



7 Capacity Building Mileage Programme

Opening Up Wider Horizons

Empowerment is part of the three-pronged strategy adopted by the Commission to promote women's well-being. We believe that capacity building is an important process leading to empowerment and that an essential aspect of capacity building lies in adequate and relevant education and training programmes. The Commission reckoned that many existing programmes offered by public, private and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were vocational and we were concerned that they may not fully address women's needs or interests in timing of classes, location, academic prerequisites and choice of subjects. We thus initiated the development of a Capacity Building Mileage Programme (CBMP) to enhance individual women's all-round abilities.

EXPLORATION

The way is far and
wide

I will search high and
low

I will explore

– **Qu Yuan**, ancient
Chinese poet

Equipped for Challenges

The CBMP has been created to encourage women to widen their perspectives and develop or realise their potential; to develop learning interest and boost their skills in studying; to remove environmental barriers; and to provide opportunities to build up their capacities. The Programme is designed to equip women with a positive mindset and enhance their inner strength so that they can cope with different challenges. It differs from existing vocational training courses in that it seeks to help participants, women in particular, to change their perceptions and attitudes about themselves and the environment. It sets out to enhance participants' creativity, curiosity, personal judgement, self-reliance, self-confidence and a sense of humour or optimism.

The CBMP is the first, large-scale, tailor-made learning programme with a women's focus and, in place of a classroom-based approach, it will use the radio to disseminate information and include self-evaluation. The Commission has played



a catalytic role in taking the CBMP forward, mobilising The Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) and Commercial Radio to prepare a three-year pilot programme that builds on the different strengths of the parties involved. The OUHK's Li Ka Shing Institute of Professional and Continuing Education (LiPACE) is responsible for course development, administration and quality assurance while Commercial Radio will look after production and broadcasting.

New Routes to Learning

Key features of the CBMP include:

- **flexibility:** participants can take up courses at any time ("multiple entry points") and accumulate "points", which enable them to proceed to more advanced courses (hence "mileage"); or exit the programme at any time ("multiple exit points");
- **convenience:** face-to-face classes are minimised with courses mainly broadcast via radio and supplemented by optional activities; supplementary activities, tutorials or peer-sharing sessions may be provided by NGOs;
- **relevance:** courses are tailor-made to meet women's needs; course content is relevant to women's daily lives, especially grassroots women, but men are welcome to enrol;
- **choice of assessment:** unlike conventional programmes where course providers employ one method of assessment, a combination of assessment tools, such as tests, coursework, reflective writing, is allowed;
- **mileage:** participants gain "points" from their studies and advance to the next level when sufficient "points" are accumulated;
- **optional enrolment:** registration is not required unless participants intend to undertake assessment and obtain "points"; and
- **affordable:** the fee is set to cover the cost of registering participants and production of course materials. Scholarships and financial assistance can be granted to those who excel and those in need.

The Programme has provided a good opportunity for collaboration with community groups, and women's organisations and NGOs have been invited to participate in the CBMP's design (through focus groups and by responding to a consultation document), publicise the Programme, mobilise women to enrol, and conduct supplementary learning activities and some face-to-face courses.

At the vigorous support of the Commission, the Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee agreed that a sum not exceeding some \$12 million should be granted from the Lotteries Fund to the OUHK for the implementation of the CBMP on a three-year pilot basis. A Steering Committee was established under the Commission to provide strategic guidance on the Programme's development, to monitor progress and evaluate the outcome. The CBMP is set to launch in March 2004 with courses including interpersonal relationships, finance management, health and practical issues in daily lives (such as basic legal knowledge and problem-solving skills). Academics, professionals and experts on women's issues, women's groups and NGOs will be involved in course development.

PROGRESS

Where there had
been no pathway

A pathway was
formed

As many people took
that way

– **Lu Xun**, modern
Chinese writer