

TWF Submission to the UN CEDAW Committee

Dear TWF Friends

We are delighted to share with you the Shadow Report we submitted this week to the United Nations Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This report will be reviewed in the Committee's pre-session hearing from March 3-7 and considered again at the full Committee hearing in October which will review the Hong Kong Government's compliance with CEDAW and recommend steps for the Government to implement going forward to strengthen the protections afforded women and girls in Hong Kong.

Although Hong Kong is ahead of many countries in its protection of women's human rights and has taken some commendable steps since its last CEDAW review in 2006, large gaps remain. Our Shadow Report highlights some key gaps and recommendation drawing on our community programmes and other TWF initiatives, as well as our recent research on the status of women and girls in Hong Kong in collaboration with partners including the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Civic Exchange.

These include:

Institutional mechanisms: The Women's Commission is under resourced and disadvantageously positioned due to its status as an advisory body rather than as a central mechanism within the Government Secretariat, which hampers its ability to drive the integration of gender in legislation, public policies and programmes.

Gender disaggregated data: Gender-segregated data maintained by government departments and bureaux is not comprehensive, consistent or always accessible. Critical gaps include comprehensive data regarding teenage pregnancies, household spending on childcare and elderly care, and individuals with disabilities, and demographics of ethnic minority women. These gaps make it more difficult for effective policies to be developed.

Female representation in leadership/decision-making positions: Women are under-represented in all levels of political activity. Women are also significantly under-represented in leadership and senior executive and non-executive roles across industry sectors and professions.

"Feminisation of poverty": Women are still disproportionately employed in lower status jobs and earn lower incomes compared to men. There is a lack of specific consideration of women in Government welfare policies including the MPF scheme. Women also make up the majority of the part-time/casual workforce engaged in the 4C's - catering, caring, cashiering and cleaning - and lack statutory protections with respect to the employment and other benefits enjoyed by full-time workers.

Gender stereotypes: The ease with which media is now accessible through multiple devices and by younger generations makes it even more critical that the Government, parents, and educators adopt measures to ensure consumers, and particularly young consumers of media, are aware of the potential harmful effects of news accounts and broadcast, billboard, print and online images which objectify women, portray women as sexual prey, and promote unrealistic body ideals.

Life Skills: Many teens are growing up without training in essential life skills and the critical thinking required to challenge gender-based assumptions and to see new possibilities for themselves. Our programmes and research show that while teen girls are more prone to self-doubt and often lack the confidence and role models to aspire to higher education and career opportunities, teen boys are more strongly affected by gender stereotypes and more likely to hold rigidly gendered views of the roles of men and women in society. Accordingly it is imperative that gender awareness programs reach both boys and girls.

Women and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics): Women are under-represented in the STEM subjects in terms of studies and career options which disadvantages women in their employment prospects given the growing importance of technology and IT across industry sectors. If ICT is going to be a new pillar industry for Hong Kong, we need many more women to enter the field.

To read our report in full, please click [here](#).

To read more about CEDAW and other reports submitted by NGOs, please click [here](#).

As always, we warmly welcome all and any feedback and your suggestions for issues and areas that we should be focusing on. Please write to me at sthompson@thewomensfoundationhk.org. I would love to hear from you.

Warm regards

Su-Mei Thompson
CEO, The Women's Foundation

