

# **ISLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Paper IDC 95/2013**

### **Women's Commission**

#### **Strengthen the Collaboration between Women's Commission and District Councils**

#### **Purpose**

This paper outlines the work of the Women's Commission (WoC) and introduces two initiatives for women's empowerment and community harmony. WoC seeks to enlist the support of the District Councils (DCs) in promoting these two initiatives through their local networks and in strengthening the collaboration with WoC on related matters.

#### **Background**

2. Established in 2001, WoC is tasked to take a strategic overview over women's issues, develop a long-term vision and strategy for the development and advancement of women, and advise the Government on policies and initiatives which are of concern to women. Over the years, it has established the practice of making regular district visits and attending relevant meetings in order to exchange views with members of District Councils, local communities and women's groups and discuss issues relating to the well-being of women.

3. In May 2012, the WoC Chairperson attended a monthly meeting held between the Home Affairs Department (HAD) and all DC Chairpersons and Vice-chairpersons. A briefing on the Funding Scheme for Women's Development launched last year was given and received positive response from all DCs. The meeting was also informed of a new round of district visits by WoC to introduce its work to DCs with a view to deepening collaboration.

## **Gender Mainstreaming**

4. “Gender mainstreaming” is a strategy advocated by the United Nations to promote women’s interests and gender equality. Simply put, gender mainstreaming incorporates the specific needs and viewpoints of both genders into the formulation of policies, legislation and programmes, and makes the concerns and experiences of both genders one of the basic considerations in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of legislation, public policies and programmes. The goal is to ensure that both genders have equal access to, and benefit from, the resources and opportunities of society, and that both genders can fully develop their potential and contribute to society.

5. In recent years, WoC has been working to promote gender mainstreaming among government bureaux and departments, DCs and non-governmental sectors. It encourages application of the concept in various scope of work so that the distinctive needs of both genders could be addressed. DCs are important entities in the community and their work is closely related to the daily life of general public. If DCs could take into consideration the concept of gender mainstreaming and the specific needs and viewpoints of both genders in their work routines, for example in the design and supply of community facilities and allocation of DC fund in organising community activities, it would definitely bring positive impacts to the promotion of women’s development and gender equality.

### ***Gender Focal Points in DCs***

6. Extending the promotion of gender mainstreaming to the district level, WoC has established a network of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) under the auspices of DCs to facilitate communication and collaboration between WoC and DCs. By 2012, all the 18 DCs have each designated a DC member as the second-term GFP. GFP serves as the contact/resource person of the DC concerned in the promotion of gender awareness and understanding among DC members. WoC regularly meets with GFPs and works closely with them to encourage the incorporation of gender perspectives in district projects and activities.

## **Funding Scheme for Women's Development**

7. The Funding Scheme for Women's Development is launched by WoC in 2012-13. The Scheme aims to forge a partnership with DCs, women's groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in implementing women's empowerment initiatives and promoting women's well-being in local communities. WoC believes that providing empowerment projects for women can help unleash and enhance women's potential, and in turn better equip them to contribute to society at large and become a source of strength in community development and advancement.

8. Under the Scheme, a theme will be set by WoC every year. Projects promoting the set theme may apply for funding via two streams. A sum of \$1 million is managed by WoC as funding for women's groups and NGOs providing women's services to organise regional or territory-wide activities. In parallel, the management of the other \$1 million has been delegated by WoC to the 18 DCs, as an initiative to deepen mutual collaboration and to leverage the local networks of DCs to maximise the synergy to be achieved under the Scheme. The 18 DCs shall distribute the funding to local women's groups and NGOs for organising community activities catering of women in the districts. To keep track of progress of the funded projects and ensure proper use of the funding, funded women's groups and NGOs are required to submit regular progress reports and final reports for examination by WoC.

## **Capacity Building Mileage Programme**

9. The Capacity Building Mileage Programme (CBMP) is launched by WoC in partnership with the Open University of Hong Kong, Metro Broadcast, and some 70 women's groups and NGOs. The first large-scale learning programme tailored to women, it aims to encourage women of different backgrounds and educational levels to pursue life-long learning and self-development.

10. No entry requirement is set for CBMP. Courses are delivered in three modes: face-to-face courses run by NGOs, radio courses through broadcasts of the “自在人生大學堂” programme, and online courses. Subjects taught include, for example, interpersonal relationship management, finance

management, health, and everyday practicalities. The response to CBMP has been enthusiastic since its inception. Students have expressed satisfaction for gaining enhancement in terms of motivation to learn and confidence and knowledge to resolve daily problems. Some have found life more enriched and purposeful because of the new community networks and wider social circles they have developed in the process.

11. CBMP has encouraged women of different backgrounds and educational levels to pursue life-long learning and self-development. As at February 2013, the cumulative number of enrolments has exceeded 61 000 and the radio programmes have reached over 1.4 million people. From 2012-13 onwards, it has become a regularised initiative with ample recurrent provisions of \$8 millions from the Government to offer quality courses for women. Part of the provisions is allocated for NGOs to provide face-to-face courses taught in English or Putonghua so as to encourage enrolment by women of ethnic minorities and new arrival women. WoC hopes that DCs will make use of their district networks to engage local women's groups and NGOs to organise courses and promote CBMP, so that more women can embark on continuous learning and empower themselves to work for the betterment of their communities.

### **Advice Sought**

12. Members are invited to note the above information and provide support as deemed fit to the promotion and implementation of the initiatives in the district.

**Women's Commission**  
**September 2013**