

MESSAGE

Women make an ever increasing and important contribution to the development of Hong Kong's economic, political and social life. Not only do they contribute directly to our prosperity by making up 40% of our labour force, they also contribute through their unremunerated work in looking after their families and other voluntary services. With a view to eliminating discrimination on the grounds of sex and promoting gender equality in the community, we enacted the Sex Discrimination Ordinance in 1995 and established the Equal Opportunities Commission in 1996.

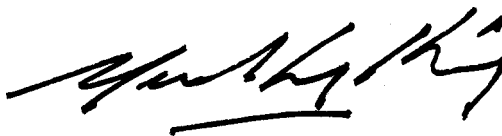
Equality in education is demonstrated by the fact that more than half of our university first degree graduates are now women. Their growing contribution to serving the community is indicated by the 14 female Executive and Legislative Council members and 72 District Council members. The number of women serving on Government advisory and statutory bodies has nearly doubled over the past decade. As a consequence of these achievements, the status enjoyed by women in Hong Kong has improved considerably in recent years.



Notwithstanding the progress made, more work has to be done. We believe that a more holistic, comprehensive and systematic approach can address women's concerns more effectively. Later this year, we will set up a Women's Commission to serve as a dedicated body to promote the well-being and interests of all women in Hong Kong.

The establishment of the Women's Commission will be a milestone in our efforts to promote the advancement of women in Hong Kong. The Commission will not only help us develop a long-term vision and strategies for the advancement of women, but also to address women's immediate needs and concerns more effectively. We will also address the deep-rooted issue of gender stereotyping and cater for the specific needs of various women's groups.

To succeed in our mission, we need support from both within and outside the Government, in particular those organisations and individuals who are already active in championing different causes for women. The Administration looks forward to working hand in hand with the Women's Commission and the community, to achieve these objectives and to ensure that all women are given the opportunity to develop their potential.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yeoh E K', with a horizontal line underneath the signature.

(Dr E K Yeoh)
Secretary for Health and Welfare

**Promote the Well-being and
Interests of Women
Policy Objective
and
Key Result Areas**

PROMOTE THE WELL-BEING AND INTERESTS OF WOMEN

Our Policy Objective is to promote the well-being and interests of women in Hong Kong.

This new Policy Objective demonstrates our commitment to promote the advancement of women and sincerity in handling women's issues. We will establish a Women's Commission this year. The Commission, with a majority of members from the non-governmental sector, will be asked to advise on a strategic overview of women's issues and the development of a long-term vision and strategies for the development and advancement of women. With the establishment of the Commission, we will ensure that women's perspectives are factored in during the formulation of policies, where applicable. In addition, we will also improve the delivery of services for women by reviewing existing services and identifying priority areas for action. We intend to raise public awareness on women's issues by organising training, educational and promotional activities.

Overall Targets

Our targets this year in pursuing this Policy Objective are –

- to improve the current delivery of women's services to better serve women's needs
- to enhance the awareness and understanding of the public and the Administration on women's issues
- to improve communication between the relevant non-governmental organisations and the Government and to strengthen liaison with relevant international bodies

Progress

Over the past decade, we have adopted a wide range of administrative and legislative measures to meet the diverse needs of women. For example, with a view to eliminating discrimination on the grounds of sex and promoting gender equality in the community, we enacted the Sex

Discrimination Ordinance in 1995 and established the Equal Opportunities Commission¹ in 1996. To assist working mothers, we have been providing comprehensive child care services through child care centres and after school care programmes. Women’s competitiveness in the labour market has been enhanced through a wide range of training programmes. The specific healthcare needs of women have been met by a comprehensive range of promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative healthcare services provided by our Women Health Centres and Maternal and Child Health Centres. We have also established inter-departmental working groups to strengthen the co-ordination of our efforts and services on battered spouses and sexual violence. In addition, we continue to adhere to the principles in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by implementing various policies and measures and by fulfilling the objectives set out in the Beijing Platform for Action².

Women’s issues impinge on a wide range of policy areas. Women-related issues are handled individually by bureaux and departments according to their functional responsibilities. In future, the Women’s Commission will serve as a central body for the identification of all women’s needs and specifically, to address all matters of concern to women. The Health and Welfare Bureau will provide secretariat and administrative support to the Commission, as well as undertaking implementation responsibilities relating to CEDAW.

Looking Forward

To achieve our overall targets this year, we will undertake the following initiatives and targets under each of the Key Result Areas (KRAs) for the coming year.

- ¹ The progress on initiatives regarding the Sex Discrimination Ordinance and the promotion of equal opportunities undertaken by the Equal Opportunities Commission are reported under the Home Affairs Bureau’s Policy Objective “The Rights of the Individual”.
- ² The Government participated at the Fourth World Conference on Women held by the United Nations in 1995, at which the Beijing Platform for Action was endorsed. The document identifies obstacles to the advancement of women under 12 “critical areas of concerns” and calls for action to be taken by Governments, the international community, non-governmental organisations and the private sectors to remove these obstacles.

1

Develop a long-term vision and strategies related to the development and advancement of women

We have accorded a high priority to women-related matters. Currently, there is a well-established machinery both within and outside the Government to handle the major women's issues and, many administrative and legislative measures are in place to cater for their needs. Notwithstanding this trend, we see room for further improvement and will establish a single body to oversee this area of work.

By setting up a Women's Commission, we will be able to better promote the well-being and interests of women and address their needs more effectively. Instead of individual bureaux and departments handling women's issues separately, a strategic overview will be developed to provide the broad framework within which women's issues can be addressed. A longer term vision and detailed strategies will be developed to promote the development and advancement of women. We will address women's needs in a comprehensive and systematic manner and promote their full development and advancement. Last but not least, we will oversee the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action.

We will assess our performance in respect of this KRA against the following indicators –

- Progress in drawing up longer term strategies and plans to promote the well-being and interests of women in Hong Kong. Our target is to have these strategies and plans ready by 2001.
- Progress in implementing CEDAW, the United Nations Committee's Concluding Comments on the HKSARG's initial report under CEDAW and relevant measures and initiatives in meeting the Beijing Platform for Action. This will be an on-going effort.

We will pursue the following initiatives and targets to deliver results in this area –

Initiative *	Target
To set up a Women’s Commission <i>(Health and Welfare Bureau (HWB))</i>	To complete in 2000
To draw up longer term strategies and plans to promote the well-being and interests of women in Hong Kong <i>(Women’s Commission)</i>	To complete by 2001
To implement CEDAW, the UN Committee’s Concluding Comments on the HKSARG’s initial report under CEDAW and relevant measures and initiatives in fulfilling the Beijing Platform for Action <i>(HWB)</i>	This will be an on-going effort. To continue to implement recommendations contained in the UN Committee’s Concluding Comments, as far as possible

* the bracketed information denotes the agency with lead responsibility for the initiative

2

Identify women's needs and improve women's services

The well-being of women is closely related to our effectiveness in addressing their needs and concerns. Our efforts will focus on two main areas, i.e., identification of women's needs and delivery of services. To address women's concerns more effectively and improve the delivery of services to women, we will adopt a more holistic, comprehensive and systematic approach.

With the active participation of the Women's Commission, we will investigate emerging issues and implement improvements to services. In the coming year, we will consider whether some of the existing services should be re-organised, how resources should be redeployed to areas with greater need and develop new programmes to encompass more up-to-date strategies. In this way, we will be able to provide services that better cater for the needs of women. Moreover, building on our past efforts in maintaining liaison with the community on women's issues, we will broaden and strengthen our liaison with local women groups and service agencies to ensure that women's needs are clearly identified and that there is community input in the process. We will continue to communicate with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and service agencies. Regular fora and meetings will be organised to solicit their views and input on topical issues.

We will assess our performance in respect of this KRA against the following indicators –

- Effectiveness in identifying women's needs through conducting studies, surveys and research, improving communication with local NGOs and relevant international organisations and collecting the necessary women-related statistics. Our target is to start the first study in 2001 and conduct regular meetings with local NGOs.
- Extent of improvement in the delivery of services to women to address their needs and concerns. Our target is to complete the first review on services to women and to co-ordinate the introduction of some improved services in 2001.

We will pursue the following initiatives and targets to deliver results in this area –

Initiative	Target
<p>To commission studies, surveys and research on women’s needs</p> <p><i>(Health and Welfare Bureau (HWB))</i></p>	<p>This will be an on-going effort. To start the first study in 2001</p>
<p>To improve communication between local women’s groups and service agencies and the Government, as well as to build up a liaison network with relevant international bodies</p> <p><i>(HWB)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Starting from 2001, to conduct regular meetings with local non-governmental organisations each year ● Starting from 2000, to participate in key international fora
<p>To establish a sex disaggregated database and collect the necessary women-related statistics</p> <p><i>(Census & Statistics Department)</i></p>	<p>To publish a report on women-related statistics in 2001</p>
<p>To review services delivered within and outside the Government, to identify priority areas for action and to develop new or improved services</p> <p><i>(HWB)</i></p>	<p>To complete the first review and to co-ordinate the introduction of some improved services in 2001</p>

3

Facilitate women to participate more fully in the community

Women comprise 40% of our existing labour force and play an important and valuable role in various public structures, including advisory and statutory bodies. Women make up more than half of our population and there is clearly potential to see more women participating to a greater extent in our community.

We are aware that women face a number of different obstacles. To help mothers who wish to work, we provide child care facilities to enable them to go to work. Various vocational training and retraining courses are provided to retrain women and equip them with the necessary new skills required in an ever changing work environment. In the coming year, we will continue to encourage relevant agencies to implement initiatives to develop women's potential and to facilitate them to participate more fully in the community.

We will assess our performance in respect of this KRA against the following indicators –

- Number of initiatives undertaken to facilitate women's participation in the community. This will be an on-going effort and our target is to consult the Women's Commission on areas and issues that require early attention and to initiate specific programmes in 2001.
- Labour force participation rate of women. We will consult the Women's Commission on how to facilitate women to participate in the labour market.
- Number of women serving on Government advisory and statutory bodies. We will seek advice from the Women's Commission on how to enhance their participation.

We will pursue the following initiative and target to deliver results in this area –

Initiative	Target
To facilitate women to participate more fully in the community e.g. by providing employment training opportunities, child care facilities etc. <i>(Health and Welfare Bureau)</i>	This will be an on-going effort. To consult the Women’s Commission on the areas and issues that require early attention and to initiate specific programmes in 2001

4

Raise public awareness on women and gender-related issues and reduce gender stereotyping

In recent years, the Government has launched numerous promotional activities, including the production of television advertisements, booklets, CD-ROMs and leaflets in an attempt to raise public awareness about gender-related issues and to reduce gender stereotyping.

Notwithstanding these efforts, the community at large is still not sufficiently sensitive to women's issues. In the coming year, we will work to gradually change pre-conceived ideas about the role of women and to enhance community awareness on gender-related issues. We will work to enhance the Administration's sensitivity to gender-related issues and its understanding about women's issues and continue with our educational and promotional efforts in these areas.

We will assess our performance in respect of this KRA against the following indicators –

- Number of gender sensitive educational activities. Our target is to complete the first programme in 2001.
- Number of officers who have received gender-related training. Our target is to develop and start relevant training programmes in 2001.

We will pursue the following initiatives and targets to deliver results in this area –

Initiative	Target
To devise and implement a gender sensitive educational programme <i>(Health and Welfare Bureau (HWB))</i>	To complete the first programme in 2001

Initiative	Target
To provide gender-related training to civil servants with a view to ensuring that women's perspectives are taken into account during policy formulation, the legislative process, and the implementation phase <i>(HWB)</i>	To develop and start relevant training programmes in 2001