

**The Second Report
of the Government of the
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
on the Implementation
of the Beijing Platform for Action**

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Executive Summary

Introduction

1. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action were adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995. The Beijing Platform for Action, which sets out the strategic objectives under twelve critical areas of concern, aims to empower women through promoting their advancement and removing all the obstacles to their active participation in all spheres of public and private life.
2. The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has all along been observing the principle of the Platform and fulfilling the objectives through various policies and measures. This is the second report on the implementation of the Platform. It serves as a review of the Government's efforts in the empowerment of women since the last report issued in 2000.
3. Amongst other initiatives, the establishment of the Women's Commission marks an important milestone in the history of women development in the HKSAR. The Government set up in January 2001 the Women's Commission to promote the well-being and interests of women in the HKSAR. It is a high-level central mechanism within the HKSAR to enable women to fully realize their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life. The three strategic functions of the Commission include championing women's causes, inspiring and catalyzing changes, and mobilizing community resources. The major works include the provision of an enabling environment such as gender mainstreaming, empowerment of women, public education, and collaboration with non-governmental organizations etc. Its major achievements are summarised in the Annex for reference.

A: Women and Poverty

4. Women make up half of the population of the HKSAR. In 2004, the median monthly employment earnings of female employed persons was HK\$9,000 (approximately US\$1,150) (excluding foreign domestic helpers), which amounted to 82% of the corresponding figure of HK\$11,000 (approximately US\$1,410) for males.
5. We consider that providing adequate education, training and employment opportunities to the poor, including women, is the best way to alleviate poverty. At the same time, we also provide a safety net for those in need.
6. Major Government measures include the protection of women against discrimination in the employment field through the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) (Cap. 480) and the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO) (Cap. 527) enacted in 1995 and 1997 respectively; the provision of various subsidized opportunities for our working population, irrespective of gender, to pursue continuing education or training; the introduction of the Mandatory Provident Fund (“MPF”) System since 1 December 2000 to provide retirement protection for members of the workforce of both genders and the provision of social security to elders with financial difficulty, regardless of sex.
7. Moreover, the Government provides a wide range of subsidized services for the needy, including women in poverty, such as public housing, medical services, education and social welfare support. A safety net is also in place to provide financial assistance to meet the basic needs of the families in need. In the 2004-05 financial year, the Government spent HK\$22,970 million (approximately US\$2,950 million) on social security, which is a comprehensive system administered on an entirely non-contributory basis. This comprised 11.7% of total Government expenditure and 1.8% of the Gross Domestic Product. As at the end of December 2004, about 1,108,000 people (or 16% of the population) were receiving social security payments, and 54% among them were women.

8. Furthermore, we also established the HK\$300 million (approximately US\$38.5 million) Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) in 2002 to support projects which aim at, amongst others, empowering women in poverty through cross-sectoral partnerships and mutual help so as to increase their confidence and ability in seeking employment and facing life adversities.
9. Some women's groups have proposed the Government to review the Co-operative Societies Ordinance (Cap. 33) to help the disadvantaged groups to run their own businesses. We have met some co-operatives to better understand their concerns, and are considering how best their concerns can be addressed.
10. In terms of equal access to economic resources, the SDO renders it unlawful for anyone to discriminate against a woman on the ground of sex by refusing or deliberately omitting to provide her with banking or insurance facilities. The New Territories Land (Exemption) Ordinance (Cap. 452) was enacted in 1994 to provide for the equal right of women as men in succeeding land and real estate in the New Territories.
11. The Commission on Poverty (CoP) would continue with its work to study the needs of different target groups, and review policies and measures to explore room for further improvement in policy integration and interface. In the process, the Commission would keep in view the needs of different disadvantaged groups, including the women members thereof.
12. The Women's Commission (WoC) is a high-level central mechanism within the HKSAR to advise the Government on a strategic overview of women issues. On the advice and with the support of the Women's Commission, the Government has put in place a number of measures since 2001, including gender mainstreaming with a view to incorporating the needs and perspectives of women and men in policy making within the Government. In addition, on the advice of the Commission, the Government is taking stock on what studies have been done on tackling the issue of women and

poverty to facilitate further consideration.

B: Education and Training of Women

13. The Government is committed to promoting equal opportunities in education. Nine-year universal basic education is available to all children aged six to 15, regardless of their sex, in the HKSAR. On higher education, female students made up more than half (i.e. 54.5%) of first degree graduates of programmes funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) in 2003-04 (an increase of about 2.6% compared to 51.9% in 1998-99). The SDO also renders discrimination in respect of admissions or access to benefits, facilities or services of students unlawful.
14. Vocational institutions have also adopted a policy of equality for students of both sexes. In 2003-04, about 37% of the graduates from the Vocational Training Council's (VTC's) vocational education courses were women (an increase of about 4% compared to 33% in 1998-99) whereas about 40% of the graduates from their industrial training courses were women (an increase of about 13% compared to 27% in 1998-99). At the same time, the Employees Retraining Scheme provides retraining courses and services to retrainees of both sexes equally. Since the inception of the Employees Retraining Board in late 1992, some 80% of its retrainees are women.
15. The Government encourages lifelong learning, and different continuing education and retraining courses are open to all, including housewives. Women represent more than 70% of the trainees of the HK\$400 million (approximately US\$51.3 million) Skills Upgrading Scheme and over 60% of the applicants of the HK\$5 billion (approximately US\$640 million) Continuing Education Fund.

C: Women and Health

16. The Department of Health (DH) provides a comprehensive range of affordable, accessible and quality services to address different health

needs of women at various stages of life.

17. The Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) provide maternal health and family planning services to women of child-bearing age. Three Women Health Centres (WHCs) were established in 1994 to promote the health of women and to address their health needs. Since 2001, the service has been extended to ten more MCHCs. Health education, counselling, physical examination and appropriate screening tests are provided. In addition, a territory-wide cervical screening programme was also launched in 2004 in collaboration with other health care professionals.
18. The Social Hygiene Service of the DH offers free service related to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) to all women citizens through six female Social Hygiene Clinics. The Special Prevention Programme of the DH also contributes to the health promotion and prevention of HIV/AIDS among women. The AIDS Trust Fund, established in 1993, provides funding support for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to conduct promotional projects including those targeting women.
19. At the same time, the Hospital Authority provides a comprehensive range of medical treatment and rehabilitation services to patients of both sexes through hospitals and specialist clinics. Some services and programmes, e.g. obstetric and gynaecology services, are specially designed to cater for the needs of women.
20. In 2004, the life expectancy at birth for women and men were 84.7 years and 79.0 years respectively, increasing from the corresponding figures of 83.2 years and 77.7 years in 1999 as well as 81.5 years and 75.7 years in 1994.

D: Violence against Women

21. The United Nations treaties which pledge for protection to women against violence are applicable to the HKSAR. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT).

22. A number of laws are in place to provide protection to women against sexual violence. The Crimes Ordinance (Cap. 200) was amended in July 2002 to make it clear that marital rape is a criminal offence. The corroboration rule in respect of sexual offences was abolished in 2000. Victims of sexual violence will be provided with appropriate medical, psychological and counselling support.
23. The Government adopts a zero-tolerance policy against domestic violence. A three-pronged approach has been taken to tackle the problem, including preventive measures, supportive services, and specialised services and crisis intervention. Apart from social welfare services, victims have access to a wide range of medical services as well as financial and housing assistance. Legislation is also in place to provide protection to victims. In addition, we set up the Working Group on Combating Violence in 2001 to provide high-level coordination amongst parties concerned to tackle domestic violence. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has also commissioned a study on child abuse and spouse battering to estimate the prevalence of the problems in the HKSAR and to identify elements contributing to effective prevention and intervention.
24. The SDO renders sexual harassment unlawful in specified fields of activity. The Crimes Ordinance outlaws trafficking in people including women, causing prostitution, and exercising control over prostitutes. Sex workers who are willing to accept help may receive counselling and welfare assistance.

E: Women and Armed Conflict

25. HKSAR has not been involved in armed conflict since the Second World War. Its defence is being undertaken by military forces

stationed by the Central People's Government in the HKSAR (in accordance with Article 14 of the Basic Law). There is no conscription, and the prospect of armed conflict is remote.

F: Women and the Economy

26. Women have been actively participating in the economy of the HKSAR. In 2004, 49% of women aged 15 and over were economically active, and they accounted for 41% of the total labour force (excluding foreign domestic helpers). The corresponding figures in 1999 were 46% and 38%.
27. The SDO protects women's employment in various aspects through, amongst others, the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sex, pregnancy or marital status. The FSDO renders discrimination on the ground of family status in employment unlawful. Moreover, both male and female employees are under the protection of the same set of labour legislation. Furthermore, the Employment Ordinance (Cap. 57) provides protection against dismissal during pregnancy and maternity leave. A pregnant employee with a continuous contract of employment is entitled to 10-week maternity leave.
28. The principles of "equal pay for equal work" and "equal pay for work of equal value" (EPEV) have already been covered by the SDO. With regard to the issue of EPEV, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) is now in the process of mapping out a strategy to take this complex subject forward.
29. The Labour Department provides a comprehensive range of free employment services to all job-seekers, irrespective of sex. In 2004, a total of 223,229 job-seekers were registered, of whom 51.6% were female. Among those placed by referrals, 53% were female.
30. Retraining is also available to people of both sexes. In fact, women form the majority of beneficiaries of retraining. Please refer to paragraph 14 above for details.

31. The Government provides various child care service to assist working mothers and fathers. In addition, low-income families with a social need to place their children in full day care can also receive financial assistance.
32. In January 2004, the Government established the Economic and Employment Council to provide advice on the development and implementation of policies and initiatives to promote economic development, and engender employment opportunities etc. All the job-opportunities thus created are offered to both men and women on an equal basis.

G: Women in Power and Decision-making

33. Article 26 of the Basic Law provides that HKSAR residents shall have the right to vote and to stand for election in accordance with law. Article 21 of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights provides that every permanent resident shall have the right and the opportunity, without distinction of any kind including sex, to take part in the conduct of public affairs.
34. Women have been actively participating in public affairs in the HKSAR. In the 2004 Legislative Council election, 49% of all the registered voters are female. At present, four (i.e. 19%) out of 21 members of the Executive Council are women whereas 11 (i.e. 18.3%) out of 60 members of the Legislative Council are women. Furthermore, 90 women are serving on the District Councils. As at May 2005, 21 Village Representatives, two Executive Committee members of Rural Committees and five Heung Yee Kuk Councillors were women.
35. In the civil service, selection of candidates for appointment is made on the basis of merits regardless of gender. As at 31 December 2004, women made up 33.6% of the total number of civil servants and 26.3% of the total number of directorate officers.

36. On the advice of the Women's Commission, the Government has set a gender benchmark of 25% as an initial working target for appointments to Advisory and Statutory Bodies (ASBs). A proactive approach is being taken to reach out, identify and cultivate potential female candidates, and women's participation in ASBs has been improving. As at June 2005, women took up 24.8% (1,188 posts) of the appointed non-official posts of ASBs, compared with a women participation rate of 17% (779 posts) in June 2000.

H: Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

37. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), established under the SDO on 20 May 1996, is tasked to eliminate sex discrimination and promote equality of opportunity between men and women.
38. In January 2001, the Government established the Women's Commission to further promote the well-being and interests of women. The Commission is a high-level central mechanism within the HKSAR to enable women to fully realize their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life. It plays a strategic role in developing women's strategies in a holistic and systematic manner and advising the Government on policies, legislation and services affecting women etc. The Commission has adopted a three-pronged strategy, including the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women and public education to promote the advancement of women.
39. On the advice and with the help of the Women's Commission, the Government has introduced gender mainstreaming to the planning, implementation, evaluation and review of legislation, policies and programmes on an incremental basis, with a view to incorporating the needs and perspectives of women and men into the Government decision-making process. An analytical tool in the form of a checklist has been developed. Gender related training has been provided to 1,000 civil servants and all bureaux and departments have also designated "Gender Focal Points" to serve as the contact/resource persons for their organisations. Since 2002, the

Checklist has been applied to 14 policy areas or programmes. We would continue to roll out the Checklist to more policies or programmes gradually.

40. On the empowerment of women, the Capacity Building Mileage Programme (CBMP) has been launched since March 2004 to encourage women of different backgrounds and educational levels to pursue life-long learning and self-development. The Programme is incubated by the Women's Commission, and developed in partnership with the Open University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Commercial Radio. Responses from women have been enthusiastic. So far, 15 radio courses and five face-to-face courses have been conducted. The total number of enrolments is 4,633, of whom 98% were women, not to mention the large network of audience reached through the radio programmes.
41. On the advice of the Women's Commission, the Government has also set a gender benchmark of 25% for appointments to ASBs. We are about to meet the target shortly - as at June 2005, 24.8% of the appointed non-official posts of ASBs were taken up by women.
42. The Government and the Women's Commission continue to work together to carry out public education activities and organize seminars to promote greater gender sensitivity amongst the general public.
43. In 2005, the Government continues to work with the Commission to focus on three major areas of concerns to women, namely safety (emphasis on family violence against women), nurturing family (emphasis on quality parenting education), and gender awareness, amongst other on-going initiatives.
44. In respect of the collection of sex disaggregated data, the Census and Statistics Department has been compiling an annual statistical publication "Women and Men in Hong Kong – Key Statistics" since 2001.

I: Human Rights of Women

45. The rights and freedom of the residents of the HKSAR are guaranteed by the Basic Law, which is the constitutional document of the Region.
46. The CEDAW was extended to Hong Kong in 1996. The Second Report of the HKSAR was submitted to the United Nations in early 2004 as part of China's combined fifth and sixth periodic reports.
47. The EOC is an independent statutory body set up in 1996 to promote equal opportunities between the two sexes as well as enforce and implement the SDO and the FSDO. The SDO renders unlawful discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status or pregnancy in specified areas of activity including employment, education, provision of goods, facilities or services, disposal or management of premises, eligibility to vote for and to be elected or appointed to advisory bodies, activities of clubs etc. The FSDO renders it unlawful to discriminate against a person who has family status in specified areas of activity similar to those covered under the SDO. It protects those who have responsibility for the care of an immediate family member.

J: Women and the Media

48. Freedom of expression is protected by various legal instruments in the HKSAR. It is enshrined in the Basic Law (Article 27) and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights (Article 16).
49. The rights of women's access to decision-making positions in the media industry are protected under the SDO. There is no restriction for women to access media/new technologies-related programmes offered by the UGC-funded institutions. Various legislation and Codes of Practice are in place to prohibit pornography and sex discriminatory elements in the media, including publications, films and broadcasting.

K: Women and the Environment

50. The rights of women to participate in decision-making related to the environment are enshrined in the SDO. At present, the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau is headed by a woman.
51. The Government has put in place various programmes to combat environmental hazards. Such programmes would benefit men and women alike.
52. Education on environmental protection is currently covered in a number of subjects at different primary and secondary levels. To promote women's environmental awareness, the Environmental Protection Department has been organizing various activities targeting different women's associations.

L: The Girl-child

53. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was extended to Hong Kong in 1994. The rights of children, including girl-child, are protected by various legislation and administrative practices. They include the Hong Kong Bill of Rights and the Protection of Children and Juveniles Ordinance (Cap. 213).
54. The Government provides nine-year free and universal basic education to all children, boys and girls alike, between six to 15 years old. We also provide a wide range of health services dedicated to children of both sexes. The employment of persons under the age of 18 years is also regulated by various ordinances and regulations.
55. In respect of violence against children, the Committee on Child Abuse is tasked to formulate measures to prevent and tackle child abuse, and to promote a multi-disciplinary approach. Victims are provided with psychological or psychiatric counselling and other rehabilitation services as appropriate. Legislation is also in place to protect children from violence, abandonment and neglect.

56. The Prevention of Child Pornography Ordinance (Cap. 579) has been operative since December 2003 to prevent sexual exploitation of children.

Challenges Ahead

57. Women in the HKSAR have come a long way over the past few decades. The Government with the assistance of the Women's Commission have made remarkable progress since the issue of the last report in 2000. We also recognize and appreciate the important contributions that women's groups and other non-governmental organisations have made in promoting gender equality and advancing the status of women in the HKSAR.
58. That said, we are not complacent about the current situations. There are a number of challenges in the advancement of women, and more needs to be done.
59. The Government will continue to work on the empowerment of the less privileged women and the enhancement of support services, so that they can develop their capability and participate fully in the economy. There is the need to consider ways to further provide quality health care services at a price affordable and suitable to women of different ages while maintaining a sustainable system; the need to carefully examine the recommendations of the study on child abuse and spouse battering taking into account all relevant factors, with a view to preventing and tackling domestic violence more effectively; and the empowerment of women to participate more actively in public affairs.
60. The advancement of women could be enhanced if the root of the problem, including gender prejudices and stereotyping, is removed. Changing these misconceptions and stereotyping are long-term tasks that will require sustained public education efforts.
61. The Government is fully committed to advancing the interests and well-being of women in the HKSAR. We would continue to work

with the Women's Commission to meet the various challenges. The Commission has set the theme "Together We Build a Harmonious Community" as the goal for the next five years. This coincides squarely with the Government's objective to build a harmonious and caring society with both genders enjoying same rights, opportunities and status. The Government and the Women's Commission would continue to partner with the stakeholder groups concerned in achieving the important cause of advancing the interests and well-being of women.

Introduction

The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action were adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995. The Beijing Platform for Action, which sets out the strategic objectives under twelve critical areas of concern, aims to empower women through promoting their advancement and removing all the obstacles to their active participation in all spheres of public and private life.

2. Making up half of the population and 41% of the labour force in 2004¹, women are always accorded a high priority in the agenda of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). The Government has all along been observing the principle of the Platform and fulfilling the objectives through various policies and measures. The first report on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was issued in 2000. This second report serves as a review on the Government's efforts in the empowerment of women since the last report.

3. Amongst other initiatives, the establishment of the Women's Commission marks an important milestone in the history of women development in the HKSAR. The Government set up in January 2001 the Women's Commission to promote the well-being and interests of women in HKSAR. It is a high-level central mechanism within the HKSAR to enable women to fully realize their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life. It plays a strategic role in developing women's strategies in a holistic and systematic manner and advising the Government on policies, legislation and services affecting women etc. The three strategic functions of the Commission include championing women's causes, inspiring and catalyzing changes, and mobilizing community resources. The major works include the provision of an enabling environment such as gender mainstreaming, empowerment of women, public education, and collaboration with non-governmental organizations etc. Its major achievements are summarised in the Annex for reference.

¹ Figures exclude foreign domestic helpers

A: Women and Poverty

Strategic Objectives

- A.1 Review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty*
- A.2 Revise laws and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources*
- A.3 Provide women with access to savings and credit mechanisms and institutions*
- A.4 Develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminization of poverty*

4. Women make up half of the population of the HKSAR. In 2004, the median monthly employment earnings of female employed persons was HK\$9,000 (approximately US\$1,150), and amounted to 82% of the corresponding figure for male employed persons in 2004, slightly increasing from 79.2% in 1999 and 77.8% in 1994. The Government considers that providing adequate education, training and employment opportunities to the poor, including women, is the best way to alleviate poverty. At the same time, we also provide a safety net for those in need. The following paragraphs set out the major measures that we have taken to tackle the issues.

Employment earnings²

5. In the HKSAR, the median monthly employment earnings of female employed persons was HK\$9,000 (approximately US\$1,150) in 2004, as compared with HK\$11,000 (approximately US\$1,410) for their male counterparts. In other words, the median monthly employment earnings of female employed persons amounted to 82% of the corresponding figure for male employed persons in 2004, increasing from 79.2% in 1999 and 77.8% in 1994.

² Figures in paragraphs 5 to 7 exclude foreign domestic helpers

6. Among those employed persons with monthly employment earnings less than the overall median level of HK\$10,000 (approximately US\$1,280) in 2004, 48% were females. Yet, only 36% of those with monthly employment earnings at or exceeding the overall median level were females. There were also more women in the low-income group. In 2004, among those earning less than half of the overall median monthly employment earnings (i.e. HK\$5,000 (approximately US\$640) a month), 62% were women, slightly less than the figures of 66% in 1999 and 69% in 1994.

7. It is noted that female employed persons taken together tend to be less experienced than male employed persons, as some of the female employed persons may become homemakers after marriage and thus may not stay in the labour force for very long. In 2004, 44% of female employed persons were aged 40 and above, distinctly smaller than the corresponding proportion of 54% for male employed persons. Also, there is a higher proportion of women than men working in part-time, temporary or casual jobs. In 2004, 13% of female employed persons worked less than 30 hours per week, larger than the proportion of 8% for their male counterpart. For all the female employed persons as a whole, the median hours of work, at 45 hours per week in 2004, was shorter than that for male employed persons, at 48 hours per week.

8. We consider that providing adequate education, training and employment opportunities to the poor, including women, is the best way to alleviate poverty. At the same time, we also provide a safety net for those in need.

Protection of women against discrimination in employment

9. The HKSAR Government is committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination on the ground of sex. For protection of women against discrimination in the employment field, legislation was enacted in the form of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) (Cap. 480) and the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO) (Cap. 527) in 1995 and 1997 respectively. If a woman considers that she is being discriminated against unlawfully on the terms and conditions of employment because of

her sex, she may lodge a complaint with the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC).

10. The EOC is also tasked to promote equal opportunities and to work towards the elimination of discrimination through public education. Community outreach programmes organised by the EOC in recent years include the Community Participation Funding Programme, community roadshows and Equal Opportunities Expo. The EOC has also issued Codes of Practice on Employment under the SDO and the FSDO, quarterly newsletters and the Equal Opportunities Essentials Kit for small to medium enterprises.

Training and retraining

11. The Government provides various subsidised opportunities for our working population to pursue continuing education or training. These opportunities are open to all eligible persons, irrespective of gender. Some examples of these opportunities include vocational education courses offered by the Vocational Training Council (VTC), industry specific courses under the Skills Upgrading Scheme (SUS), the subsidy provided under the Continuing Education Fund (CEF), as well as the retraining courses offered by the Employees Retraining Board (ERB). Women with different background and needs would be able to benefit from these various subsidised continuing education and training opportunities.

Retirement protection

12. In December 2000, the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) System was fully implemented in the HKSAR to provide retirement protection for members of the workforce. The MPF System is a privately managed, employment-related mandatory system of provident fund schemes, and applies equally to both genders. Except those being specifically exempted by the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Ordinance (Cap. 485), employees and self-employed persons aged between 18 and 65 are required to participate as members of registered

MPF schemes.

13. The MPF System provides for joint contributions by the employer and employee, each contributing 5% of the employee's relevant income to a registered MPF scheme, subject to the maximum and minimum levels of income (which are HK\$20,000 (approximately US\$2,564) and HK\$5,000 (approximately US\$640) respectively) for contribution purposes. Those employees who earn less than HK\$5,000 (approximately US\$640) a month are not required to contribute though they may choose to do so. The accrued benefits will be fully vested in the scheme members and can be transferred from scheme to scheme when employees change or cease employment. A self-employed person has to contribute 5% of his or her relevant income. In normal circumstances, benefits must be preserved until the scheme member attains the retirement age of 65.

14. The registered MPF schemes are managed by approved trustees who meet stringent criteria relating to capital adequacy, financial soundness and qualifications. Upon retirement, scheme members will receive benefits commensurate with the contributions made by or in respect of the scheme members during their working lives and the investment returns arising from those contributions. The Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority is established to ensure the prudential regulation and supervision of approved trustees and the smooth operation of the system.

15. Since the implementation of the MPF System, the enrolment rate remains high and stable. As at the end of May 2005, 97.9% of employers, 96.7% of employees and 80.4% of self-employed persons have been registered, while the total scheme assets amount to HK\$128.4 billion (approximately US\$16.5 billion).

16. Apart from the MPF system, elders with financial difficulties, regardless of sex, can apply for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme. Other forms of financial assistance are available from the Old Age Allowance (OAA) Scheme and the Disability Allowance (DA) Scheme. The MPF system and social security constitute the two pillars of the 3-pillar model for retirement protection

advocated by the World Bank, in addition to private savings.

17. To explore further the adequacy and long-term sustainability of the three pillars, the Central Policy Unit (CPU) is conducting research to examine the related issues. A number of research projects will commence soon, initial results of which are expected by early 2006.

Welfare support

18. The Government provides a wide range of subsidized services for the needy, including women in poverty, such as public housing, medical services, education and social welfare support. There is also a safety net to provide financial assistance to meet the basic needs of the families.

19. The Government has all along attached importance to the service needs of women from different backgrounds, including those who are single parents or with low-income. We have been reviewing and re-engineering services for them to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

20. Examples of our welfare support to the needy women are set out below.

21. On family services, there are at present 61 Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) over the territory to provide family support services to the needy, including women and single parents. Services include counselling services, support groups and programmes, with the aim of assisting individuals and families in building up self-confidence and developing proper values, enhancing parents' skills in parenting, problem solving and stress management. To cater for the needs of women who need to work or take care of their families during day-time, the service hours of the IFSCs would be extended to evenings during certain days of a week.

22. To encourage parents of low-income families (including women and single parents) to seek jobs so as to attain self-reliance, aided day nurseries and crèches are set up by the Social Welfare Department (SWD)

through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide flexible services for families in need of child care support for their children aged under six. Ancillary services such as extended hours service and occasional child care service are available to cater for the special needs of parents, for example, for parents with long working hours or having sudden commitments. Low-income families with a social need to place their children in full day care can also receive financial assistance through the Fee Assistance Scheme for Child Care Centres.

23. To encourage women and others to work, NGOs operate After School Care Programme to provide half-day supportive care services for primary pupils aged six to 12. Families with income below 75% of the median household income would be given subsidy by the SWD so that they would be granted half or full fee waiving for such services.

24. To strengthen support to the needy families, including women in poverty, we have increased the provision for fee-waiving places from HK\$10 million (approximately US\$1.3 million) a year to HK\$15 million (approximately US\$1.9 million) from 1 April 2005, thereby increasing the number of full fee-waiving places by 50% from 830 to 1,245. This would encourage more needy parents, including women, to work.

Social security

25. All local residents of the HKSAR, irrespective of their sex, enjoy the right to social security. The social security policy is to meet the basic and essential needs of the disadvantaged, including the financially vulnerable, the elderly and the severely disabled. This is achieved through a comprehensive social security system administered on an entirely non-contributory basis. The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme and the Social Security Allowance (SSA) Scheme are two prominent features of the system. A person can receive either assistance under the CSSA Scheme or one of the allowances under the SSA Scheme. Both schemes are non-contributory and non-statutory. They are wholly funded from the general revenue and are administered by the SWD.

26. In the 2004-05 financial year, the Government spent HK\$22,970 million (approximately US\$2,950 million) on social security, increasing from HK\$18,450 million (approximately US\$2,370 million) in 1998-99. This comprised 11.7% of total Government expenditure and 1.8% of the Gross Domestic Product in 2004-05. The corresponding figures in 1998-99 were 7% and 1% respectively. As at the end of December 2004, about 1,108,000 people (or 16% of the population) were receiving payments under either the CSSA Scheme or the SSA Scheme, and 54% among them were women. As at the end of December 1999, the number of people receiving assistance was about 911,000 (or 13% of the population) with 54% being women.

Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme

27. The CSSA Scheme is means-tested. It provides a safety net for those who for various reasons, such as old age, disability, temporary illness, low income or unemployment, are unable to meet their basic and special needs, such as food, rent, clothing and transport. With the assistance, recipients can meet their essential needs of living. In addition, all CSSA recipients are entitled to free medical treatment at public hospitals or clinics. As at the end of December 2004, some 542,000 people were receiving assistance under the Scheme. About 52% of them were female. The corresponding figures as at the end of December 1999 were 376,500 people with about 52% being female.

28. In addition to basic assistance, there are special grants to cover costs such as rent, school fees and other educational expenses for children. Under the CSSA scheme, a higher standard rate and a monthly supplement are also provided to single parent families, which are mostly female-headed (82%), to meet their needs. As at end of December 2004, there were around 40,000 CSSA single parent family cases.

29. In addition to the higher CSSA payments, the Social Welfare Department has implemented the Ending Exclusion Project, which is a voluntary scheme, since March 2002 to provide employment assistance and other childcare and support services to CSSA single parent families with the youngest child aged below 15, to help them integrate in the community.

30. Able-bodied CSSA recipients, regardless of sex, are provided with employment assistance under the Support for Self-Reliance Scheme to help them find work, and become self-reliant. As at end of December 2004, among the overall CSSA caseloads, the unemployed caseloads involved around 99,000 recipients of which 46% were female, whereas the low-earnings caseloads involved around 60,000 recipients of which 52% were female.

31. We are currently reviewing specific items under the CSSA Scheme, including a review on the arrangements and services for CSSA single parents with a view to helping them become more self-reliant and integrate into the community as soon as possible. We are consult relevant stakeholders, and expect to present the results of the review to the Legislative Council of the HKSAR later in 2005.

Social Security Allowance (SSA) Scheme

32. The SSA Scheme, which includes the Old Age Allowance (OAA) and the Disability Allowance (DA), provides assistance to the elderly and the severely disabled to meet their special needs arising from old age or disability. The Scheme takes the form of a monthly flat-rate allowance to elderly persons aged 65 or above and to persons with disabilities. As at end of 2004, there were around 457,000 OAA recipients and 110,000 DA recipients, of which women took up 56% and 52% respectively. As at end of 1999, about 534,800 people were receiving OAA and DA under the SSA Scheme, 55% of them were women.

Community Investment and Inclusion Fund

33. The Government established the HK\$300 million (approximately US\$38.5 million) Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) in 2002 to support projects which aim at, amongst others, empowering women in poverty through cross-sectoral partnerships and mutual help so as to increase their confidence and ability in seeking employment and facing life adversities. A total of 17 projects for assisting women have so far been approved under the CIIF, involving

HK\$14.5 million (approximately US\$1.9 million). These projects aim at changing the needy women from passive service recipients to active participants socially and economically. This would increase the chance for women in poverty to be more self-reliant.

34. One of these projects, for example, has helped a group of middle-aged unemployed women without formal education or work experience in Kwun Tong to become, after training and empowerment, “quality post-natal carers” with their own income. Within the first two years of the project, 80 of these women have gained financial independence, earning over HK\$3 million (approximately US\$384,600) in total. They are now in the process of forming a self-management and self-financing co-operative.

Community economy

35. Some have proposed that the Government review the Co-operative Societies Ordinance (Cap. 33) to help the disadvantaged groups to run their own businesses, as part of the Government’s initiative to help promote the community economy. We understand that the concerns of the co-operatives/potential co-operatives of social enterprise nature go beyond the legislative requirements of the Ordinance. We have met some co-operatives to better understand their concerns and are considering how best their concerns can be addressed.

Equal access to economic resources

36. The Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) (Cap. 480), which was enacted in 1995, renders it unlawful for anyone to discriminate against a woman on the ground of sex by refusing or deliberately omitting to provide her with banking or insurance facilities (please refer to paragraph 184 below for more information on the SDO). There are no bars on women's access to bank loans, mortgages or consumer credit and they do not need the consent of their husbands or fathers to apply for such services. Authorised institutions mainly base their credit decisions on, inter alia, financial and repayment ability of the applicants and do not

accord differential treatment to applicants for credits on the ground of gender.

Women's rights to land and property in the New Territories

37. The New Territories Land (Exemption) Ordinance (Cap. 452) was enacted on 24 June 1994 to provide for the equal right of women as men in succeeding land and real estate in the New Territories.

38. As regards the small house policy which enables a male indigenous villager to apply, once in his life time, to build a small house on his own land or Government land, the Government is conducting a comprehensive review of the policy.

Assistance to women entrepreneurs

39. All entrepreneurs, irrespective of their sex, can have access to the support services provided for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the HKSAR. A number of industrial and trade support organisations provide a wide spectrum of services to SMEs. These services cover business start-up procedures, licensing requirements, human resources development, technology support, productivity enhancement, and management advice.

40. The Trade and Industry Department runs the Support and Consultation Centre for SMEs (SUCCESS) which is the first stop for SMEs to obtain free business information and advisory services. Through partnership with various Government departments and SMEs support organisations, SUCCESS provides SMEs with a comprehensive range of information, advice and facilities under one roof.

41. To help SMEs secure financing, improve human resources, expand markets and enhance overall competitiveness, the Government has set aside HK\$2.2 billion (approximately US\$280 million) to establish the SME funding schemes with a total commitment of HK\$12 billion (approximately US\$1.5 billion). The Schemes have been well-received

by the industry and over 43,000 SMEs have benefited from the Schemes, involving a total of \$7 billion (approximately US\$900 million) grants and guarantees.

Women migrant workers

42. Women migrant workers enjoy the same rights, benefits and protection under the labour legislation as local employees in the HKSAR. Please refer to paragraph 131 below for details.

Commission on Poverty

43. It has been an established policy of the Government to ensure the adequate provision to its citizens of living necessities (such as food, lodging and health care) and avenues for social advancement especially with respect to education, training and employment opportunities. To further enhance its work in preventing and alleviating poverty, the Government announced early this year the establishment of a new Commission on Poverty (the Commission). The Commission would focus on cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary issues where greater policy coherence and integration is called for.

44. Chaired by the Financial Secretary, the Commission comprises the Head of the Government think-tank and four Principal Officials responsible for health and welfare, community affairs, employment and education. It also includes Legislative Councillors, business people, community leaders, representatives from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and academics. The Commission has been tasked -

- (a) to study and identify the needs of the poor;
- (b) to make policy recommendations to prevent and alleviate poverty and promote self reliance; and
- (c) to encourage community engagement; delineate responsibility between the Government, social welfare sector and community organisations; foster public-private partnerships and mobilise social capital in alleviating poverty.

45. The Commission would continue with its work to study the needs of different target groups, and review policies and measures to explore room for further improvement in policy integration and interface. In the process, the Commission would keep in view the needs of different disadvantaged groups, including the women members thereof.

Women's Commission

46. The Women's Commission (WoC) is a high-level central mechanism within the HKSAR to advise us on a strategic overview of women issues. On the advice and with the support of the Women's Commission, the Government has put in place a number of measures since 2001, including gender mainstreaming with a view to incorporating the needs and perspectives of women and men in policy making within the Government. In addition, on the advice of the Commission, the Government is taking stock on what studies have been done on tackling the issue of women and poverty to facilitate further consideration. The Commission's work in promoting gender mainstreaming in the Government is set out in paragraph 167 below.

47. For details on education and training provided for women, please refer to paragraphs 48-70 below. For issues related to women's participation in the economy and employment, please refer to paragraphs 121-150 below.

B: Education and Training of Women

Strategic Objectives

- B.1 Ensure equal access to education*
- B.2 Eradicate illiteracy among women*
- B.3 Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education*
- B.4 Develop non-discriminatory education and training*
- B.5 Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms*
- B.6 Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women*

48. The Government is committed to promoting equal opportunities in education. The SDO renders discrimination in respect of admissions or access to benefits, facilities or services of students unlawful. Nine-year universal basic education is available to all children aged six to 15, regardless of their sex, in the HKSAR. On higher education, female students made up more than half (i.e. 54.5%) of first-degree graduates of programmes funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) in 2003-04 (an increase of about 2.6% compared to 51.9% in 1998-99). The overall Government expenditure on education rose from HK\$33.6 billion (about US\$4.32 billion) in 1995-96 to HK\$55.7 billion (about US\$7.16 billion) in 2004-05, representing an increase of 66%. Vocational institutions have also adopted a policy of equality for students of both sexes. In addition, the Government encourages lifelong learning, and different continuing education and retraining courses are open to all, including housewives. In fact, the majority of trainees are women, except for vocational training courses. The legislative protection and the current situations of education and training of women in the HKSAR are set out in the following paragraphs.

Legislative protection

49. The Government is committed to promoting equal opportunities in education. Section 25 of the SDO renders discrimination in respect of admissions or access to benefits, facilities or services of students unlawful. In addition, section 28 of the Ordinance also provides for the protection of women's right to obtain or use goods, facilities or services, including those related to education. Please refer to paragraph 184 below for details of the Ordinance.

Nine-year universal basic education

50. Nine-year universal basic education is available to all children aged six to 15, regardless of their sex, in the HKSAR. The Education Ordinance (Cap. 279) empowers the Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower to serve a school attendance order if it appears to him that a child is not attending primary or secondary school without any reasonable excuse. Failure without reasonable excuse to comply with the attendance order issued by the Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower is an offence.

Education at primary and secondary levels

School curriculum

51. It has always been the Government's policy to provide equal education opportunities to students of both sexes. The Government does not agree with the practice of streaming students into different subject classes by gender, as this would bar boys and girls from access to the same curricula and would reinforce gender stereotyping.

52. From time to time, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) issues circulars and organises teacher professional development programs reminding schools to ensure that all students are given equal opportunities for participating in and studying all the subjects offered. When selecting teaching and learning materials such as case studies, examples and

illustrations, schools should exercise care to avoid any form of discrimination. Equality between the two sexes and respect for each other's needs are among the core elements of some existing school curricula such as Social Studies, Religious Studies, Integrated Humanities and Liberal Studies at secondary level and General Studies at primary level. In addition, the EMB has issued guidelines on sex and civic education which suggest the inclusion of “equality of sexes” and “equality and discrimination” as topics for discussions in lessons and in activities such as class-teacher periods, school assemblies and guidance and counselling sessions.

Sex education

53. Sex education is included in the subjects of Biology, Human Biology, Science, Social Studies, Home Economics, Religious Studies, Integrated Humanities and Liberal Studies at secondary level and General Studies at primary level. The Guidelines on Sex Education in School issued by the Education Department in 1997 suggest ways to implement sex education through school curriculum. In 2001, the curriculum reform of the EMB advocated the development of five priority values among students. “Respects for others” and “Responsibility” are two of the above-mentioned priority values that provide a solid foundation for enhancing students’ awareness of equal opportunities, gender equality and non-discrimination. Sex education contributes significantly in helping students develop such core values. To support teachers in the promotion of sex education, the EMB makes continuous efforts to provide relevant learning and teaching resources as well as professional development programmes for teachers.

Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System

54. The past SSPA system involves separate scaling, separate banding for boys and girls, and gender quotas for co-educational schools. Pursuant to a judicial review on the System, the three gender-based features have been removed. With effect from the 2002 allocation exercise, there has been no different, nor separate, treatment of either sex in scaling the results of students’ internal assessments and determining the allocation bands. There is also no pre-determined quota for girls and

boys in co-educational secondary schools. The present SSPA System is therefore in compliance with the sex discrimination law.

Higher education

55. There is no discrimination on the ground of gender in the rights to enjoy tertiary education and training. For instance, the eight University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions admit students on the basis of their performance in academic and non-academic areas, including sports, music, and social services etc. In 2003-04, female students made up more than half (i.e. 54.5%) of first degree graduates of UGC-funded programmes (an increase of about 2.6% compared to 51.9% in 1998-99).

Gender and women studies in tertiary institutions

56. The UGC-funded institutions regard gender studies (including women studies) as an integral part of academic research, and have continued to conduct studies in this area. Since the last report, published in 2000, a wide spectrum of research work on gender and women-related topics was conducted by UGC-funded institutions. Some of these studies include: “Women and employment: a life history perspective” conducted by the University of Hong Kong, “Social networks and marital power: A cross-sectional study in Hong Kong” conducted by the Hong Kong Baptist University, “Genetic etiology of lung adenocarcinomas among women in Hong Kong” conducted by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Apart from these, various seminars and workshops on gender and women-related topics were organized, for example, the City University of Hong Kong in collaboration with the Chinese University of Hong Kong organized the “Gender and religion workshop” in 2002.

57. Since the last report published in 2000, we saw an increase in the number of gender and women studies in UGC-funded institutions. The Chinese University of Hong Kong launched a research postgraduate programme, the Master of Philosophy in Gender Studies programme in 1998. In 2000, two postgraduate programmes, the Doctor of Philosophy

in Gender Studies programme and the Master of Arts in Women's Studies programme were launched. In addition, the Gender Studies minor programme, which was established in 1997, is now offering 30 elective courses on gender studies to undergraduate students. In the Hong Kong Institute of Education, topics on sex and gender education issues were incorporated in the curriculum of the pre-service teacher education programmes including the Bachelor of Education programme and in-service programmes, such as the Bachelor of Education (Special Needs) programme and Course for Teachers of Children with Special Educational Needs. In the University of Hong Kong, a number of courses relating to gender and woman studies were offered to students at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, for instance, "Gender and History", "Sexual and Gender Development" and "Gender and Society". A number of courses on gender studies, such as, "Gender, Culture and Society" and "Gender and Relation in Hong Kong", were also offered by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

Financial assistance

58. At the tertiary level, there are scholarships offered solely for female students at different levels of studies. For example, the Hong Kong Association of University Women (HKAUW) has been offering scholarships solely for female students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in recognition of their academic achievements. According to HKAUW, there were 15 students receiving scholarships from the HKAUW in 2003-04. The Zonta Club also offers scholarships to female students of the UGC-funded institutions.

Sexual harassment in tertiary institutions

59. All of the UGC-funded institutions have their own established policies, mechanisms or procedures for handling sexual harassment cases. These include, for example, setting up committees/working groups which will consider sexual harassment cases and promote equal opportunities on campus; designating an Equal Opportunities Officer; and publishing policy documents, guidelines and codes for their students and staff on sexual harassment and equal opportunities in general. Policies, mechanisms and procedures on handling sexual harassment were

reviewed and revised by the institutions when necessary. Trainings and workshops were also organized for students and staff in the UGC-funded institutions to promote equal opportunity, self-protection and the understanding of sexual harassment.

60. In addition, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has been providing assistance to tertiary institutions in relation to sexual harassment. These include distributing newsletters, educational materials and organising seminars to promote equal opportunities; helping tertiary institutions to set up sexual harassment policies and procedures; and advising the UGC-funded institutions on the handling of individual cases.

Vocational training

61. Vocational institutions have also adopted a policy of equality for students of both sexes. The admission criteria for vocational education and industrial training courses offered by the Vocational Training Council (VTC) are based on the applicants' education level and aptitude, irrespective of gender. In fact, women's rights to vocational training are provided for in the SDO (please refer to paragraph 184 below for details of the Ordinance).

62. In 2003-04, about 37% of the graduates from the VTC's vocational education courses were women (an increase of about 4% compared to 33% in 1998-99). For some courses in disciplines such as Applied Science, Business Administration, Child Education and Services, Hotel, Service and Tourism Studies, Design, Printing, Textile and Clothing, more than 50% of the new year-one intakes were female. As regards the VTC's industrial training courses, about 40% of the trainees completing training in 2003-04 were women (an increase of about 13% compared to 27% in 1998-99).

Retraining

63. The aim of the Employees Retraining Scheme is to retrain the unemployed and potentially unemployed so that they could acquire new skills to adjust to changes in the labour market. The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) is responsible for implementing the Scheme by providing quality retraining courses and services to enhance its retrainees' employability. The ERB accords equality to retrainees of both sexes. In fact, since the inception of the ERB in late 1992, some 80% of its retrainees are women.

Continuing education for women

64. The Government encourages lifelong learning. At present, different continuing education and retraining courses are available to upgrade the workforce and facilitate their adaptation to technological, economic and social changes. These courses are open to all, including housewives, through which they may prepare themselves to re-enter the job market or to develop their own interests.

65. The HK\$400 million (approximately US\$51.3 million) Skills Upgrading Scheme was launched in September 2001 to help low skill and low education employees to adapt to the economic restructuring. The Scheme covers 22 industries and has already benefited over 118,000 in-service workers since its inception. Female trainees participation rate is more than 70% especially for industries such as clothing and textile, import/export, retail, beauty care and elderly care. Besides, the Government also launched the HK\$5 billion (approximately US\$640 million) Continuing Education Fund to provide financial subsidies to those eligible applicants aged from 18 to 60 to pursue continuing education. An applicant is eligible for a reimbursement of 80% of the course fee up to a cumulative sum of HK\$10,000 (approximately US\$1,280) upon completion of the course. Within the 170,400 applications as at end of April 2005, over 60% of them are from women.

66. The EMB subvents non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to run informal education courses such as courses designed to improve basic

literacy in Chinese, social and moral education courses. In the 2004-05 school year, there are a total of 850 subvented programmes, involving HK\$11.6 million (approximately US\$1.5 million).

67. The Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) provides, through open access and distance learning, tertiary education opportunities for adult learners who did not have the opportunity of receiving tertiary education when they left school. The OUHK complements the formal tertiary education system and promotes lifelong learning. Through flexible and distance learning modes, adults aged above 17 from all walks of life, including housewives, may pursue their studies at their own time, pace and place.

68. To provide open learning programme for women's self-development and life-long education, initiated by the Women's Commission, the OUHK has partnered with the Commercial Radio in developing the Capacity Building Mileage Programme (CBMP) which was launched in March 2004. For details of the CBMP, please refer to paragraph 169 below.

69. In addition, the UGC-funded institutions, the VTC, the ERB, the Hong Kong Productivity Council and other NGOs also provide continuing education courses of different natures.

70. Part-time vocational education and industrial training courses are offered by the VTC for people in employment seeking to update or upgrade their skills and knowledge in order to meet the new requirements of their work. The VTC imposes no gender restriction on access to these courses. Courses which attract more women than men are in disciplines such as Child Care, Clothing Manufacturing, Beauty Care, Design, Wholesale/Retail, and Financial Services etc.

C: Women and Health

Strategic Objectives

- C.1 Increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services*
- C.2 Strengthen preventive programmes that promote women's health*
- C.3 Undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health issues*
- C.4 Promote research and disseminate information on women's health*
- C.5 Increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health*

71. The Department of Health (DH) provides a comprehensive range of affordable, accessible and quality services to address different health needs of women at various stages of life. At the same time, the Hospital Authority provides a comprehensive range of medical treatment and rehabilitation services to patients of both sexes through hospitals and specialist clinics. Over the past decade, Government expenditure on health services rose from HK\$20.0 billion (about US\$2.57 billion) in 1995-96 to HK\$30.2 billion (about US\$3.88 billion) in 2004-05, representing an increase of 51%. With the provision of quality health services and technological advancement, the life expectancy at birth for women and men in 2004 were 84.7 years and 79.0 years respectively, increasing from the corresponding figures of 83.2 years and 77.7 years in 1999 as well as 81.5 years and 75.7 years in 1994.

Legislative protection

72. The SDO renders it unlawful for a person to discriminate against a woman by refusing or omitting to provide her with healthcare services. Please refer to paragraph 184 below for details of the Ordinance.

Health care services provided by the Department of Health

73. The Department of Health (DH) provides a comprehensive range of affordable, accessible and quality services to address different health needs of women at various stages of life. The Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) provide maternal health and family planning services to women of child-bearing age, whilst the Women Health Centres (WHCs) offer health promotion and disease prevention services to all women aged under 65.

Maternal health

74. Maternal health services encompassing antenatal and postnatal care are delivered through a shared care system between MCHCs and the Obstetric Departments of regional hospitals. Thus all pregnant women have access to trained personnel throughout pregnancy, during and after delivery. In 2004, 21,468 pregnant women attended MCHCs for antenatal care. The corresponding figures in 1999 and 1994 were 22,765 and 29,633 pregnant women respectively. In 2004, 14,713 new mothers used the postnatal service. The corresponding figures in 1999 and 1994 were 18,634 and 21,045 new mothers respectively.

75. In 2004, the life expectancy at birth for women and men were 84.7 years and 79.0 years respectively, increasing from the corresponding figures of 83.2 years and 77.7 years in 1999 as well as 81.5 years and 75.7 years in 1994. In 2004, the maternal mortality ratio was 6.1 per 100,000 registered live births which compared favourably with those of other places. The crude death rates for female and male in 2004 were 4.5 and 6.3 per 1,000 population.

Breast-feeding

76. Breast-feeding has been actively promoted, protected and supported by the Government. All MCHCs offer a supportive environment where women are provided with sufficient information, expert advice and comfortable areas enabling them to breast feed their babies. Breast-feeding is a regular topic in the on-going antenatal

classes. Women after deliveries are invited to join the breast-feeding support groups for problem-solving and experience-sharing. A telephone hot-line enquiry service manned by breast-feeding consultants is also available. Since August 2002, the DH has implemented a departmental policy to promote breastfeeding among all staff and support breastfeeding in the workplace.

Psychological health related to child birth

77. In the MCHCs, education on the physiological and psychological changes during pregnancy and postnatal period is provided through antenatal health talks to expectant mothers and their husbands. Individual counselling, workshops on child care and postnatal support groups are available to all postnatal women. Follow-up, referral or home visit will be arranged as appropriate.

Family planning

78. Family planning services in the MCHCs are provided to all women of childbearing age to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of the children. Apart from prescription of contraceptives, counselling services are provided for infertile couples with appropriate referrals for further management. In 2004, 103,819 women registered for the service. In 1999 and 1994, 122,335 women and 116,236 women registered for the service respectively.

79. The Family Planning Association of Hong Kong (FPAHK), a Government subvented organisation, also operates birth control clinics and offers premarital counselling and advice on infertility, sterilisation, vasectomy and contraception.

Women health service

80. Three Women Health Centres (WHCs) have been established since 1994 to promote the health of women and to address their health needs at various stages of life. Since 2001, the service has been extended to ten more MCHCs. Health education, counselling, physical examination and appropriate screening tests are provided. In 2004,

21,902 women enrolled in the service and the attendance of the health education activities reached 125,286, increasing greatly from an enrolment of 9,396 women and attendance of 21,726 in 1999 as well as an enrolment of 1,592 women and attendance of 3,239 in 1994.

81. A territory-wide cervical screening programme was also launched in 2004 in collaboration with other health care professionals to facilitate regular cervical swears for all women at risk of cervical cancer. Under the Programme, participants will receive a cervical smear test at a mere cost of HK\$100 (about US\$13). It aims to improve overall coverage rate of the target population and to raise public awareness on the need for cervical screening.

Health care services for the girl-child

82. The Government provides a wide range of health services for children of both sexes, including girl-children. Please refer to paragraph 228 below for the details.

Health education

83. The Central Health Education Unit (CHEU) of the DH is responsible for planning, organising and promoting health promotion education activities for the community. Health education on women's health, family and child health, exercise and nutrition is delivered to women via various channels such as television and radio, articles, pamphlets, posters, health talks, exhibitions, the CHEU website and a 24-hour telephone hotline. During the World Health Organisation (WHO) Breastfeeding Week in 2004, the CHEU also collaborated with the Family Health Service of the DH in organizing a series of activities, including a booth at Baby Expo, to promote breastfeeding. Regular health talks are provided to the public in the MCHCs and the WHCs. The FPAHK also regularly organises education programmes for the community.

Sexually transmissible diseases

84. The Social Hygiene Service of the DH offers free service to all women citizens who suspect they may have acquired sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The six female Social Hygiene Clinics provide free screening, treatment, counselling and education services for the prevention of STDs.

HIV/AIDS

85. The Special Prevention Programme of the DH contributes to the health promotion and prevention of HIV/AIDS among women through its health promotion arm or its Secretariat support to the Advisory Council on AIDS and its Committees/Task Forces. Activities include production and provision of educational resources; organisation of public education activities; capacity building of health care workers (train-the-trainer); provision of technical/backup support and organisation of AIDS prevention activities targeting high-risk groups. The AIDS Trust Fund, established in 1993, provides funding support for NGOs to conduct promotional projects including those targeting women.

The Hospital Authority

86. The Hospital Authority provides a comprehensive range of medical treatment and rehabilitation services to patients, irrespective of sex, through hospitals and specialist clinics. Specialist medical services such as internal medicine, surgery, orthopaedics, traumatology, radiotherapy and oncology, provide equal treatment opportunities for men and women in the territory. Some services and programmes, e.g. obstetric and gynaecology services, are specially designed to cater for the needs of women.

Abortion

87. The Offences Against the Person Ordinance (Cap. 212) provides for medical termination of pregnancy by a registered medical practitioner in an approved hospital or clinic if two registered medical practitioners are of the opinion, formed in good faith, that the continuance of pregnancy would involve risk to the physical or mental health of either the pregnant woman or the child.

Rehabilitation services for people with disabilities

88. The objective of the provision of rehabilitation services is to ensure full participation of and equal opportunities for people with disabilities, regardless of gender, in every aspect of life. Rehabilitation services are provided by both the Government and NGOs. In general, services can be categorized into medical rehabilitation, pre-school training, special education, vocational training and social rehabilitation. The Government also provides financial assistance to those in need.

89. On the promotion of equal opportunities, the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 487) came into effect in 1996. The Mental Health Ordinance (Cap. 136) was amended in 1997 to strengthen the legal safeguards for the well-being of mentally disordered or mentally handicapped persons. The Building Ordinance (Cap. 123) was also amended in 1997 to ensure suitable facilities with buildings are provided to meet the needs of people with disabilities. In addition, a wide range of public education activities is launched every year to enhance public understanding of disabilities. Through legislation and these continuous public education efforts, progress has been achieved in promoting the rights of people with disabilities.

D: Violence against Women

Strategic Objectives

- D.1 Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women*
- D.2 Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures*
- D.3 Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking*

90. The United Nations treaties which pledge for protection to women against violence are applicable to the HKSAR. Legislation is in place to provide protection to women against violence, including sexual and domestic violence. The Government also adopts a zero-tolerance policy against domestic violence. Apart from social welfare services, victims have access to a wide range of medical services as well as financial and housing assistance. In addition, we set up in 2001 the Working Group on Combating Violence to provide high-level coordination amongst parties concerned to tackle domestic violence. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has also commissioned a study on child abuse and spouse battering to estimate the prevalence of the problems in the HKSAR and to identify elements contributing to effective prevention and intervention.

International instruments

91. The United Nations treaties which pledge for protection to women against violence, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), are applicable to the HKSAR. Please refer to paragraphs 177-182 below for more information on these treaties.

Sexual violence

Legislative protection against violence

92. At present, there are a number of laws which provide protection to women against violence. The major ones are-

- (a) the Crimes Ordinance (Cap. 200), which deals with sexual and related offences among other things; and
- (b) the Offences Against the Person Ordinance (Cap. 212), which among other things, deals with homicide, assaults, forcible taking or detention of persons, unlawful abortion etc.

93. The Crimes Ordinance was amended in 1997 to increase penalties for certain sexual and related offences. In particular, the amendments raised the maximum imprisonment for incest with women between the age of 13 to 16 from seven to 20 years taking account of the fact that this group of women are more vulnerable. To offer greater protection to women against violence, the Crimes Ordinance was amended in July 2002 to make it clear that marital rape is a criminal offence.

94. The Dangerous Drugs, Independent Commission Against Corruption and Police Force (Amendment) Ordinance 2000 (the Ordinance) was enacted in June 2000 and came into effect on 1 July 2001. Under the Ordinance, police officers are authorized to take both intimate samples (e.g. semen) and non-intimate samples (e.g. hair) from suspects arrested in connection with serious arrestable offences (including sexual offences) for the purpose of investigation, subject to the requirements and safeguards as provided by the relevant provisions.

Abolition of the corroboration rules in sexual offence cases

95. As a general rule, evidence given against a defendant does not need to be corroborated. A defendant can generally be convicted on the uncorroborated evidence of a single credible witness, provided that the judge or jury is satisfied, beyond reasonable doubt, of the defendant's

guilt. There were however exceptions, the evidence of accomplices, children and the complainant in sexual offences had all to be corroborated. In the HKSAR, the corroboration rules were abolished in respect of the evidence of accomplices and children in 1994 and 1995 respectively. The only remaining application of the corroboration rules is to the evidence of complainants in sexual offences.

96. It has been observed that the corroboration rules work particularly to the disadvantage of victims of sexual offences: they are inflexible, complex and create a lot of anomalies. The Government was of the view that the abolition of the corroboration rules would not leave defendants inadequately protected because the general obligations of a trial judge would already ensure that a defendant be given a fair trial. In 2000, the corroboration rule in respect of sexual offences was abolished by an amendment to the Evidence Ordinance (Cap. 8).

Incidence of reported sex crimes

97. The number of reported sex crimes (including rape, indecent assault, unlawful sexual intercourse, keeping vice establishment and procurement/abduction of female) has remained stable in recent years, with around 2,000 cases recorded each year.

Special training to the Police for handling victims of sexual violence

98. The Police are aware of the need to adopt a sensitive and sympathetic approach towards victims in investigating sexual violence cases. Modules on Victim's Charter and the handling of cases involving sexual violence are included in the basic training programme for new recruits. Other relevant modules on "Victim Psychology" and "Empathetic Listening and Response" are taught during promotion courses, development courses and Divisional Training Days. Ways to support victims are taught at the Detective Training School. There are specific guidelines in Police Procedure Manuals for officers handling such cases to safeguard victims' privacy and help reduce the trauma they may experience.

99. The Criminal Procedures (Amendment) Ordinance and the Evidence (Amendment) Ordinance enacted in 1995 also provide greater protection to vulnerable witness including children, mentally incapacitated persons and witnesses in fear in the criminal justice system which allows them to give evidence via television link in court.

Services for victims of sexual violence

100. Victims of sexual violence with gynaecological injuries requiring hospitalised treatment would be admitted to the Gynaecology Ward and be cared for by the attending gynaecologists in the first instance. The attending gynaecologists would then coordinate the care for victims by involving other carers, such as clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, medical social workers as and when required. Guidelines on Management of Victims of Sexual Assault in the Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department were issued to staff. Hospital staff will actively utilize the services provided by medical social workers and clinical psychologists, including psychological and counselling support, to help the victims.

Domestic violence

101. The Government adopts a zero-tolerance policy against domestic violence. A three-pronged strategy has been taken to tackle domestic violence, including preventive measures (such as publicity, community education and enhancing social capital), supportive services (such as family services, housing assistance, financial assistance and child care services), and specialized services and crisis intervention (such as Family and Child Protective Services Units, a Family Crisis Support Centre and refuge centres for women etc).

Legislative protection against domestic violence

102. In addition to the protection offered by legislation against violence as mentioned in paragraph 92 above, the Domestic Violence Ordinance (Cap. 189) was enacted in 1986 to deal specifically with domestic violence. Under the Ordinance, the court may grant

injunctions on application by a party to a marriage to restrain the other party from molesting the applicant or exclude the other party from a specified area which may include the matrimonial home.

Incidence of reported domestic violence cases

103. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has set up the Central Information System on Battered Spouse Cases in 1997 to facilitate collection of statistics on battered spouse cases. The information system was enhanced in 2003 to include information on sexual violence cases and more data on battered spouse cases (e.g. occupation of victims and batterers, years of residence of batterers etc.) In 2003 and 2004, there were 3,298 and 3,371 newly reported cases of battered spouse respectively. The numbers of female victims involved were 2,925 and 2,990 respectively.

104. In 2003, SWD commissioned a consultancy study on spouse battering and child abuse in the HKSAR. Part One of the study seeks to estimate the prevalence rate of child abuse and spouse battering in the HKSAR and identify the elements contributing to effective prevention and intervention.

105. Part One of the Study has been completed. The findings of the household survey provide information on the demographic, social, psychological and family profile of perpetrators and victims, and provide reference for the Government in refining the existing policies and measures in tackling child abuse and spouse battering. The consultant has made a total of 21 recommendations. Many of the recommendations are similar to the views previously expressed by legislators and other interested parties. The Government would carefully examine the recommendations taking into account all relevant factors. Part Two of the Study seeks to develop assessment tools to facilitate early identification of cases at risk of child abuse and spouse battering and timely intervention.

Preventive measures on domestic violence

106. As prevention is always better than cure, the SWD has strengthened the preventive and supportive services to enable individuals and families to prevent domestic violence. The SWD transformed all

Family Services Centres / Counselling Units to become 61 Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) by phases in 2004-05. The IFSC is a new service delivery model aiming to improve the accessibility of services and promoting early identification of needy families for intervention. Serving a well-defined geographical boundary, the IFSCs provide a continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial services including family life education, parent-child activities, enquiry service, volunteer training, outreaching service, mutual support groups, counselling and referral service, etc. to meet the changing needs of families in a holistic manner. To enhance the accessibility of the services to facilitate early identification and intervention, the IFSCs provide extended hour services in some evenings and on Saturday.

107. Since 2002, the SWD has launched a territory-wide publicity campaign on “Strengthening Families and Combating Violence”. The objectives of the campaign are to enhance public awareness of the need to strengthen families, encourage families to seek early assistance and prevent violence. Sub-themes on spouse battering, child abuse, elder abuse, sexual violence and suicide in addition to strengthening families are covered.

108. The Government recognizes the importance of coordination of the joint efforts of different departments, professionals and NGOs in preventing and tackling family violence. A Working Group on Combating Violence, chaired by the Director of Social Welfare, has been set up since 2001 to provide high-level coordination amongst parties concerned to tackle family and sexual violence. One of its tasks is to map out strategies and approaches in handling the problem, from prevention, service provision to multi-disciplinary collaboration.

109. The SWD is well aware of the need for training on handling of domestic violence and other family problems. Between April 2001 and March 2004, over 70 training programmes on domestic violence were organized. Over 3,500 participants took part. Among others, the trainees included social workers, clinical psychologists, police officers, teachers and medical staff.

Special training to the Police for handling victims of domestic violence

110. Police officers are provided with training on how to handle cases of domestic violence at various stages of their career. Specific guidelines and handling procedures have been drawn up for handling such cases. Domestic violence has been included in the basic training programmes for police inspectors and police constables since 1997. Related modules on “Victim’s Charter”, “Victim Psychology” and “Empathetic Listening and Response” have also been included in promotion courses, development courses and Divisional Training Days. In July 2004, a newly revised training day package was developed for the handling of domestic violence. A two-week “Child Protection Special Investigation Course” is conducted every eight to ten months to provide officers with the necessary skills and knowledge to handle child victims and investigate into child abuse cases. The SWD and non-governmental organisations concerned have been invited by the Police to attend training days and discussion seminars to share their experience in the handling of domestic violence cases with frontline police officers.

Services offered to victims of domestic violence

111. Victims of domestic violence can have access to a wide range of social welfare and medical services. Prompt medical treatment at A&E Departments of public hospitals is available to victims of abuse. Besides the counselling and referral services provided by medical social service units and the IFSCs, the specialized Family and Child Protective Services Units (FCPSUs) of the SWD are in place to provide integrated services including outreaching, crisis intervention, casework and group work treatment, and statutory protection of children. In April 2005, an additional FCPSU was set up, making a total of six such specialized units across the territory. Other supportive services available include telephone hotline, compassionate rehousing and child care services. There are at present four refuges with a total of 162 places, providing temporary accommodation for women victims (and their children) of family violence, sexual abuse, or other crisis situations with 24-hour admission. Those in need of financial assistance can apply for the CSSA and charitable trust funds. Different forms of housing assistance are arranged for cases with genuine housing need and social/medical

ground. Legal aid is available to eligible and meritorious applicants for seeking court injunctions under the Domestic Violence Ordinance, as well as taking proceedings for divorce, child custody and maintenance payments.

Sexual harassment

112. The SDO renders sexual harassment unlawful in specified fields of activity. For example, it is unlawful for an employer or a principal to sexually harass an employee, contract worker or commission agent in his employment; for a partner in a firm to sexually harass another partner; for a member of a trade union to sexually harass another member; for a provider of goods, facilities or services to sexually harass a client; for a landlord to sexually harass a tenant; or for a member of the staff of an educational body to sexually harass a student.

Prostitution and trafficking of women

113. Prostitution itself is not an offence in the HKSAR. Our law targets at those who organize and exploit prostitution.

114. The Crimes Ordinance outlaws trafficking in people, causing prostitution, and exercising control over prostitutes. It also provides that any person who unlawfully takes an unmarried girl under the age of 16 years out of the possession of her parent or guardian is liable to imprisonment for ten years. Any person who unlawfully abducts an unmarried girl under the age of 18 years with the intention that she shall have unlawful sexual intercourse with men or with a particular man is liable to imprisonment for seven years. The offence of "keeping a vice establishment" seeks to prevent the use of premises by two or more sex workers by targeting the keeper of the premises. This helps to combat the exploitation of women by organized crime elements.

Assistance to sex workers

115. Sex workers who are willing to accept help may receive counselling and welfare assistance provided by the 61 Integrated Family Service Centres. Apart from counselling, welfare assistance such as financial assistance, psychological service, child care service, vocational training and employment service will be arranged for them as appropriate so as to help tide over the difficulties that they may encounter when giving up prostitution.

Protection to sex workers against violence

116. Laws relating to violence against women mentioned above apply equally to sex workers as any other women in society. The fact that the victim is a sex worker is immaterial.

Child pornography

117. The Prevention of Child Pornography Ordinance (Cap. 579) has been operative since December 2003. It prohibits the printing, making, producing, reproducing, copying, publishing, importing, exporting, possessing and advertising of child pornography; criminalizes the use, procurement or offer of persons under 18 for making pornography or pornographic performance; prohibits the making of any arrangement or the advertisement of arrangement in connection with child sex tourism activities; and extends extra-territorial effect to 24 sexual offences as listed under Schedule 2 of the Crimes Ordinance that are committed towards children under 16 outside the HKSAR. Since the enactment of the Ordinance in December 2003, the Police have used the new powers to strengthen their enforcement against child pornography, and will continue to do so.

E: Women and Armed Conflict

Strategic Objectives

- E.1 Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation*
- E.2 Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments*
- E.3 Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse on conflict situations*
- E.4 Promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace*
- E.5 Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women*
- E.6 Provide assistance to the women of the colonies and non-self governing territories*

118. Hong Kong has not been involved in armed conflict since the Second World War. Its defence is being undertaken by military forces stationed by the Central People's Government in the HKSAR (Article 14 of the Basic Law). There is no conscription, and the prospect of armed conflict is remote.

F: Women and the Economy

Strategic Objectives

- F.1 Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources*
- F.2 Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade*
- F.3 Provide business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women*
- F.4 Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks*
- F.5 Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination*
- F.6 Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men*

119. Women have been actively participating in the economy of the HKSAR. In 2004, 49% of women aged 15 and over were economically active, increasing from 46% in 1999 and 45% in 1994. The Sex Discrimination Ordinance and the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance protects women's employment in various aspects through, amongst others, the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sex, pregnancy, marital status or family status. Moreover, both male and female employees are under the protection of the same set of labour legislation. The Employment Ordinance provides protection against dismissal during pregnancy and maternity leave.

120. The Labour Department provides a comprehensive range of free employment services to all job-seekers, irrespective of sex. Retraining is also available to people of both sexes. In fact, the majority of beneficiaries of retraining are women. We also provide various child care service to assist working mothers and fathers. In January 2004, the Economic and Employment Council was established to provide advice on the development and implementation of policies and initiatives to promote economic development and engender employment opportunities

etc.

Women's participation in the economy of the HKSAR³

121. Women have been actively participating in the economy of the HKSAR. In 2004, 49% of women aged 15 and over were economically active and they accounted for 41% of the total labour force. The corresponding figures in 1999 were 46% and 38% and that in 1994 were 45% and 36%.

122. The proportion of female employed persons in total employment was 42% in 2004. Over the past decade, the number of married women participating in employment has been on the increase. In 2004, married women accounted for 23% of the total employed population, an increase from 22% in 1999 and from 19% in 1994.

123. In 2004, 31% of all the female employed persons had attended tertiary education, an increase from 26% in 1999 and 19% in 1994. The corresponding figure for the male employed persons was 28% in 2004, 22% in 1999 and 16% in 1994.

Protections for employees

Legislative protection

124. The Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) (Cap. 480) protects women's employment in various aspects which include:

- (a) prohibiting discrimination against a female employee on the ground of sex, pregnancy or marital status (sections 7-8);
- (b) ensuring equal opportunities for both sexes in employment (section 11(1));
- (c) ensuring equal access to opportunities for promotion, transfer or

³ Figures in paragraphs 121 to 123 exclude foreign domestic helpers

training, benefits, facilities or services for both sexes (section 11(2));

- (d) ensuring equal opportunities for contract workers, as well as in partnerships, trade unions, qualifying bodies, vocational training, employment agencies, commission agents and the Government (sections 13,15-20); and
- (e) rendering sexual harassment unlawful (sections 23-34, 39-40).

Please refer to paragraph 184 below for details of the SDO.

125. The Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 527), enacted in June 1997, also renders discrimination on the ground of family status in employment, inter alia, unlawful. Family status is defined as the responsibility to take care of one's immediate family members. Please refer to paragraph 189 below for details of this Ordinance.

126. In addition, both male and female employees are under the protection of the same set of labour legislation governing employment rights and benefits, employees' compensation and occupational safety and health. Moreover, under Article 27 of the Basic Law, all HKSAR's residents, irrespective of sex, enjoy the right and freedom to form and join trade unions and to strike.

Code of Practice on Employment

127. The employment related provisions of the SDO came into force in December 1996 (please refer to paragraph 184 for more information on this Ordinance). The Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 527) became effective in November 1997 (please refer to paragraph 189 for more information on this Ordinance). To provide practical guidance to facilitate compliance by the public (including both employers and employees) with the two Ordinances, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has drawn up two sets of Code of Practice on Employment. Failure on the part of a person to observe any of the provisions contained in the Code does not automatically render him or her liable in any proceedings. However, if a person is accused of

discrimination or victimization under the two Ordinances, the Code of Practice shall be admissible as evidence in a Court of Law.

Equal pay for equal work

128. The principles of equal pay for equal work and equal pay for work of equal value (EPEV) have already been covered in the SDO. If a woman considers that she is being discriminated against unlawfully on the terms and conditions of employment because of her sex, she may lodge a complaint with the EOC. With regard to the issue of EPEV, the EOC is now in the process of mapping out a strategy to take this complex subject forward.

Protection for pregnant employees

129. The Employment Ordinance (Cap. 57) provides protection against dismissal during pregnancy and maternity leave. A pregnant employee with a continuous contract of employment (i.e. a minimum of four weeks and no less than 18 hours' work in each week) who has served notice of pregnancy on her employer would be entitled to protection against dismissal. Employers breaching the relevant provisions shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of up to HK\$100,000 (approximately US\$12,820). In addition to other termination payments, a dismissed employee is also entitled to make a civil claim for remedies if the employer cannot prove that the dismissal is due to a valid reason.

130. A pregnant employee with a continuous contract of employment is entitled to 10-week maternity leave. If the employee has been employed under a continuous contract for 40 weeks or more immediately before the commencement of the scheduled maternity leave, she is entitled to maternity leave pay. If a pregnant employee produces a medical certificate with an opinion that she is unfit to handle heavy materials, to work in places where gas injurious to pregnancy is generated, or to do other work injurious to pregnancy, the employer may not allocate such work to the employee. The maximum fine for breach of the above requirements is HK\$50,000 (approximately US\$6,410).

Migrant workers

131. Subject to meeting the relevant requirements, the HKSAR also admits workers from outside the territory to enter the HKSAR to work. These workers enjoy the same rights, benefits and protection under the labour legislation as local employees. They also enjoy safeguards against abuse and violence like the other workers in the HKSAR as they can seek redress through the local judicial bodies. Foreign domestic helpers, who are mostly women and form the majority of foreign workers, are entitled to a minimum allowable monthly wage as well as free food, accommodation, medical treatment and passage on top of their statutory benefits.

Employment services

132. The Labour Department provides a comprehensive range of free employment services to all job-seekers, irrespective of sex, through a network of ten job centres, the Telephone Employment Service Centre as well as the Interactive Employment Service on the web. In 2004, a total of 223,229 job-seekers were registered, of whom 51.6% were female. Among those placed by referrals, 53% were female. The corresponding figures in 1999 were 188,784 registered job-seekers, of whom 45% were female and 54% of those placed were female.

133. To eliminate discriminatory practices on recruitment, the Labour Department vets carefully vacancies received to ensure that they do not contain restrictive requirements based on sex and age. Employers will be advised to remove such restrictive requirements, or their requests for placing such vacancies will be refused.

134. The unemployment rate for women was 6.4% in 2004, which was lower than the corresponding figure of 7.8% for men. The unemployment rate was 5.5% for women and 7.2% for men in 1999 as well as 1.8% for women and 2.1% for men in 1994.

135. Those who need more personalised and intensive employment services may join the Job Matching Programme. Placement officers will

help job-seekers evaluate their academic qualifications, job skills, work experience and job preferences, encourage them to look for suitable jobs actively, and where appropriate, refer them to suitable retraining courses.

Youth Pre-employment Training Programme

136. The Government launched a major and comprehensive Youth Pre-employment Training Programme in September 1999 for young school leavers aged between 15 and 19. Under the Programme, a wide range of employment related training courses, workplace attachment training as well as career counselling are provided to young school leavers to enhance their competitiveness and employability. Training courses provided are built on four modules: (1) leadership, discipline and team building training, (2) job search and interpersonal skills training, (3) computer application training and (4) job-specific skills training.

137. The Programme has been well received by the community since its implementation. For the past five programme years, over 57,000 young people received training, of which 45% were female.

Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme

138. The Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme (YWETS) was launched in July 2002 to provide work experience and job-related training for young people aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment below degree level. The YWETS includes a 40-hour induction course on communication and interpersonal skills by non-governmental organisations; 50-hours counselling and case management services by registered social workers; and on-the-job training of six to 12 months by employers. For the current term of the scheme, of the 17,000 trainees registered so far, 48% are female. As at end of May 2005, some 21,500 trainees have been successfully placed in training vacancies and another 12,200 have found jobs in the open market with the assistance of their case managers.

Youth Self-employment Support Scheme

139. In May 2004, the Labour Department launched the Youth Self-employment Support Scheme to train and assist young people aged 18 to 24 with educational attainment below degree level and assessed to have motivation to become self-employed. Among the 1,475 trainees accepted for the Scheme, 48% are female. As at end of May 2005, the trainees have conducted 7,300 business transactions with gross profits of HK\$3,350,000 (approximately US\$429,500) recorded.

Re-employment Training Programme for the Middle-aged

140. To assist the middle-aged in finding jobs, the Labour Department has launched the Re-employment Training Programme for the Middle-aged. Employers who engage registered job-seekers aged 40 or above in full-time job and provide them with on-the-job training may apply for a monthly training allowance of HK\$1,500 (approximately US\$190) for up to three months.

The Special Incentive Allowance Scheme for Local Domestic Helpers (LDHs)

141. In March 2002, the Employees Retraining Board launched the Integrated Scheme for Local Domestic Helpers (LDHs) on a pilot basis with 13 designated Regional Service Centres set up in six major districts throughout the territory to provide an integrated service for both employers who are in need of LDHs and LDH retrainees. To further promote the service of LDHs and to address the mismatch in supply and demand in the LDH market, the Special Incentive Allowance Scheme for LDHs was introduced by the Labour Department in June 2003. A sum of HK\$60 million (approximately US\$7.7 million) was earmarked to provide an allowance to qualified LDHs who are willing to work in a district different from the one in which they reside or during 'social hours' (i.e. 5 pm to 9 am). Some 8,000 LDHs are expected to benefit from the Incentive Allowance Scheme. As at end-May 2005, there were some 4,800 successful applications and all were female.

Employment services for new arrivals and ethnic minorities

142. New arrival and ethnic minority women have equal rights to enjoy the Labour Department's free employment services. A resource corner has been set up in each job centre to provide new arrivals and ethnic minorities with comprehensive employment information. The job centres also conduct regular employment briefings tailor made for new arrivals and ethnic minorities.

Employment services for the disabled

143. The Labour Department provides special employment services to job-seekers with disabilities to assist them in obtaining open employment. In 2004, it registered a total of 4,002 job-seekers with disabilities, of whom 1,791 were female. Of the 2,391 placements secured by persons with disabilities in the same period, 48% were filled by females. The corresponding figures in 1999 were 3,462 registered job-seekers with disabilities, of whom 1,354 were female and of the 1,511 placements, 39% were female.

Retraining

144. Retraining is available to people of both sexes. In fact, women form the majority of beneficiaries of retraining. Please refer to paragraphs 11 and 63 above for the relevant details.

Economic and Employment Council

145. In January 2004, the Government established the Economic and Employment Council (EEC), chaired by the Financial Secretary, to provide advice on the development and implementation of policies and initiatives to promote economic development, encourage inward investment, facilitate business, and engender employment opportunities. The Council combines four advisory bodies on economic development and employment, including the former Task Force on Employment. The Council comprises representatives from the business, labour and

academic sectors, Legislative Council members as well as concerned Principal Officials.

146. Since its establishment, the EEC has discussed and provided the steer on various matters concerning economic development and employment. A Subgroup on Business Facilitation was also formed under the EEC in March 2004 to oversee regulatory reviews aiming to break down barriers and streamline procedures so as to facilitate business development and job provision. All the job opportunities thus created are offered to both men and women on an equal basis.

Child care services

147. The Government provides various child care services to assist working mothers and fathers. There were 952 aided day crèche places and 28,661 aided day nursery places as of December 2004. Some child care centres also provide occasional child care service and/or extended hours service for parents who cannot look after their children due to sudden engagement or need to work long or irregular hours. As of December 2004, there were 702 occasional child care (OCCS) places in 224 centres and 1,504 extended hours (EHS) child care places in 108 centres.

148. After school care programme (ASCP) centers are operated on a self-financing and fee charging basis. Services provided include homework guidance, meal service, parent guidance and education, skill learning and other social activities. As at December 2004, there were about 150 ASCP centers with over 6,000 after school care places available over the territory. The SWD provided 804 full fee waiving places to children from needy families.

Employment of persons under 18

149. The employment of persons under the age of 18 years is regulated by various ordinances and regulations. Please refer to

paragraph 231 below for details of the protection.

Women's access to economic resources

150. Women enjoy equal rights with men in accessing economic resources. Please refer to paragraph 36 above for details.

G: Women in Power and Decision-making

Strategic Objectives

- G.1 Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making*
- G.2 Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership*

151. The right for HKSAR residents to vote and to stand for election is provided for in the Basic Law. Whereas, the right for every permanent resident, irrespective of sex, to take part in the conduct of public affairs is provided for in the Hong Kong Bill of Rights. Women have been actively participating in public affairs in the HKSAR. This can be seen from the increasing number of women members in the Executive Council, Legislative Council, District Councils, Rural Committees and Heung Yee Kuk. The number of female civil servants has also been increasing. Furthermore, on the advice of the Women's Commission, the Government has set a gender benchmark of 25% for appointments to advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs). We are about to meet the benchmark shortly - as at June 2005, 24.8% of the appointed non-official posts of ASBs were taken up by women (an increase from 17% in June 2000).

Legislative protection

152. Article 26 of the Basic Law provides that HKSAR residents shall have the right to vote and to stand for election in accordance with law. Article 21 of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights provides that every permanent resident shall have the right and the opportunity, without distinction of any kind including sex, and without unreasonable restrictions, to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot; and to have access, on general terms of

equality, to public service in the HKSAR.

Participation of women in public affairs

153. Women have been actively participating in public affairs in the HKSAR. In the 2004 Legislative Council election, there were about 1.57 million registered female voters on the General Electoral Roll, representing 49% of all the registered voters in the HKSAR. The turnout rate of female voters was 55.4%.

154. At present, four (i.e. 19%) out of 21 members of the Executive Council are women. In the 2004 Legislative Council election, 26 out of the 159 candidates were women. Eleven of them were elected, taking up 18.3% of the membership of the 60-member legislature. Ninety women are serving on the District Councils established in early 2003, representing a 25% increase in the number of women who served on the District Boards in 1999-2002.

Recruitment in the Civil Service

155. The recruitment to the Civil Service of the Government of the HKSAR is based on the principle of open and fair competition. Selection of candidates for appointment is made on the basis of merits regardless of their gender. The Government's aim is to appoint "the best person for the job". The percentage of women in the total number of civil servants is increasing. As at 31 December 2004, women made up 33.6% of the total number of civil servants and 26.3% of the total number of directorate officers, representing an increase of 0.6% and 5% respectively as compared with the situation five years ago.

Advisory and statutory bodies

156. Appointments to Government advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs) are made on the basis of merits, taking into consideration an individual's ability, expertise, experience, integrity and commitment to

public service, regardless of gender. That said, the Government considers a balanced gender composition would enable the perspectives and concerns of both men and women to be fully reflected. On the advice of the Women's Commission, the Government has set a gender benchmark of 25% as an initial working target for appointments to ASBs. A proactive approach is being taken to reach out, identify and cultivate potential female candidates, and women's participation in ASBs has been improving. As at June 2005, women took up 24.8% (1,188 posts) of the appointed non-official posts of ASBs, compared with a women participation rate of 17% (779 posts) in June 2000.

Rural elections

157. In support of the Government's policy of encouraging fair and open elections, the Heung Yee Kuk, a statutory advisory body on New Territories affairs, promulgated a set of Model Rules for the conduct of Village Representative elections in 1994. The Model Rules provide for, amongst others, one-person-one-vote and equal voting rights for men and women. Women can also stand for elections. Individual villages may adapt the model rules to suit their circumstances.

158. In 1999, the electoral arrangements were challenged in court. In the case of Chan Wah vs. Hang Hau Rural Committee, it was found that in the village of Po Toi O, the electoral arrangement contravened the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, in that husbands of female indigenous villagers were not allowed to register as voters in the elections. In 2000, the Court of Final Appeal affirmed that men and women should enjoy equal rights in rural elections, and that Government has a duty not to approve persons not so elected.

159. In view of the court ruling, the Government enacted the Village Representative Election Ordinance (Cap. 576) in 2003 to bring rural elections under statutory control. The Ordinance ensures that electoral arrangements are consistent with the requirements of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance (Cap. 383) and the Sex Discrimination Ordinance.

160. To date, there are 707 villages in the New Territories with about 1,320 village representatives.

161. Village Representatives make up the 27 Rural Committees. The electoral arrangements and the conduct of an election to elect an office holder of a Rural Committee is also governed by the Village Representative Election Ordinance to be consistent with the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance. The Chairpersons of the Rural Committees are ex-officio Executive Committee Councillors of the Heung Yee Kuk and Vice-chairpersons of the Rural Committees are ex-officio Councillors of the Kuk. They elect the Chairperson and Vice-chairpersons of the Heung Yee Kuk on a one-person-one-vote basis. Women and men enjoy equal rights at all three levels of rural elections.

162. As at May 2005, 21 Village Representatives, two Executive Committee members of Rural Committees and five Heung Yee Kuk Councillors were women.

H: Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

Strategic Objectives

- H.1 Create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies*
- H.2 Integrate gender perspective in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects*
- H.3 Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation*

163. In May 1996, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) was established to eliminate sex discrimination and promote equality of opportunity between men and women. In January 2001, the Women's Commission was established to promote the well-being and interests of women. The Commission is a high-level central mechanism within the HKSAR to enable women to fully realize their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life.

Mechanism, legislation and policies

164. The Government attaches great importance to women issues and is committed to promoting the interests of women, addressing their needs and concerns, and eliminating discrimination against them. Various policy bureaux are responsible on an on-going basis for developing and implementing policy and legislative initiatives for women, and the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) – an independent statutory body – is in place to promote equal opportunities between the two sexes and implement, amongst others, the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) (Please refer to paragraphs 184-187 below for details of the EOC and the SDO).

165. In order to further promote the well-being and interests of women, the Government established the Women's Commission in January 2001. The Commission is a high-level central mechanism

within the HKSAR to enable women to fully realize their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life. It plays a strategic role in developing women's strategies in a holistic and systematic manner, advising the Government on policies, legislation and services affecting women and assisting in implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international conventions related to women. The Commission is appointed by the Chief Executive and chaired by a non-official member. It comprises 18 non-official members from a variety of background and interests, as well as four Government officials.

166. Since its establishment, the Women's Commission with full support by the Government has played a strategic role and developed a long-term vision and strategy in promoting women's interests and addressing women's needs. Through the three strategic objectives, namely the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women and public education, the Commission seeks to uplift women's status and arouse gender awareness of the public. The Commission has also joined forces with Government policy-making bureaux, non-governmental organisations, women's groups, tertiary institutions and the media to organise activities in order to better understand the range of views at large and to broaden its own perspectives.

Gender Mainstreaming

167. The Women's Commission sees gender mainstreaming as one of the key strategies in achieving women's advancement and gender equality. With the integration of gender perspectives in legislation, policies or programmes, gender mainstreaming seeks to ensure that women and men have equitable access to, and benefit from, society's resources and opportunities. To this end, the Commission has designed a Gender Mainstreaming Checklist and with the Commission's assistance, the Government has applied gender mainstreaming to 14 policy or programme areas. It would be applied to more policy or programme areas on an incremental basis. Furthermore, all Government bureaux and departments have now designated a senior officer as the "Gender Focal Point" within their respective organisations, and over 1,000 civil servants have received gender-related training. The Commission would

evaluate the effectiveness of the application of gender mainstreaming and compile a booklet on good practices.

Empowerment of Women

168. The Women's Commission also sees the need and potential of women to participate more fully in the decision-making processes. Currently, there are over 400 Government advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs) advising the Government on a wide range of issues that have direct relevance to everyday life of women and men in the HKSAR. Upon the Commission's recommendation, the Government has undertaken to take gender composition into account in appointments to ASBs, with an initial working target of 25% as a benchmark for women's participation. As at June 2005, women took up 24.8% (1,188 posts) of the appointed non-official posts of ASBs, compared with a women participation rate of 17% (779 posts) in June 2000.

169. On the empowerment of women, the Capacity Building Mileage Programme (CBMP) has been launched since March 2004 to encourage women of different background and educational levels to pursue life-long learning and self-development. The Programme is incubated by the Women's Commission, and developed in partnership with the Open University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Commercial Radio. Responses from women have been enthusiastic. So far, 15 radio courses and five face-to-face courses have been conducted. The total number of enrolments is 4,633, of whom 98% were women, not to mention the large network of audience reached through the radio programmes.

Public Education and Publicity

170. The Women's Commission has also launched public education and publicity programmes to reduce gender prejudices and stereotyping as well as to raise public awareness of women-related issues. They include public fora and seminars on different specific women topics, annual public functions on International Women's Day, launching of Announcements in the Public Interest on TV, radio stations and on buses, holding of an essay writing competition, broadcasting of a TV drama series as well as a radio programme on the theme of women capacity

building, printing and distribution of posters. The Women's Commission held a major Conference with the theme of “Women for a Better Tomorrow” in May 2002 to generate public discussion on and raise public awareness of gender-related issues.

Other initiatives

171. In 2005, the Women’s Commission has put its work focus on three major areas, namely safety (emphasis on family violence against women), nurturing family (emphasis on quality parenting education) and gender awareness, amongst other on-going initiatives. The Commission would, amongst others, publish a booklet on zero tolerance on family violence, formulate strategies to promote the importance of quality parenting in fostering nurturing and caring families, and enhance gender awareness in school education, the media and the general public.

172. Separately, to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and to foster a closer tie between the Mainland and the HKSAR on women issues, the Women’s Commission also co-organized with the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau and the All-China Women’s Federation the “Joint Events in Celebration of the Beijing+10” in April 2005 in Beijing. The events included a conference, visits to women-related projects and tour programmes. Over 200 delegates from the Mainland and the HKSAR participated in the events, during which participants had an overview on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at the international level and also had vivid exchanges on areas of mutual interests and concern of both places.

Collection of sex disaggregated data

173. The Government is well aware that collection and compilation of sex disaggregated data are important for gender analysis and gender-sensitive policy making. In all household surveys (e.g. the General Household Survey and the population censuses/by-censuses) and in the relevant establishment surveys (e.g. the Labour Earnings Survey) conducted by the Census and Statistics Department, the gender of persons is always included as a basic variable. Subsequent publications of the

survey results will include tables using gender as a classifying variable where appropriate. For instance, detailed analyses on labour force by sex and age are published regularly in the Quarterly Report on General Household Survey to facilitate better understanding of the demographic characteristics of the labour force; and analysis of employed persons by sex and industry/occupation are also made to reflect the sex disaggregated employment situation in the HKSAR.

174. Besides, the Census and Statistics Department has been compiling an annual statistical publication “Women and Men in Hong Kong – Key Statistics” since 2001. The publication serves as a ready source of information for those interested in the profile of women and men and gender equality in the HKSAR. It draws together sex disaggregated statistics and indicators from a wide variety of sources with a view to painting a picture of the situation of women and men in major economic and social spheres.

I: Human Rights of Women

Strategic Objectives

- 1.1 Promote and protect the human rights of women, through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*
- 1.2 Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice*
- 1.3 Achieve legal literacy*

175. The rights and freedom of the residents of the HKSAR are protected by the Basic Law. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was extended to Hong Kong in 1996. The Sex Discrimination Ordinance and the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance render unlawful discrimination on the grounds of sex, pregnancy, marital status or family status in specified areas of activity. We have been actively promoting public awareness of the human rights instruments and the equal opportunities legislation.

The Basic Law

176. The rights and freedom of the residents of the HKSAR are guaranteed by the Basic Law of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China, which is the constitutional document of the Region. Of which, Article 4 stipulates that the HKSAR shall safeguard the rights and freedoms of the residents of the HKSAR and of other persons in the Region in accordance with law. The fundamental rights of the residents are set out in Chapter 3 of the Basic Law. For example, Article 25 provides that all HKSAR residents shall be equal before the law; Articles 26 to 28 provide that the HKSAR residents shall have the right to vote and to stand for election in accordance with law, the freedoms of speech, of the press and of publication, of association, of assembly, or procession and of demonstration, as well as the freedom to form and join trade

unions.

177. In addition, Article 39 affirms 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 the HKSAR shall remain in force, and shall be implemented through the laws of the HKSAR.

178. The Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance (HKBORO) (Cap. 383) and the provisions of all United Nations human rights treaties applicable to the HKSAR, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), continue to apply.

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

179. The CEDAW was extended to Hong Kong in 1996. The initial report on the HKSAR under the Convention was examined by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in February 1999. The Second Report was submitted to the United Nations in early 2004 as part of China's combined fifth and sixth periodic reports.

180. The Government has been promoting the public awareness of the CEDAW. The Convention, together with the concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women issued after the hearing of the initial report under the Convention, were uploaded into the Government homepage. The text of the Convention was published and distributed to the public.

Promotion of public awareness of the human rights instruments

181. The promotion of human rights education has been one of the major areas of work of the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education, a Government advisory body on civic education outside

schools. A series of human rights education materials and programmes have been developed. The Committee recently decided to re-convene a dedicated working group on human rights education for the purpose of reviewing these materials and deliberating on how best to continue promoting the respect of human rights in the HKSAR. Recently, the Committee has strengthened its efforts to build up community awareness and understanding of the Basic Law (including provisions seeking to protect different kinds of human rights). The Government promotes the understanding of the Basic Law by sponsoring projects organised by community organisations through the Basic Law Promotion Funding Scheme. The Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee was established in January 1998 to provide the necessary steer on the overall strategy for promoting the Basic Law.

182. The Government actively publicises the international human rights treaties⁴ applicable to the HKSAR and the reports submitted under them. The Government have published the texts of the treaties and posted soft copies of the texts, together with the HKSAR's reports under those treaties, the concluding observations on relevant hearings as well as all other related materials on the Government homepage.

Racial discrimination

183. In 2003, we announced the intention of introducing legislation against racial discrimination in accordance with our obligations under the ICERD. Public consultations on the detailed legislative proposals were recently concluded and, at the time of finalising this report, the law drafting process was well advanced. We hope to introduce the Bill into

⁴ These treaties include:

- (a) the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- (b) the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR);
- (c) the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);
- (d) the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD);
- (e) the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT); and
- (f) the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

the Legislative Council in 2005.

Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO)

184. The Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) (Cap. 480) was enacted in July 1995 and the entire Ordinance came into force in December 1996. The Ordinance renders unlawful discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status or pregnancy in specified areas of activity including employment, education, provision of goods, facilities or services, disposal or management of premises, eligibility to vote for and to be elected or appointed to advisory bodies, activities of clubs, and activities of Government in Parts III and IV of the Ordinance. Part IV of the Ordinance also outlaws sexual harassment and Part V makes it unlawful to apply any discriminatory practices or to publish any discriminatory advertisements. The Ordinance binds both public and private sectors.

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)

185. The SDO also provides for the establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), an independent statutory body which, among other things, is tasked with the responsibility of eliminating sex discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity between men and women. The Commission, formally established on 20 May 1996, started full operation on 20 September 1996. In 2005-06, the total number of staff is 76 and its recurrent subvention is HK\$71.2 million (approximately US\$9.1 million).

186. The EOC performs functions which include conducting formal investigations, handling complaints, encouraging conciliation between parties in dispute, providing assistance to aggrieved persons, and undertaking public education and research programmes to promote equal opportunities in the community. The Commission is also empowered to issue codes of practice to provide practical guidelines to facilitate the public's compliance with anti-discrimination legislation. In addition, the Commission also plays the role of keeping under review the working of

the SDO.

187. Below are the figures of the number of enquiries, complaints received under the SDO and the number of complaints under SDO that were successfully resolved or conciliated in the past three years-

	2002	2003	2004
No. of enquiries received under the SDO	1,629	1,748	1,316
No. of complaints received under the SDO	402	491	214
No. of complaints under the SDO that were successfully resolved or conciliated	485	139	98

188. The EOC also undertook a variety of activities to promote equal opportunities and to work towards elimination of discrimination through public education. Community outreach programmes organised by the EOC in recent years include the Community Participation Funding Programme, community roadshows and Equal Opportunities Expo. The EOC has also issued Codes of Practice on Employment under the SDO and Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO), quarterly newsletters and the Equal Opportunities Essentials Kit for small to medium enterprises.

Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO)

189. The Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO) (Cap. 527) was enacted in June 1997 and came into operation in November of the same year. This piece of legislation renders it unlawful to discriminate against a person who has family status in specified areas of activity similar to those covered under the SDO. This Ordinance provides protection to those who have responsibility for the care of an immediate family member. Like the SDO, the EOC is responsible for the enforcement and implementation of this Ordinance. Below are the

figures of the number of enquiries, complaints received under the FSDO and the number of complaints under FSDO that were successfully resolved or conciliated in the past three years-

	2002	2003	2004
No. of enquiries received under the FSDO	148	198	138
No. of complaints received under the FSDO	27	57	21
No. of complaints under the FSDO that were successfully resolved or conciliated	14	8	10

J: Women and the Media

Strategic Objectives

- J.1 Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication*
- J.2 Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media*

190. Freedom of expression is protected by various legal instruments in the HKSAR. It is enshrined in the Basic Law (Article 27) and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights (Article 16). The rights of women's access to decision-making positions in the media industry are protected under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance. There is no restriction for women to have access to media/new technologies-related programmes offered by the University Grant Council (UGC)-funded institutions. Furthermore, various legislation and Codes of Practice are in place to prohibit pornography and sex discriminatory elements in the media, including publications, films and broadcasting.

Freedom of expression

191. Freedom of expression is protected by various legal instruments in the HKSAR. It is enshrined in the Basic Law (Article 27) and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights (Article 16).

Women in the media industry

192. The rights of women's access to decision-making positions in the media industry are protected under the SDO. Please refer to paragraph 184 above for details of the Ordinance.

Media / new technologies-related education

193. Consistent with admission policies of UGC-funded institutions, there is no restriction for women to have access to media/new technologies-related programmes offered by the institutions.

Pornography and sex discriminatory elements in the media

194. The Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance (Cap. 390) restricts the publication of indecent articles including printed matters, sound recordings, video-tapes, discs and electronic publications. Under this Ordinance, the publication of obscene articles is prohibited. On the film side, the Film Censorship Ordinance (FCO) (Cap. 392) regulates the exhibition and publication of films. Under the FCO, films are classified by reference to certain standards. These include whether the films portray, depict or treat cruelty, torture, violence, crime, horror, disability, sexuality or indecent or offensive language or behaviour; and whether the films denigrate or insult any particular class of the public by reference to, among others, the sex of the members of that class.

195. In respect of broadcasting, the Codes of Practice issued by the Broadcasting Authority provide, among others, that no programme may contain any matter which is indecent, obscene, or of bad taste which is not ordinarily acceptable to the viewers; and any matter which is likely to encourage hatred against or fear of, and/or considered to be denigrating or insulting to any person(s) or group(s) on the basis of gender, sex preference, etc. The relevant Codes of Practice on programme and advertising standards also reflect the taste and decency standards acceptable to the community, to be observed by the broadcasters.

196. The Broadcasting Authority Ordinance (Cap. 391) provides for the issuing of Codes of Practice for sound broadcasting while the Broadcasting Ordinance (Cap. 562) provides for the issuing of Code of Practice for television broadcasting. Furthermore, the Court may, on application, prohibit the broadcasting of any material which is likely to invite hatred against any group of persons, being a group defined by reference to sex, race etc.

197. The EOC strives for the elimination of sex discriminatory elements in advertisements. With the effort of the EOC, they have now virtually disappeared.

K: Women and the Environment

Strategic Objectives

- K.1 Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels*
- K.2 Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development*
- K.3 Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women*

198. The rights of women to participate in decision-making related to the environment are enshrined in the Sex Discrimination Ordinance. We have put in place various programmes to combat environmental hazards and they would benefit men and women alike. Education on environmental protection is currently covered in a number of subjects at different primary and secondary levels. To promote women's environmental awareness, the Environmental Protection Department has been organizing various activities targeting different women's associations.

Women in environmental decision-making

199. The rights of women to participate in environmental decision-making are enshrined in the SDO (please refer to paragraph 184 above for details of the Ordinance). In fact, the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau is at present headed by a woman. Of the 13 non-official members of the Council for Sustainable Development, three (23%) are women.

Education on environmental protection

200. Education on environmental protection is currently covered in a number of subjects such as General Studies, Geography, Science, Biology, Human Biology etc at different primary and secondary levels.

Assistance to agriculture and fisheries

201. The Government provides a wide range of assistance and services (including vocational training, technical support and low-interest loans etc.) for the sustainable development of local agriculture and fisheries. All these assistance and services are provided to the industries without making any distinction between men and women.

Combating environmental hazards

202. Serious environmental pollution has been a by-product of economic and population growth. The Government has put in place various programmes to combat environmental hazards. Such programmes would benefit men and women alike.

Air pollution

203. Air pollution from stationary sources has been tackled. Major pollution sources are under stringent licensing control. Regulations are in force to ban the venting of ozone depleting refrigerants and to restrict import of certain products containing ozone-depleting substances from non-partisan countries to the Montreal Protocol.

204. It is an established policy of the Government to adopt the most stringent vehicle fuel and emission standards that are technologically practical and available. Euro III emission standards were introduced on 1 January 2001 in tandem with the European Union. The specifications of motor vehicle diesel and petrol have been tightened to Euro IV and we are planning to upgrade the emission standards for newly registered vehicles to Euro IV on 1 January 2006. At present, the HKSAR's

controls are not only among the most stringent in Asia but are also on a par with the European Union.

205. In order to provide timely information about air pollution to the public and to enhance awareness, we have been reporting Air Pollution Indices (API) by districts and making a forecast for the following day since 1995. Since January 2005, the Hong Kong Observatory has been releasing real time satellite imaging photos on its website, tracking the distribution of air pollutants over the Pearl River Delta.

206. To address the regional air pollution problem, the HKSAR Government is working closely with Guangdong to reduce the total air pollutant emissions in the Pearl River Delta. The HKSAR Government and the Guangdong Provincial Government reached a consensus in April 2002 to reduce by 2010, on a best endeavour basis, the regional emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, respirable suspended particulates and volatile organic compounds by 40%, 20%, 55% and 55% respectively, using 1997 as the base year. In December 2003, the two governments jointly drew up the Pearl River Delta Regional Air Quality Management Plan (the “Management Plan”) with a view to meeting the above emission reduction targets. Under the Management Plan, the two governments have set up a regional air quality monitoring network. The network is expected to be fully operational later in 2005.

Noise pollution

207. Controls on noise from construction sites and industrial/commercial activities were introduced in 1989. Control on the use of particularly noisy equipment and the carrying out of certain noisy construction activities conducted in populated area during sensitive hours was introduced in 1996. Tightened noise emission standards for vehicles came into operation in 2002 to bring them in line with those of the international standards. The Noise Control Ordinance was amended in 2002 to explicitly hold the management of a body corporate liable for noise offences committed by the corporation so as to deter repeated offences. The new provisions came into operation in 2004 together with two Codes of Practices which are intended to provide industries with guidance on good management practice to prevent noise violations.

Waste disposal

208. The waste disposal strategy is based on the provision of three very large landfills in the New Territories and a network of refuse transfer stations. The three new strategic landfills, which occupy a total of 270 hectares of land, are located respectively, in the western, north-eastern and south-eastern parts of the New Territories. Seven refuse transfer stations distributed throughout the territory are now in operation. To reverse the rising trend of waste growth, the Government launched a 10-year Waste Reduction Framework Plan (WRFP) on 5 November 1998. The WRFP sets out dynamic and environmentally responsible programmes to prolong the life of our existing landfills and to reduce the increasing costs of waste transportation, treatment and disposal.

209. To ensure proper management of chemical waste, the Government has introduced a cradle-to-grave control for such wastes under the Waste Disposal Ordinance (Cap. 354) since 1993. To help local producers to dispose of their chemical waste properly, a Chemical Waste Treatment Centre (CWTC) on Southern Tsing Yi Island was commissioned in April 1993.

210. In addition, the Basel Convention is applicable to the HKSAR. A statutory permit system has been implemented under the Waste Disposal Ordinance for all import and export of hazardous waste to ensure that any such waste shipments would be conducted in an environmentally sound manner. In addition, the import of hazardous waste from developed countries into the HKSAR has been banned since December 1998.

211. The Legislative Council passed the necessary legislation in January 2005 to enable the implementation of construction waste disposal charges. This scheme is in line with the polluter pays principle and aims to provide an economic incentive to reduce construction waste. We are now actively undertaking necessary preparatory work and aim to implement the charging scheme in late 2005.

Water quality

212. The introduction of water control zones under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO) (Cap.358) allows control over the quality of discharges. The WPCO is now in force in all waters of the HKSAR. A revised Livestock Waste Control Scheme under the Waste Disposal Ordinance has been implemented throughout the whole territory since July 1997 to control the handling and disposal of livestock waste in order to protect the water quality in the HKSAR's watercourses.

213. Permanent long-term improvements to water quality will require a comprehensive upgrading of the territory's sewerage infrastructure. We have invested some HK\$8 billion (approximately US\$1 billion) in Stage 1 of the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme to ensure proper treatment for about three quarters of the domestic sewage being discharged into Victoria harbour. Water quality in the harbour has improved significantly following full commissioning of Stage 1 at the end of 2001.

214. Subject to the acceptance by the community of the need to meet recurrent costs through sewage charges, we have plans to invest a further HK\$8 billion (approximately US\$1 billion) in the next phase aimed at dealing with the remaining one quarter of the sewage in Victoria Harbour area which currently does not receive proper treatment. Completion of this phase will deliver a healthy marine water environment in most of the harbour area. At the same time we will continue to invest in sewerage infrastructure in other parts of the territory, with projected expenditure of HK\$1 billion (approximately US\$130 million) per year for each of the next five years.

Promotion of Women's Environmental Awareness

215. To promote women's environmental awareness, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has been organizing various activities targeting different women's associations. In 2001, the EPD, the Environmental Campaign Committee and Hong Kong Federation of Women jointly organized the Green Leaders Programme (Family Series)

cum "Beautiful Life - Living Tips" series. The series of programme included environmental talks on various topics for women's associations at various districts and the publication of a booklet entitled "Environmental Protection - Great Fun for the Family". Under this Programme, 122 environmental education sessions had been conducted for women's associations with over 2,200 participants.

216. In December 2004, the Hong Kong Women Professionals and Entrepreneurs Association jointly organized with the EPD and other co-organizers an environmental forum on "How to Make a Business Greener and More Competitive". The forum aimed to educate young executives, professionals and entrepreneurs on how to make their business more environmentally friendly and to enhance the competitive advantages of the Small Medium Enterprises in the HKSAR.

217. There have also been on-going trainings and Environmental Protection Ambassador Schemes conducted by the EPD for specific stakeholders including women's groups such as the Hong Kong Girl Guides Association, the Zonta Club of Hong Kong, etc. to enhance their environmental knowledge and awareness.

218. Community groups can also seek funding from the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) to organize environmental activities on their own. Since 2001, 11 Environmental Education and Community Action Projects and four Community Waste Recovery Projects proposed by various women's associations were approved by the ECF. Funding amounted to HK\$0.3 million (approximately US\$38,500) and HK\$1.5 million (approximately US\$192,300) respectively.

L: The Girl-child

Strategic Objectives

- L.1 Eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl-child*
- L.2 Eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls*
- L.3 Promote and protect the rights of the girl-child and increase awareness of her needs and potential*
- L.4 Eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training*
- L.5 Eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition*
- L.6 Eliminate the economic exploitation of child labour and protect young girls at work*
- L.7 Eradicate violence against the girl-child*
- L.8 Promote the girl-child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life*
- L.9 Strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl-child*

219. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was extended to the Hong Kong in 1994. The rights of children, including girl-child, are protected by various legislation and administrative practices. The Government provides nine-year free and universal basic education to all children, boys and girls alike, between six to 15 years old. We also provide a wide range of health services dedicated to children of both sexes. The employment of persons under the age of 18 years is regulated by various ordinances and regulations. Legislation is also in place to protect children from violence, abandonment and neglect and to prevent sexual exploitation of children.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

220. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was extended to Hong Kong in 1994. The initial report under the Convention was examined by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 1996. Please

refer to paragraphs 181-182 above for efforts in promoting the Convention.

Legislative protections

221. The rights of children, including girl-child, are protected by various legislation and administrative practices in the HKSAR. Article 22 of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights, as set out in the HKBORO, guarantees all persons, including children, the right to equality and non-discrimination. The Protection of Children and Juveniles Ordinance (PCJO) (Cap. 213) provides for the protection of children or juveniles who have been or are being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused; or whose health, development or welfare has been or appears likely to be neglected or avoidably impaired.

222. We had launched a scheme since October 2003 to provide legal representation service for children and juveniles involved in care or protection proceedings under the PCJO to fulfil the obligation under Article 37(d) of the Convention. A review of the scheme was conducted in February 2005. Before the review, children/juveniles who are deprived of their liberty and detained in a place of refuge under section 34E of PCJO are covered by the scheme. After the review, the Government have decided to expand the scope of service to cover more cases where liberty is deprived of or likely to be deprived of which do not entail immediate detention in a place of refuge, starting from June 2005.

Registration and nationality of newborns

223. The Births and Deaths Registration Ordinance (Cap. 174) provides that the particulars of a child born alive in the HKSAR must be registered within 42 days after the day of such birth with the Registrar of Births and Deaths, or else, after the expiration of the 42 days and within 12 months after the said birth, the birth shall be registered after payment of the prescribed fees. No birth shall be registered after the expiry of 12 months except with the consent of the Registrar and on payment of the prescribed fees.

224. The Nationality Law of the People's Republic of China (CNL) has been applied in the HKSAR by way of promulgation in accordance with Article 18 of and Annex III to the Basic Law since 1 July 1997.

225. Under Article 4 of the CNL, any person born in China (including the HKSAR) whose parents are both Chinese nationals or one of whose parents is a Chinese national shall have Chinese nationality. Article 6 of the CNL stipulates that any person born in China whose parents are stateless or of uncertain nationality and have settled in China shall have Chinese nationality. For children born in the HKSAR to parents of foreign nationality, they may acquire a nationality according to the respective nationality laws applicable to their parents.

Minimum age of marriage

226. The Marriage Ordinance (Cap. 181) provides that the minimum age at which a person may marry is 16 years old. Parental or guardian consent is required if either party to the intended marriage is of or over 16 and under 21 years of age. Where a person whose consent is required refuses to give consent or has forbidden the issue of the certificate of the Registrar, the party to the intended marriage may apply to a District Judge for consent to the marriage and the consent so given shall have the same effect as if it had been given by the person or as if the forbidding of the issue of the certificate had been withdrawn.

Education

227. The Government provides nine-year free and universal basic education to all children, boys and girls alike, between six to 15 years old. Please refer to paragraph 50 above for details of the provision.

Health services

228. The Government provides a wide range of health services dedicated to children of both sexes, including:

- (a) Health care services for children up to five years of age: A comprehensive range of health promotion and disease prevention services are provided in 31 Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) to children from birth to five years of age through an integrated child health and development programme. In 2004, 184,710 children aged below five attended the child health service. Among them 50,478 were new clients. The total attendance of the service was 660,137.
- (b) The Student Health Service provides regular physical examinations, health screening, health education and counselling for primary and secondary school students. In the school year 2004-05, the total number of primary and secondary school students is about 931,000. Among them, 728,688 students (78%) have enrolled in the Student Health Service.
- (c) Specialist clinics: As at 31 March 2005, there were seven Child Assessment Centres under the DH providing specialised assessment for children from birth to 11 years of age through a multi-disciplinary team approach.
- (d) Immunisation and control of communicable disease: In 2004, 94.2% of local newborn babies attended the MCHCs. A comprehensive immunisation programme is provided to protect children from nine infectious diseases, namely tuberculosis, hepatitis B, poliomyelitis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, measles, mumps and rubella. The school immunisation campaigns for primary one to primary six students achieved the coverage rate over 98% in 2003-04.
- (e) Dental care: The School Dental Care Service (SDCS) provides dental examination, preventive and basic dental care to enrolled primary school children at a nominal annual fee. In 2003-04

school year, 90.3% of primary school population participated in the scheme. The SDCS homepage and 24-hour interactive voice response system provide information on the SDCS and oral health. The Oral Health Education Unit (OHEU) of the DH promotes oral health to all sectors of the community through various outreaching and target-specific programmes. Information on oral health is accessible through the OHEU homepage and 24-hour interactive telephone hotline.

- (f) Education on AIDS: The prevention and control of AIDS is dealt with through public education to prevent maternal infection and perinatal transmission, and the school curriculum. In schools, a train-the-trainer approach is adopted whereby guidelines, leaflets, booklets, learning packs and teaching kits providing guidance on teaching about AIDS were distributed.
- (g) Health Education: The Central Health Education Unit (CHEU) of the DH developed a series of health education materials on various health issues. Health messages on family and child health, adolescent health and sex education, and woman's health, exercise and nutrition are disseminated to children and adolescents via various channels including TV and Radio, newspapers and magazines, pamphlets, posters, health talks, exhibitions, the CHEU website and a 24-hour telephone hotline.
- (h) Hospital Services: As at 31 March 2005, there were a total of 1,011 hospital beds dedicated to paediatric patients.

Comprehensive Child Development Service (0-5 Years)

229. It is widely recognised that the early years of children is of great importance to their future development. Inter-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration is needed to provide an integrated and comprehensive service that meets the varied needs of pre-school children and their families. To move towards an integrated community-based child and family service model, the Department of Health, the Hospital Authority, the Education and Manpower Bureau, the Social Welfare Department and non-governmental organisations will cooperate and align their services to

improve the interface among healthcare, social and education services at the community level.

230. The Government will implement the pilot Comprehensive Child Development Services for children of 0 to 5 years of age in four communities in 2005-06. The programme aims to augment the existing service in the MCHCs through better alignment of the delivery of health, education and social services to ensure early identification of the varied needs of children and their families so that appropriate services can be made available to them in a timely manner.

Employment of persons under 18

231. The employment of persons under the age of 18 years is regulated by various ordinances and regulations. For example, the Employment of Children Regulations, which are applicable to children under 15, prohibit employment which would interfere with a child's schooling or would endanger his/her moral and physical health. Young persons (aged 15 or above but below 18) are prohibited under the Employment of Young Persons (Industry) Regulations, the subsidiary regulations of the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Cap. 509) and the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance (Cap. 59) from employment in certain trades and work processes. Their employment in workplaces is also subject to certain conditions. The Labour Department conducts workplace inspections vigorously to check whether employers have violated these regulations.

Violence against children

232. The Working Group on Child Abuse, which was set up in 1983 (and renamed as Committee on Child Abuse in November 1998), is composed of representatives from different Government bureaux/departments and professions including clinical psychologists, social workers and medical practitioners. It is tasked with proposing measures to prevent and handle the problem of child abuse, and to promote a multi-disciplinary approach. The "Guide to the Identification

of Child Abuse” and the “Procedures For Handling Child Abuse Cases” have been widely distributed to front-line professionals to help them identify and handle child abuse cases.

233. A multi-disciplinary case conference is held shortly after each report of child abuse to agree to a long term welfare plan for the child concerned. Participation of family members in the case conference has been introduced since October 1996 to strengthen family participation in the intervention process, particularly in the formulation of welfare plan for the child and the family. The Protection of Children and Juvenile Ordinance (Cap. 213) provides for the powers of juvenile courts in relation to guardianship, custody and control of children and juveniles in need of care and protection. Victims of abuse are given psychological or psychiatric counselling and other rehabilitation services as appropriate.

Child pornography

234. The Prevention of Child Pornography Ordinance (Cap. 579) has been operative since December 2003 to prevent sexual exploitation of children. Please refer to paragraph 117 above for details.

Strengthen the role of family

235. Various resources and programmes are offered by the Government to strengthen the role of the family. To meet the changing needs of individuals and families in a holistic manner, the Government re-engineered the Family Services Centres (FSCs)/Counselling Units, the Family Life Education Units, the Family Support and Resource Centres, the Family Support Networking Teams, etc. to set up a total of 61 Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) over the territory by phases in 2004-05 with the objective of preserving and strengthening the family as a unit. Each IFSC will serve a well-defined geographical boundary by providing a continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial services including family life education, parent-child activities, enquiry service, volunteer training, outreaching service, support groups, educational/developmental programmes, counselling and referral service, etc. for individuals or families in need.

Challenges Ahead

236. Women in the HKSAR have come a long way over the past few decades. The Government with the assistance of the Women's Commission have made remarkable progress since the issue of the last report in 2000. We also recognize and appreciate the important contributions that women's groups and other non-governmental organisations have made in promoting gender equality and advancing the status of women in the HKSAR.

237. That said, we are not complacent about the current situations. There are a number of challenges in the advancement of women, and more needs to be done.

238. The HKSAR is undergoing economic restructuring brought by globalization, and some specific groups are facing more difficulties. Some women, especially those who are in their middle ages or less educated, still encounter difficulties in seeking employment opportunities, and in general the median monthly employment earnings of women is lower than that of men. We need to further empower the less privileged women and enhance support services, so that they can develop their capability and participate fully in the economy.

239. Moreover, as women lead a longer life, how to continue to provide quality health care services at a price affordable and suitable to women of different ages while maintaining a sustainable system is a big challenge. At the same time, the Government needs to carefully examine the recommendations of the study on child abuse and spouse battering taking into account all relevant factors, with a view to preventing and tackling domestic violence more effectively.

240. Furthermore, while we would achieve the gender benchmark of 25% for appointments to Government statutory and advisory bodies shortly, there is still room to further empower women to participate more actively in public affairs.

241. The advancement of women could be enhanced if the root of the problem, including gender prejudices and stereotyping, is removed. While traditional values are changing, there are still prejudiced misconceptions on the roles, values, images and abilities of the two sexes, which hinder women from developing their potential to the full. Changing these misconceptions and stereotyping is long-term tasks that will require sustained public education efforts.

242. The Government is fully committed to advancing the interests and well-being of women in the HKSAR. We would continue to work with the Women's Commission to meet the various challenges. The Commission is setting the theme "Together We Build a Harmonious Community" as the goal for the next five years. This coincides squarely with the Government's objective to build a harmonious and caring society with both genders enjoying same rights, opportunities and status.

243. The Government and the Women's Commission would continue to partner with the stakeholder groups concerned, including women's groups, other non-governmental organisations, schools, business sector and academics, in achieving the important cause of advancing the interests and well-being of women.

Annex

Major Achievements of Women's Commission

- Secured the Government's endorsement of the introduction of gender mainstreaming on an incremental basis.
- Designed a Gender Mainstreaming Checklist and launched it in selected policy/programme areas.
- Designated Gender Focal Points in all Government bureaux and departments, with provision of gender-related training to over 1,000 civil servants.
- Obtained the Government's agreement to take gender composition into account in appointments to advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs), with an initial target of 25% as a benchmark for women's participation.
- Promoted good empowerment practices in organizations and published a booklet to publicize these practices.
- Developed and launched the Capacity Building Mileage Programme for women's self-development and life-long education.
- Launched major publicity campaign (including TV/radio API, TV drama series, radio programmes)
- Hosted a Conference on "Women for a Better Tomorrow", open fora and seminars on women's issues in 2002.
- With substantive input from NGOs, developed a framework to identify and structure areas for future collaboration.
- Held a planning forum with women's groups and NGOs in November 2004 on the future direction of the Commission's work and collaboration activities.

- Participated in various international fora on women issues.
- Co-organized the Mainland/HKSAR Joint Events in Celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in April 2005 in Beijing with the All-China Women's Federation and the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau. Some 200 women representatives from Mainland and HK attended the event.