

Jan 2004 Issue No. 28

Message from the Chairperson - Building Capacity Effecting Change

**Building Capacity
Effecting Change**



Mrs Patricia Chu, EOC Chairperson

I am deeply honoured to be the new Chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), and very pleased to have this opportunity to continue serving the community. With a firm belief in human rights and equal opportunities, the work of the Commission is close to my heart. I shall work with all Commission members and staff to improve our service, increase our transparency, and build up the capacity and credibility of the EOC.

Having served the Social Welfare Department for 34 years and retired from the civil service last December, I have accumulated solid experience in working with marginalized groups and non-governmental organisations. In particular, I was able to contribute to upholding the rights of persons with disabilities, protecting the vulnerable, strengthening the family system so as to improve the quality of life for individuals and their families. I fully understand the difficulties faced by disadvantaged groups in employment, education, transportation, access to services and facilities and I am committed to listening to their voices and addressing their concerns.

Ensuring EOC's Impartiality

My civil service background has led to some questions about my neutrality in dealing with complaints and litigation against the government. In my view, what is required of the EOC Chairperson, regardless of his or her background, is a strong commitment to equal opportunities. Moreover, the EOC, as a statutory body, is mandated to implement the three anti-discrimination ordinances in Hong Kong, to eliminate discrimination on grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy, disability and family status. The EOC has always been impartial in handling complaint cases as stipulated in the ordinances, and there is a clear set of guidelines on conflict of interest for its members and staff. I shall handle all matters in a fair and open manner, and most importantly, in accordance with the law.

In July 2003, we conducted a survey on public awareness and perception of the EOC. According to initial results, of the 2,002 respondents, 92.7% said that they had heard of the EOC. Nearly all (97.3%) respondents said that the work of the EOC deserved their support, and 84% said that the EOC could enhance public understanding of discrimination and inequality. These results are certainly encouraging, giving us a clear indication of the public's perception, support for, and expectations of the Commission. No doubt, the findings will help the EOC map out future strategies for enhancing its work.

Sustaining Team Spirit

Over the past few months there have been changes to the leadership of the EOC, but the EOC members and our dedicated staff have been conducting business as usual. All EOC members who come from different backgrounds and possess diverse expertise have pledged to continue working closely to set directions for the Commission and implement policies on equal opportunity. We, members and staff as a team, are strongly committed to delivering quality service, and will continue to strive for the public's support.

Strategies for the Coming Year

In September 2003, the EOC commenced a review on the role of the EOC and how we could best fulfill our mission and improve our work efficiency and effectiveness. The review is expected to be completed in early 2004, and the EOC will come up with a clear vision for future directions and priorities.

Previously as advisors to the Chairman, fellow Commission member Professor Nelson CHOW and I have met with EOC staff and various community groups and organizations, and we have listened intently to their views about how the EOC can advance its work. We will look for a plan that answers the needs of our society today, with a view to best implement the concept of equal opportunities.

Meanwhile, in addition to our existing work, the EOC will also focus on strengthening promotion and public education, partnering with different sectors to combat discrimination and spread the values of equal opportunities, building our capacity, streamlining our work procedures and ensuring effective use of resources.

What has happened in recent months has put us firmly on the agenda. The EOC is committed to upholding the principle of equal opportunities and providing quality service. Our vision is for Hong Kong to become a diversified, fair and just society, where all individuals have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. This is, no doubt, a challenging task, not only for the EOC, but everyone in Hong Kong. I shall serve to the best of my ability and I look forward to your staunch support for the work of EOC.

At the beginning of a new year, I would like to wish you all a fruitful, happy and healthy 2004.

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"Career Challenge 2003" Widens Horizon

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"Windsurfing Queen", Olympic gold medallist LEE Lai-shan, intrepid polar explorer Rebecca LEE Lok-sze, trade union leader and legislator CHAN Yuen-han...just to name a few, they are respected achievers in their chosen fields, this year's mentors for hundreds of students in the EOC's "Career Challenge 2003".



Changing Attitudes - Mentees' Reports



The thought provoking session by Dr. Rebecca LEE attracted a large group of students.

"I never realized that a woman could survive the perils of Mount Everest and the two Poles. Dr Rebecca LEE said she never thinks of herself as a woman. She loves the world. When we asked her which qualities led to her success, she explained, perseverance. She said we would also need proper training, knowledge and hard work. She reminded us not to be bound by traditional values. We have to set our own goal and strive for it. We may experience failure, but we should see them as challenges. With her encouragement, I believe I can excel if I tried hard enough."



Full of confidence, the senior soloist of Hong Kong Ballet Frankie-M LAI shares his experience with young mentees.

"Mr. Frankie-M LAI has worked very hard to become the senior soloist of the Hong Kong Ballet. In those early years, even though many people, including his good friends, teased him for choosing ballet as his career, he succeeded to reach his goal. He advised us to choose a subject that we really like, and not to allow traditional values restrict our decisions."



"I once wondered if the job was more suitable for a man, but Ms. YAN Suk-yin, a Rescue and Search Team Helicopter Pilot, demonstrated to us that gender is not a factor for success. What matters is love for the job and hard work."



YAN Suk-yin takes her visitors on a tour of the Government Flying Service Depot. The operations of the rescue team fascinated her mentees.



"I am very lucky to have Mr. CHONG Chan-yau as my mentor. Instead of lamenting about his disability, he has faced it positively. Although he has to work three times as hard as everybody else, he never gives up. He told us that if we can find our own direction, work hard to achieve our goal, there would be no regrets."

Words of wisdom from CHONG Chan-yau enlightened his mentees.



"I used to think all nurses were like Florence Nightingale, and nursing was a women-only profession. But after meeting my mentor MAK Kwok-fung, who is a very successful psychiatric nurse heading the operations team in a hospital, I realize that there is no direct relation between gender and the ability to work in a certain field."

LegCo Member The Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung, Department Operations Manager (Kwai Chung Hospital), fields questions about the nursing profession from his mentees.

"Emily is the first female president of Medecins Sans Frontieres Hong Kong, and its youngest regional head. As a young Asian woman, she explained that she had to work twice as hard to win recognition. We learned from her experience that we should never be bound by stereotyping of gender, race and age. Emily also demonstrated that immense courage and persistence are the true qualities for pursuing humanitarian goals. Her words have encouraged me to overcome life's difficulties and to follow my aspirations."



Emily Chan, President of Medecins Sans Frontieres Hong Kong, encourages her mentees to follow their aspirations.



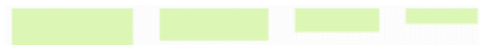
"Ms. CHAN Yuen-han has been safeguarding workers' rights for more than 30 years. She had witnessed the adverse impact of stereotyping - for example, pregnant women were pigeonholed as incapable, and were often sacked as a result. She also fell victim to stereotypical attitudes when she first joined her trade union in the '70s. At that time, women were still a rare breed in the labour movement, and she worked hard to prove herself. I enjoyed the sharing session very much and was deeply inspired by Ms. CHAN's experience".

LegCo Member The Hon CHAN Yuen-han explains to her young audience the challenges of a trade union leader.



"No pain, no gain" - useful advice from Olympic gold medallist Lee Lai-shan and the coach of Hong Kong Windsurfing Team, Wong Tak-sum.

"Pursuing sports as a lifetime career has always been considered a waste of time, especially in Hong Kong. LEE Lai-shan and WONG Tak-sum proved that Hong Kong athletes could also shine on the international stage. LEE Lai-shan reminded us that women and men could perform equally well in sports. In order to realize our full potential, we should explore a wide variety of subjects, and consider career choices based on our interest and abilities."



Enthusiastic mentees line up for autographs from their mentor, KO Tin-lung.

"KO Tin-lung is not only a successful director and playwright, he is also an outstanding speaker. In explaining his philosophy of life, he stressed that creative and independent thinking will enable us to gain better insight. He reminded us not to make too many assumptions, and try not to stereotype ourselves or others. He encouraged us to learn more, in order to find more choices in life."

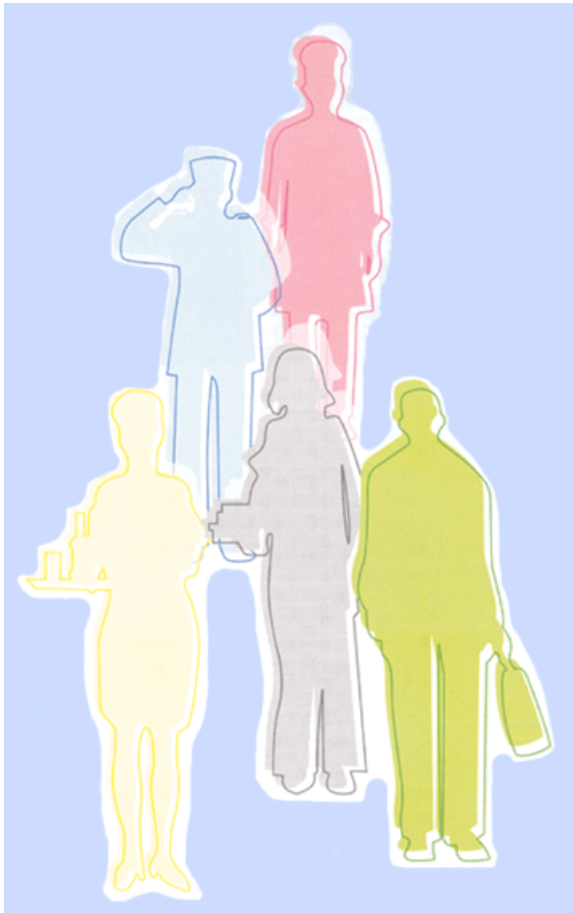
For more photos and an update of the mentorship programme, please visit the EOC website at:
<http://www.eoc.org.hk/CE/youth/careerchallenge2003>

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Equal Opportunity Training "Prevention is the Key"

Equal Opportunity Training

"Prevention is the Key"



" Do you know what your rights and responsibilities are under Hong Kong equal opportunities laws?

Would you know how to handle a problem of discrimination or harassment in your company?

Did you know that as an employer you have legal obligations?"

These and many other issues will be addressed in the **EOC Spring Training Series** to be conducted from March to June 2004.

Commencing on 25 March 2004, 20 interactive training workshops will be presented covering a range of topics which include how to manage recruitment and selection processes, how to manage EO related complaints and dealing with other EO related issues in human resources management.

The EOC will also be providing train the trainer workshop to enable companies to deliver their own programs.

Contact us on 2106 2155 for a copy of our Spring Training Workshops Program or visit the EOC website at <http://www.eoc.org.hk/EOC/GraphicsFolder/training.aspx>

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New E-learning Programme "Equal Opportunities Begin At School"

New E-learning Programme "Equal Opportunities Begin At School"



Peter is a very busy primary school teacher. Recently a new student, Linda, joined his class. She has a visual impairment. Peter very much wanted to assist her smooth integration into the classroom but he did not know what would be best for Linda, or what the law expects of him and the school.

You may be one of the many teachers who face a similar dilemma. Increasingly students with disabilities are seeking to enroll in mainstream schools. Since the implementation of the Code of Practice on Education under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance in 2001, the Equal Opportunities Commission has seen the need for a training course tailor-made for teachers, on the implications and applications of the ordinance in education.

The E-learning Programme "Equal Opportunities Begin At School" is designed for Hong Kong's 49,000 primary and secondary schools teachers, to help them to develop policies and appropriate practices to deal with students with disabilities. Teachers are able to log onto the Education City website and work through this three module programme which uses interactive activity, videos and quizzes to explain the Code. The first module explains the background to the law and the principles that underpin equality of opportunity in education. The second module explains the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) in straightforward language, and the final module provides some guidance on how to apply the law in a practical way in the classroom.

One special feature of the programme is an Open Forum, which enables teachers to communicate and discuss strategies they may have successfully employed in facilitating the integration of students with disabilities into the classroom.

Developed jointly by the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Education and Manpower Bureau, the programme should take teachers no more than three hours to complete, and will earn them points in relation to their professional development requirements.



All students benefit from a socially inclusive environment, and educational establishments play a key role in promoting equal opportunity within the community. To achieve that goal, it is important that schools understand their obligations under the anti-discrimination legislation.

Watch out for the E-learning programme "Equal Opportunities Begin At School", at <http://equaled.hkedcity.net>.

An Inclusive Society Begins At School - E-poster Design Project on "Equal Opportunities in Education"

Date : **16/01/2004** (Deadline for submission of poster design)
 06/02/2004 (Closing date for web voting the 10 best E-posters)
 12/02/2004 (Announcement of voting results)
 12/02/2004 - 16/06/2004
 (The public will be able to pick the 10 best E-cards for use)



Target Students

Participants:

Organizer : The Education and Manpower Bureau

Enquiries : <http://www.hkedcity.net/project/equal>

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EO Musical - A resounding success!

EO Musical - A resounding success!



The long awaited "Equal Opportunities Musical" played to a capacity audience of 900, at the Kwai Tsing Theatre on 25 October, 2003. The star studded performance featuring popular singers Gigi LEUNG and Chris WONG, was jointly produced by the Equal Opportunities Commission and Radio Television Hong Kong Radio 2. Twenty-three volunteers were recruited to participate in the musical, which carried the theme of Hong Kong's three anti-discrimination laws.

The two-hour production began in an advertising agency, but soon the audiences were taken to another era where women ruled the world. In another time and place, persons with disabilities were not allowed to participate in everyday life. Issues related to disability discrimination, sex discrimination and family status discrimination were spelled out in new lyrics of recent hits, sung by Gigi LEUNG and Chris WONG. The mystery guest star for the evening was famous actor Louis KOO, who reminded everyone about their right to equal opportunity, "If we are willing to accept each other, we will be able to live in an open, harmonious and diverse society."

The musical is the last of a three-part educational initiative, which included the recruitment and training of volunteer performers, and a RTHK radio series on real life cases of disability, sex and family status discrimination.

View EO Musical at: http://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/otherproject/eng/color/youthcorner/programmes/eomusical/eomusical_b.htm



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Sex Discrimination Case - New Mother Joins Jobless

Sex Discrimination Case

New Mother Joins Jobless

The complaint

"I have been with this company for so many years...I can't imagine how they could have done this to me," Liza sighed.

In mid-2002, Liza felt sick and went to see a doctor. She was confirmed pregnant, and after breaking this piece of good news to her family, she told her boss who congratulated her. A few days later, Liza's boss asked if she was all right, and suggested she take no-pay leave. "Not knowing his ulterior motive and being financially stable at the time, I took his advice. Everything seemed alright until my first day back at work from maternity leave, I was sacked! I didn't realize that he had wanted to get rid of me right after I became pregnant!" Liza continued.

What the EOC did

The new mother was clearly distressed by the company's move and filed a complaint with the EOC. The EOC investigator approached her supervisor for an explanation. The reason provided was that she had given trouble to the company, and her performance had been unsatisfactory. The supervisor also pointed out that despite a few verbal warnings, she had shown no signs of improvement.

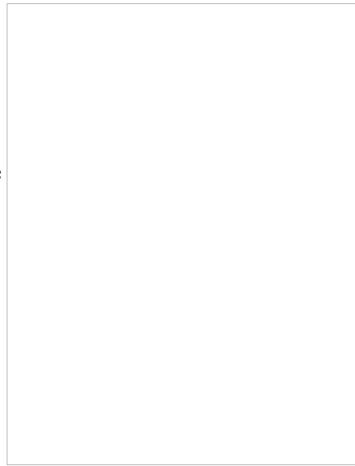
But Liza protested, "My boss was unable to cite any example of my so-called poor performance. He could not simply base this on his impression, and make false accusations against me. His reasons were unfounded. All along the appraisal records of my performance were mostly above average."

The company did not provide any documentary proof of issuing prior verbal warnings to Liza. After the EOC explained the employment related provisions of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, Liza and the company representative reached a consensus to resolve the matter. At the conciliation meeting, the employer agreed to settle the case with a monetary compensation.

What the law says

Pregnancy discrimination can come in many forms and in many different instances of employment; hiring, promotion, firing, benefits, such as maternity benefits and more.

The Sex Discrimination Ordinance passed in 1995 states that it is unlawful to discriminate against a woman on the ground of pregnancy. That is, an employer should not treat a pregnant woman less favourably or dismiss her because she is pregnant.



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Disability Discrimination Case - Not Fit for Work?

Disability Discrimination Case

Not Fit for Work?

The Complaint

Lily sustained serious leg injuries in a car accident and took off from work for several months. "I used to work in the Kowloon branch of a fast food chain. My leg injuries had stopped me from carrying out my job duties, which required standing for long hours."

Lily was fully recovered after receiving treatment for three months. Lily was fully recovered after receiving treatment for three months. But her problems didn't stop there. "When I informed my crew leader about my condition, she told me to resign first and said I could return to work once I had medical proof that I could stand for ten hours continuously."

Lily then obtained a medical certificate to confirm this, and presented it to her branch manager, Mr Wong. He claimed that the certificate was insufficient, and he wanted to speak to Lily's doctor. "Mr Wong never got back to me. I was jobless for three months. Later I found the same job in the group, at a different branch in the New Territories. Why didn't the Kowloon branch re-employ me to fill up the vacancy? Was that because of my temporary disability?" she wondered.

What the EOC did

Lily lodged a complaint with the EOC against the fast food chain and the branch manager. The EOC investigation officer approached the two respondents and explained to them about Lily's complaint. Both the fast food chain and the branch manager requested to attempt early conciliation.

To settle the dispute, Lily wanted the fast food chain to transfer her back to the Kowloon branch. She also requested Mr Wong to pay a monetary compensation for the travelling expenses incurred during negotiation to settle the complaint, and injury caused to her feelings. The three parties agreed with the settlement terms and early conciliation was reached.



What the law says



Under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO), the definition of disability covers a disability that previously existed but no longer exists. It can therefore amount to disability discrimination if a person is treated less favourably on the ground of his/her past disability.

Although an employer, in this case the fast food chain, did not discriminate against Lily, the employer would nevertheless be held vicariously liable for the unlawful acts of its employees (i.e. the Kowloon branch manager, Mr Wong), whether or not the discriminatory act was done with the employer's knowledge or approval.

The EOC urges all employers to adopt a policy in eliminating discrimination at work so as to ensure a culture of mutual respect amongst employees.

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Around the World



Around the World



New Audible Device for Visually Impaired MTR Passengers

In Hong Kong, there is a new device available for visually impaired MTR passengers, which makes information audible. The fare-reading machine is bilingual and the message is given when the Octopus card is placed on the machine.

The audible device, led by tactile guide path, is situated at the exit gate in Shek Kip Mei station, just around the corner from the Hong Kong Society for the Blind. The main purpose of the device is to read out the fare for the ride and the remaining amount in the Octopus card.

Information Source:

<http://mtr.com.hk/eng/train/disabled.html>

New Product-Stair-Climbing Wheelchair



A battery-powered wheelchair that can climb stairs, ride up slopes and maneuver over sand is now available in the United States.



The recently innovated wheelchair can just balance on two wheels and elevates the user to move around at eye level and to reach high places independently. It enables the user to climb curbs as high as four inches and to travel on grass and gravel or even grounds. It also assists in loading the user into a vehicle easily. The wheelchair can travel up to six miles per hour.

Information Source:

http://www.jnj.com/innovations/new_features/IBOT.htm



Free AIDS Drugs in South Africa

Recently, the South African government has approved a plan for the free distribution of anti-retroviral drugs for AIDS patients.

About 4.7 million South Africans, approximately 11 percent of the population, are infected with HIV. The government aims to treat 50,000 patients within the first year of the programme.

According to the Health Minister, patients will be assessed for the stage of their illness and referred into appropriate medical care once they have been identified as HIV-positive. The treatment focuses on slowing the progression of the disease, and maintaining good health through prompt diagnosis and treatment of opportunistic infections.

Although an implementation date has yet to be set, the government's decision has been described as a 'huge breakthrough'.

Information Source:

<http://www.msnbc.com/news/995619.asp>

Scottish Church Backs Female Bishops

The first female Anglican bishop in Britain and Ireland could be in place as early as 2004 after a landmark vote by bishops in Scotland. The decision ends centuries of tradition, and the move by the Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church to allow the ordination of women bishops is likely to put pressure on the Church of England to follow suit.

The Anglican Church in Ireland has already voted to allow women bishops, but has yet to appoint any.

At present, only Anglican Churches in a few countries like the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Polynesia, have female bishops. 124 out of 148 members of the Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church backed the proposal.

The synod acts as the parliament of the church. It is the church's legislative and deliberative body.

Information Source:

<http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/2983920.stm>

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社區活動巡禮 Events Calendar

第28屆香港特殊奧運會 — 滑冰比賽

The 28th HK Special Olympics Ice Skating Competition

11/02/04

香港弱智人士體育協會
The Hong Kong Sports Association for the Mentally Handicapped
<http://www.hksam.org.hk/cindex.html>

第五屆全港傑出青年婦女義工選舉頒獎禮

The 5th Hong Kong Outstanding Young Woman Volunteers Award Presentation Ceremony

07/03/04

香港基督教女青年會
Chinese Y.W.C.A.
<http://www.ywca.org.hk/wadi/0008.pdf>
3443 1660

「聾人睇真d」機構探訪

"Knowing More about the Deaf" – Visit to Organizations

全年活動 A year-round project

香港聾人協會
Hong Kong Association of the Deaf
<http://www.hongkongdeaf.org.hk>
2327 2497

傷殘人士洗手間大搜查線

Checking the Toilet Facilities for Persons with a Disability

全年活動 A year-round project

香港傷健協會 西香港傷健中心
Hong Kong PHAB Association West Hong Kong
<http://www.hkphab.org/whk/scg>
2511 4199

無障礙優異網站頒獎典禮

Web Care Award Presentation Ceremony

15/05/04

互聯網專業人員協會
Internet Professionals Association
<http://www.iproa.org>
2778 0040

為非政府組織設立新熱線 New Hotline for NGOs

平等機會委員會十分重視與非政府組織和福利機構的關係。為加強溝通，我們已設立專線，聆聽你的寶貴意見，務使委員會的工作方針更切合你的需要。熱線號碼：

The EOC places great value on our relationships with non-governmental organizations and the welfare sector. To improve mutual communication, we have set up a hotline to receive your views and address your needs. Hotline:

☎ 2106 2170

☎ 2507 2170



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