

Women's Development Goal 14:
Further the implementation of gender mainstreaming within and outside the Government

Proposed Strategies

- 14.1 Monitor the implementation of gender mainstreaming
- 14.2 Raise gender awareness and sensitivity of public officers through strengthening relevant training
- 14.3 Strengthen public education and promote gender mainstreaming outside the Government

Chapter 4. Conclusion

After extensive discussion with various stakeholders and thorough consideration, WoC has put forward 14 women's development goals and 36 recommended strategies in Chapter 3 of this report. These collective wisdoms, translated into common directions and objectives, represent the consensus reached with the stakeholders involved. As discussed in Chapter 1 of this report, it is our objective to set attainable goals in a pragmatic manner, so that all relevant parties, with respect to their different roles, can help take forward these goals and strategies to further women's development.

Other Long-term Goals

Promoting women's development is no easy task and relevant work needs to be done by stages. While the recommendations proposed in Chapter 3 are goals and strategies for the short to medium term, there are other issues that should not be overlooked for the long-term development of women, notwithstanding that the society has yet to reach a general consensus on them.

Gender Mainstreaming

Apart from monitoring the progressive application of gender mainstreaming to various policy areas within the Government, our ultimate goal should be the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming in all policy areas. We believe that gender equality constitutes not only a core value but also a cornerstone in the society's development. As our society progresses, gender equality should be manifested in major policies and initiatives.

Gender Budgeting

A number of women's groups have called for the introduction of gender budgeting in the Government. It aims to, by drawing up budget and policies from a gender perspective, ensure that women will have equal

access to resources and development opportunities in the society, and that sufficient resources will be allocated for programmes and initiatives promoting gender equality and women empowerment. Although the concept is still at a developmental stage, WoC considers that the Government should keep in view development in other countries and regions and study the progress of its implementation, with a view to exploring whether to implement the concept and how to adopt it to suit the circumstances of Hong Kong.

Specialised Domestic Violence Court

There are calls in the community for a specialised domestic violence court. We support this view and believe that the proposed set up can speed up the handling of domestic violence cases. We suggest that the Government should keep an open mind on this, and look into the feasibility of introducing an appropriate model for Hong Kong having regard to the latest development in other jurisdictions.

Reviewing the Sex Discrimination Ordinance

We consider that the Government should review SDO to strengthen the protection for victims of sexual harassment, including protection for service providers against sexual harassment by customers.

Carers in Households

Most of the carers in families are women who provide care for both their children and seniors at home. These females have made valuable contribution to our society as they have played an important role in nurturing caring families and facilitating the stable development of our society. However, social support to them is inadequate and their contributions are seldom discussed or recognised. Moreover, the existing employment protection and the Mandatory Provident

Fund Scheme are not applicable to them as they are relatives / families to whom they take care of.

We consider that community support network should be provided for carers who are primarily engaged in family caring duties. More support in caring for family members should also be provided. To ease the burden of these women, we suggest that, apart from the childcare services discussed in Chapter 3, additional resources should be given to strengthen home-based caring services for the elderly. Collaboration between Integrated Family Service Centres and NGOs should be stepped up so as to provide suitable support services for these carers. We take note of the view of women's groups that support and recognition for these carers are inadequate, and agree that these carers should be given due recognition. In the long run, we should consider how to provide retirement protection for those women who are fully engaged in family caring duties.

Women Health Centres

Women health services are currently provided by the three WHCs and ten MCHCs in Hong Kong. WHCs can be found at Chai Wan, Lam Tin and Tuen Mun respectively, while the MCHCs are located across the territory. Although the latter also provides women health services, we consider that the existing three WHCs are far from adequate in meeting the needs of women, in particular the low-income ones, which altogether constitute half of the total population in Hong Kong. We therefore consider it necessary to review the need for more WHCs in the future, so as to provide more accessible service to women living in different districts.

Positioning of WoC and Resources for Women's Development

All along, WoC has assumed a proactive and advisory role as a central mechanism on issues pertaining to the promotion of interests and well-being of women. Ten years after its establishment, we believe that it is time to revisit the positioning of WoC as well as its mode of operation within the Government system, so as to enable it to further promote women's development and provide better assistance to bureaux and departments in formulating women-related policies. Moreover, to enable women, including the disadvantaged women, to realise their potential and fully participate in society, economic activities and decision making, we see a need to invest more in women's development through women empowerment and leadership training programmes.

The long-term goals stated above require more thorough discussion or detailed study in order to reach a consensus. While they are not included in our current exercise of formulating specific women's development goals, they are good references for the study of women's development in the long-run. As such, these views are documented in this Chapter to facilitate public discussion in the future.

Conclusion

It is an important and challenging mission to promote gender equality and the advancement of women's interests. The women's development goals exercise is a new attempt of WoC. WoC will continue to listen to the views from different sectors carefully, and work in collaboration with the Government, women's groups and NGOs in advancing women's interests and well-being in Hong Kong.

Chapter 5. Membership of the Task Force on Women's Development Goals

Convener

Ms Sophia KAO

Task Force Members (surname in alphabetical order)

Ms Teresa AU

Dr Miranda CHAN (until 14 January 2011)

Ms CHAU Chuen-heung

Ms Jacqueline CHENG

Ms FONG Man-ying

Ms KO Po-ling

Dr Maggie KOONG

Mrs Ayesha M LAU

Ms LAU Ka-shi

Ms Joanna LAU (until 14 January 2011)

Dr LEUNG Lai-ching



Chapter 6. Acknowledgement

Organisations and Persons Participated in the Corresponding Meetings (in alphabetical order)

All-China Women's Federation Hong Kong Delegates Association
Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
Education Bureau
Elderly Commission
Equal Opportunities Commission
Home Affairs Bureau
Home Affairs Department
Hong Kong Coalition on Equal Opportunities
Hong Kong Federation of Women
Hong Kong Island Women's Association
Hong Kong Outlying Islands Women's Association
Hong Kong Women Development Association Limited
Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association
Kowloon Women's Organisations Federation
Labour and Welfare Bureau
Labour Department
Social Welfare Department
The Chinese General Chamber of Commerce—Ladies' Committee
The Women's Foundation
Tung Wah Group of Hospitals

Ms AU Mei-po
Dr CHIU Pok-kwan
Ms Elsie LEUNG
Dr LEUNG Tung-yeung
Dr NG Chun-hung
Ms Bell WONG
Mr YIU Tze-leung



Chapter 7. Appendices

Annex 1. Terms of Reference of the Task Force

The Task Force is set up by the Women's Commission (WoC) and tasked to –

- (a) consider women's development goals, specifically—
 - (i) to identify priority areas where women's development goals are needed;
 - (ii) to propose appropriate goals for the areas identified; and
 - (iii) to suggest ways to achieve the goals set;
- (b) consult stakeholders in respect of (a) above; and
- (c) advise WoC on the recommendations on the results of (b) above.

Annex 2. Terms of Reference of the Women's Commission

The Women's Commission is tasked to promote the well-being and interests of women in Hong Kong. As such, it will—

- advise the Government on the development of a long term vision and strategies related to the development and advancement of women;
- advise the Government on the integration of policies and initiatives which are of concern to women, which fall under the purview of different Policy Bureaux;
- keeps under review, in the light of women's needs, services delivered within and outside the Government and to identify priority areas for action, and monitor the development of new or improved services;
- initiate and undertake independent surveys and research studies on women's issues and organise educational and promotional activities; and
- develop and maintain contact with local and international women's groups and service agencies with a view to sharing experience and improving communication and understanding.



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Women's Commission

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