Gender Equality Policy/Practice in Hong Kong

Woon-kwong LAM
Chairperson
Equal Opportunities Commission
How far have we come?
The Turning Point

• Compulsory nine-year education mandated in 1978
Protection under the law

- Bill of Rights Ordinance
- Sex Discrimination Ordinance
- Family Status Discrimination Ordinance
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Building the policy infrastructure for gender equality

- Equal Opportunities Commission (1996)
- Women’s Commission (2001)
- Gender Mainstreaming Checklist
- Gender perspectives in public services
- Other policy changes
Policy in practice: A long way to go
Chronic income inequality at low income level

Median Monthly Earnings (in HK$, excluding foreign domestic workers), 2010

- Service and shop sales workers
  - Women: 7,500
  - Men: 10,100

- Craft and related workers
  - Women: 7,800
  - Men: 10,500

- Plant/Machinery Operators
  - Women: 7,500
  - Men: 10,000

- Elementary Occupations
  - Women: 6,000
  - Men: 7,000

Source: “Women and Men in Hong Kong: Key Statistics 2011 Edition”, Census and Statistics Department, HK SAR
Some policies disproportionately burden women

- E.g. the “418 contract” rule and female workers

Number of employees working less than 18 hours per week (excluding foreign domestic workers), 2010

- Women: 91,100
- Men: 69,500

Source: “Women and Men in Hong Kong: Key Statistics 2011 Edition”, Census and Statistics Department, HK SAR
Unequal treatment in the workplace still common

% of all respondents who agreed with the statement “sexual harassment occurs in my office at least occasionally”

- Agree, 45%
- Disagree, 55%

% of respondent firms willing to hire working mothers

- HK: 32%
- China: 44%
- Global: 36%

Source: Civic Party Survey 2007

Source: Regus Global Survey 2011
Gender stereotypes hold women back in and outside the home

% of all respondents who agreed with the statement

I prefer not to be supervised by female managers/supervisors 33%

Women should focus more on the family than work 50%

Men perform better at political leadership than women 39%

Source: “What do Women and Men in Hong Kong Think about the Status of Women at Home, Work and in Social Environments?”, Women’s Commission Survey, 2010
What can be done?
Set the tone with policies

- Invest in childcare support
- Legislate family-friendly practices (e.g. paternity leave)
- More gender-sensitive policymaking
- Increase awareness of gendered effects of policies
Promote equality at work

- Public education to employers and HR managers on benefits of gender equality in the workplace
Stop stereotypes

Source: Dilbert.com
Engage men and boys

- Promote awareness of gender bias
- Link gender equality to benefits for all

$97\%$ of male respondents who agree with the statement, “Achieving gender equality for women and men is an important social issue to me.”

Women must take the lead

• Reject stereotypes
• Be a role model
• Speak out against inequality
The End