

44th Meeting of the Elderly Commission **Press Summary**

The Elderly Commission (EC) held its 44th meeting today (28 November 2005). Major items on the agenda were as follows: -

(1) Major Findings of a Study on Image of Ageing in Hong Kong

- The Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB) has commissioned the study with a view to facilitating the Elderly Commission's efforts in promoting active ageing. The objective of the study was to gain a better understanding of the community's prevailing views about ageing so as to identify possible strategies that would enhance the image of older people and strengthen intergenerational solidarity.
- Specifically, the study aimed to find out the current situation of intergenerational interactions in Hong Kong, factors affecting the image of old people, and the common stereotypes or misconceptions about old people. The study comprised of a household survey of over 9,000 respondents and a focus group research conducted between March and August 2005. Members noted the findings of the study and discussed ways to further enhance the image of the elderly in Hong Kong.
- Members noted that elders' self-image is more positive than what others perceived about them. Elders considered themselves to be mature, independent, happy and open-minded. However, the public images of elders were described in more negative terms, particularly as being sickly and stubborn. Non-elders' perception about acquainted old people was more positive than their views about old people in general, and more congruent with the elders' self-image.
- The study has identified some strategies for enhancing the image of ageing, and revealed participation of elders in family and in society is important in enhancing their image and intergenerational solidarity. According to the survey findings, elders are helpful and useful to their family. Mutual support between generations is prevalent. The findings would be useful for deliberations in the Commission's Working Group on Active Ageing.
- A summary of the survey findings is attached at Annex.

(2) Draft Design Manual for Barrier Free Access

- Representatives of the Buildings Department briefed members of the Elderly Commission on the Draft Design Manual for Barrier Free Access (Draft Design Manual). The Draft Design Manual is a result of a review of the current Design Manual – Barrier Free Access 1997, having regard to changes in building technology, the quality of life of the general public, attitudes of the community towards persons with a disability as well as the needs of the elderly. The scope

of review includes research on relevant standards of barrier free access in five overseas countries and consultation with various stakeholders in Hong Kong.

- The Draft Design Manual sets out the revised design requirements for providing barrier free access to and appropriate facilities in a building for all people. A 6-month consultation will commence in early 2006 to seek stakeholders' views on the Draft Design Manual.
- Commission Members generally welcomed the efforts to update the manual and raised specific comments on the proposed improvements as design requirements in relation to the needs of the elderly.

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Gist of findings of a Study on Image of Ageing in Hong Kong

(1) Intergenerational relationship in Hong Kong is quite good and valued.

80% of elders described their relationship with their children or grandchildren as good, with 29% describing it as excellent. Only around 1% thought the relationship was poor. Similarly, 75% of non-elders described their relationship with their elderly parents or grandparents as good, with more than one-fifth reported that the relationship was excellent. Less than 0.5% reported that the relationship was poor. Middle-age people (age 40-59) tended to report a better relationship with their family elders.

87% of elders felt respected by the younger generation and 76% indicated that they liked to mingle with young people if given the chance to do so. As for non-elders, the preference on interaction with old people increased with age. Over 60% of middle-age people liked to interact with old people or welcomed their advice, compared to around 45% for young people (age 15-29). 8% and 16% of the middle-age and young people respectively did not like to interact with old people. The proportions of those who disliked advice from old people were 4% and 9% respectively.

(2) Elders are helpful and useful to their family. Mutual support between generations is prevalent.

72% of elders had given advice or shown concern to their children or grandchildren. 48% helped with housework and 42% with shopping and running errands. 17% of elders had also helped their offspring financially.

68% of non-elders had given advice or shown concern to their aged parents or grandparents and about 57% had provided financial aid in the past two months. Another common support provided by non-elders was accompanying family elders to places (51%), followed by shopping or running errands (48%).

(3) Elders' self-image is more positive than what others perceived about them.

Elders considered themselves to be mature, independent, happy and open-minded. However, the public images of elders were described in more

negative terms, particularly as being sickly and stubborn. Non-elders' perception about acquainted old people was more positive than their views about old people in general, and more congruent with the elders' self-image.

In terms of psychological wellbeing, 65% of elders were often happy. 56% were satisfied with their present life while 7% were dissatisfied. 57% considered their present way of life as quite positive and active. Furthermore, 81% felt that they were useful to their family and community, and 53% felt that they were now in the most wonderful years of their life.

(4) Participation of elders in family and in society is important in enhancing their image and intergenerational solidarity.

Elders should keep up with society and its cultural changes through maintaining an active lifestyle. To provide more opportunities and support to improve intergenerational communication skills and to cultivate common interests and fun times, age segregation should be avoided and inter-generational programmes should be promoted in families, at schools, and in the community.