



Women's Concern Groups in Hong Kong

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Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies

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Women's Concern Groups in Hong Kong

Abstract

A survey of women's concern groups (women's groups) in Hong Kong was made by questionnaire, interview and review of publications to find out their goals, activities, clientele and problems. On analysis of findings, it is revealed that women's groups in Hong Kong passed through two phases in their development; they followed the approaches of localization, diversification, cooperation, politicization and popularization; they do not insist on a definite ideological orientation but rather work on practical issues to improve women's situation; and they adopt a community approach which includes strategies, such as, educating the public, rallying the support of both sexes especially those in position of power, training women in leadership skills and strengthening the organization of women's groups. A recommendation for further research of women's groups is made in the light of the above findings.

A Brief History

After the Second World War, there was an influx of refugees into Hong Kong in search of a temporary place to live. The primary concern was for basic survival and people had little time to care about, or paid little attention to, their own rights. The first women's organization which contributed significantly to the rise in consciousness and status of women was The Hong Kong Council of Women which was established in 1947. It successfully campaigned for the abolition of the legally sanctioned polygamous system in 1971, and it also helped women to gain the right of inheritance. Working with other groups, it pushed through legislation which recognized the rights of women, including the right for rape victims to remain anonymous and to testify *in camera* in court, optional separate taxation for married women and maternity benefits for working women. In other words, their actions were targeted at structural reforms. It was not until the 1980s that

The Hong Kong Council of Women extended its work to direct service and community education which included the establishment of a refuge for battered wives and a women's centre (Women's Centre, 1987).

In the 1950s and 1960s other women's groups were formed including the Hong Kong West Women's Welfare Association and the Hong Kong and Kowloon Kaifong Women's Association. Most members of these organizations were wives of influential people. Apart from providing social affiliation, these groups contributed to charity, such as building schools and running homes for the elderly.

In the 1970s, some professional women's organizations like the Zonta Club, Professional Business Women's Association and the Federation of Women Lawyers began to emerge. These female professionals formed their own networks, commented on issues from a professional perspective, and also participated in some charity work.

As the urban population expanded rapidly, many people had to move out to live in new towns in the New Territories where social facilities and support were short. Women in the high-rise housing estates felt this isolation the most. In 1981, with the backing of the government, the first Yin Ngai Societies were founded in Tuen Mun, Shatin and Tsuen Wan. Their major function was to assist women in building a social network in the community. Most of their activities were concerned with leisure or improving their roles as mother and wife. Members of these groups were particularly sensitive to the negative image of *women's liberation*, to the extent that they emphasized their identification with, and integration into, the traditional sex role.

The active student and social movements in the 1970s created a liberal atmosphere. A group of women who had studied at universities locally or abroad began to question the traditional sex roles and the division of labour. In order to arouse the awareness of the public, they wrote articles for newspapers and became the pioneers to promote women's consciousness at the grassroots level. They formed the Association for the Advancement of

Feminism in 1984. They set consciousness-raising of women at the grassroots level as their main priority.

In recent years, many other women's organizations have emerged, the Women's Centre in 1985, Hong Kong Women Christian Council in 1988, and the Hong Kong Women Workers' Association in 1989. Though their ideologies and emphases on activities are very different, they have tried to cooperate and to present a united front on some women issues. It is at this juncture that we examine the orientations of women's groups in Hong Kong, explore their development and problems, and forecast the way for future development.

The Investigation

In this survey, we examine the present situation of women's groups in Hong Kong. The aim is to get an overview of the groups involved in the women's movement in Hong Kong: their nature and the services they offer, their relationship to the women's movement and their inherent problems.

Definition of Women's Concern Groups

There are over 200 groups in Hong Kong which are organized around women. In our study, the groups' position on the awareness (consciousness) of and concern for women's situation is the most important selection criterion (Leung, 1990). Thus target *Women's Concern Groups* here means:

- (1) Permanent organizations concerned with women's awareness and rights and those advocating equality between the sexes. Organizations which have a limited time span, but which fit the above objectives will be included in our definition of *Women's Concern Groups*. However, for convenience, we will henceforth shorten *Women's Concern Groups* to *Women's Groups*.
- (2) Organizations which reiterate women's traditional role and

which lack a critical reflection on, or appraisal of, women's situation will not be included in this investigation.

Women's Groups Included in the Investigation

Based on a list compiled by the Gender Research Programme of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (1989), there are seven categories of women's groups: women studies group, women's rights groups, service-related women's groups, grassroots-level women's groups, professional women's groups, foreign women's groups and neighbourhood/social activities women's groups.

The women studies group is under the auspice of an academic institution. It sponsors research projects, conferences, workshops and seminars on gender. The women's rights groups campaign for women's rights, promote women's awareness and enhance women's self-development. The service-related women's groups work towards women's equality and independence by offering services to special groups of women or women in general. The grassroots-level women's groups have the average woman worker as their target, championing their rights and educating them to fend for their own rights. The professional women's groups provide affiliation to women of different professions, though they also engage in social service and charity work. Likewise, the foreign women's groups offer a network for women of foreign origin, and they may also provide social services. The neighbourhood/social activities women's groups are social groups which organize services and social activities for their members, and the majority of them cater to women in the local neighbourhood.

Of these seven types of women's groups, the first four are involved in promoting women's awareness and rights and advocating equality between the sexes. They will be included in this investigation as the target women's groups. The last three types which offer social activities to their own members and engage in community services and charitable activities for the public are less directly concerned with women's awareness and rights at the

moment, and so are not included as target women's groups in this investigation. However some of them may eventually extend their concern to include women's rights. For this reason, the Questionnaire was also sent to these peripheral women's groups to understand their objectives and activities before deciding whether to include them at the end.

Method of Investigation

The investigation consists of three parts, namely, questionnaire survey, interview and review of publications.

(1) Questionnaire survey

The Questionnaire (Appendix A) was distributed to all 16 women's groups that meet the criteria set forth in the investigation as well as to 65 peripheral women's groups, requesting them to complete it and mail it back in a stamped envelope. The Questionnaire consisted of questions which covered the following areas: women groups' goals, nature of work, type of activities, target population served, problems faced, future development, source of finance, worker characteristics including their educational level and nature of their clientele.

(2) Interview

After a preliminary analysis of the returned questionnaire, 11 active groups were selected for a follow-up interview to gather more information about their goals, activities and future development.

(3) Review of publications

Request for reports and publications of the groups, such as annual reports, research and special reports, bulletins and special issues, was made in the initial contact. These publications were reviewed to further understand the aims and activities of the groups.

Nature of Women's Groups in Hong Kong

Table 1 lists the number of Questionnaires distributed and returned from the four types of target women's groups and the three types of peripheral women's groups, as well as the number of interviews made. Altogether, the Questionnaire was distributed to 16 women's groups with 13 replies. The return rate of the target women's groups is 81.3% which is satisfactory.

Only 11 out of the 65 peripheral women's groups returned the Questionnaire with a low return rate of 6.9%. This is as expected because a great majority of them may not perceive their goals as raising women's awareness or seeking equal status for women as outlined in the Questionnaire, and, therefore, these peripheral groups did not respond or return their Questionnaires. Appendix B lists the names (English and Chinese) of the women's groups and peripheral women's groups that returned the Questionnaire.

By analyzing the activities engaged in by these peripheral women's groups, two groups belonging to the neighbourhood/social activities women's groups category (Tuen Mun District Women's Association, Ltd. and The Hong Kong Chinese Women's Club) and two groups belonging to the foreign women's groups category (Committee for Asian Women and Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers (HK) Society) were found to meet the criteria of the target women's groups and they were included in our analysis.

On the other hand, two groups in the service-related women's groups which do not meet the criteria of the target women's groups were excluded from the analysis. They are The Hong Kong Girl Guides Association whose goal is personal growth without specific focus on women's awareness, and the Family Resource Centre of the Hong Kong Family Welfare Society which claims that it is not a women's group though it offers social services to women.

Table 1: Questionnaire Distributed and Returned by Women's Groups According to Group Type

Group Type	Number of Questionnaires		Return Rate (%)	Number of Groups Interviewed	
	Distributed	Returned			
Target Women's Groups	1. Women studies group	1	1	100.0	1
	2. Women's rights groups	3	3	100.0	3
	3. Service-related women's groups	7	6	85.7	5
	4. Grassroots-level women's groups	5	3	60.0	2
	(Total)	16	13	81.3	11
Peripheral Women's Groups	5. Professional women's groups	15	4	26.7	—
	6. Foreign women's groups	12	3	25.0	—
	7. Neighbourhood/Social activities women's groups	38	4	10.5	—
	(Total)	65	11	16.9	—

* Criteria for categorization according to the *Hong Kong Women's Organization Bulletin* of The Chinese University of Hong Kong Gender Research Programme.

Approaches in the Development of Women's Groups in Hong Kong

The development of women's groups in Hong Kong has followed the approaches of *localization, diversification, politicization, cooperation and popularization* (Leung, 1990). In the following sections, these approaches are illustrated by the results of our survey of

women's groups in Hong Kong.

Localization

Although women's movements across the world share the belief in equality for and independence of women, they vary from place to place due to different cultures, stages of development and interpretation of problems (Chan, S.H., 1987).

While feminism in the West supports different theoretical orientations, e.g., liberal feminism, social feminism and radical feminism, women's groups in Hong Kong are less often based on ideology. Instead, they differ from those of the West in both structure and strategy. They tend to shy away from the term *feminist*, a term that carries a militant overtone (Lam, 1985). Some people even equate women's liberation with sexual promiscuity, or burning of the bra (Leung, 1990).

In the history of the development of women's groups in Hong Kong, there were two groups with clear Western feminist ideology which tried to work at the roots of women's oppression, but both were short-lived. One was the International Women's League formed in the 1960s which put up a strong feminist stand. It was soon dispersed, and some of its members merged with The Hong Kong Council of Women. The other was an anarchist women's group which published a monthly magazine called "Women's Rights," one issue of which criticized the 1973 Miss Hong Kong Festival Beauty Contest as sexist and degrading to women (Chan, S.H., 1987).

The founding of the Association for the Advancement of Feminism in 1984 marked a new stage in the women's movement in Hong Kong as it dared to use the term "feminism." Even though it is more ideologically oriented, members are still unable to identify themselves with any line of Western feminist ideology.

Women's groups in Hong Kong do not insist on a clear theoretical orientation. Women's groups do not specify what theoretical beliefs they hold, nor do members of any one group have a commonly agreed orientation. Instead they work on prac-

tical issues to improve the plight of women. They are not happy about stereotyping which limits women, but they are not for shattering patriarchy or the family. They work on specific issues but remain non-committal on controversial issues of homosexuality, abortion or gender identity revolution. This pragmatic attitude (Cannon, 1987) of fighting for and gaining support on concrete local issues rather than emphasizing any theoretical orientation is characteristic of women's groups in Hong Kong.

The long battle for separate taxation for married women in the 1970s and 1980s is a good example to illustrate how women's groups in Hong Kong join forces among themselves and with other interest groups in the campaign, and yield to the situation rather than pursue the issue purely from the feminist perspective in order to succeed.

Under the Inland Revenue Ordinance, the income of a wife was considered to be the income of her husband for the purposes of salaries tax and personal assessment, and income tax was chargeable accordingly under the husband's name. With such discriminatory terms, it is no wonder the women's rights groups had always campaigned for separate taxation for married women in order to gain due recognition of the independent status of women.

In 1975, commemorating the Decade of Women, 25 major women's groups and over 700 individual women present passed the resolution that: "a married working women should have the option to be taxed as an individual" (The Hong Kong Council of Women, 1976). In 1981, The Hong Kong Council of Women together with eight other professional women's groups formed the Ad Hoc Legal Committee on Women's Issues with "the ultimate objective to achieve separate taxation, or if this proves to be unattainable, at least re-word these parts of the Ordinance which are currently outdated and offensive" (The Hong Kong Council of Women, 1981).

In the 1980s, separate taxation was taken up by middle-class professional groups as an issue which affected the *sandwich* class. When earned incomes of married couples is assessed jointly on their aggregate amounts and with the progressive tax rate struc-

ture pushing the aggregate income (of middle-class couples in particular) into higher tax brackets, joint taxation means that most married couples would have to pay more taxes (Leung, 1988).

Women's groups joined forces with middle-class groups in this campaign. As a condition for joining the coalition, the Association for Advancement of Feminism proposed to demand an amendment of the sex discriminatory wording in the Inland Revenue Ordinance. This position was rejected by other coalition members who felt that separate taxation was essentially an economic issue. The Association leaders admitted that, in view of the low level of feminist consciousness among women and the public in general, it was extremely difficult to pursue the issue purely from the feminist perspective and succeed. This is an example of women's movement in Hong Kong taking into consideration the local situation at that time in planning their strategy and procedure (Leung, 1988).

Diversification

With no common theoretical orientation, but working on practical issues, without even an agreed emphasis to be given to practical issues, women's groups in Hong Kong are diversified. Groups have different foci and emphases related to their strengths and characteristics (Leung, 1990). Groups with members coming from different social strata and backgrounds have different needs and ways of fulfilling these needs (Chan, P.K., 1987).

Table 2 which categorizes women's groups (Leung and Tse, 1989) illustrates the nature of the diversification in the development of women's groups in Hong Kong. The three criteria for categorization are: work orientation, areas of concern and group permanence. On work orientation, women's groups consist of women studies orientation which concentrates on research, social movement orientation which emphasizes improvement of women's conditions mainly through campaigns and changes of legislation, and service orientation which emphasizes provision of services to meet women's specific needs though it includes actions

Table 2: Women's Groups in Hong Kong, Categorized According to Work Orientation, Areas of Concern and Group Permanence

Main Work Orientation \ Main Area of Concern	Women's Problems in General	Special Area of Concern/Special Area of Concern in Addition to Women's Problems in General	Group Permanence
Academic orientation	1. Gender Research Programme, HK Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, CUHK (1985)		Permanent organization
Social movement orientation	2. The HK Council of Women (1947) 3. Association for the Advancement of Feminism (1984)	4. Committee for Asian Women (1980) 5. HK Women Christian Council (1988) 6. HK Women Workers' Association (1989) 7. Women Affairs Committee, HK Confederation of Trade Unions (1990)	
Service orientation	8. HK Young Women's Christian Association (1920) 9. The HK Chinese Women's Club (1938) 10. Tuen Mun District Women's Association Limited (1976) 11. Women's Centre, The HK Council of Women (1985) 15. Women Development Project in Shau Kei Wan, Caritas - HK Community Development Service (1988-92)	12. Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers (HK) Society (1981) 13. Harmony House (1985) 14. Mother's Choice (1988)	

to promote social change as well. On areas of concern, there are women's groups which deal with women's problems in general and those which deal with specific areas of concern in addition to general problems. A third criterion of categorization is based on group permanence. Nearly all women's groups in Hong Kong are permanent in nature with the exception of one which is set up with a time span of three and a half years.

What follows is a brief description of each of the women's groups. They will be grouped according to their main work orientations, areas of concern and group permanence. Appendix C contains a summary of the goals, the nature of work, target population and problems of the women's groups under investigation.

(A) There is only one permanent women studies group with an academic orientation and a concern for women's problems in general:

(1) Gender Research Programme, Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (founded in 1985).

The Gender Research Programme was set up to promote interdisciplinary research and knowledge dissemination on the roles and activities of women and men in the context of the changing social, economic and cultural milieu of Chinese societies across the Asia-Pacific Region.

In addition, the Programme provides research support for the development of new courses on gender role. It also engages in activities which promote gender equality and women's development. Activities are diversified, including research projects at the university and with other institutions, international conferences, local workshops and forum on gender issues, publication of a women's bulletin (*News and Views*) and occasional papers, compilation of a bibliography on gender studies and a visiting scholar programme (Gender Research Programme, 1988).

(B) There are two permanent women's groups with a social

movement orientation and a concern for women's problems in general:

(2) The Hong Kong Council of Women (founded in 1947).

The Hong Kong Council of Women has a long history as it is the first women's group which set fighting for women's rights as its main objective. It has a history of lobbying for changes in legislation concerning women, such as the abolition of concubinage, equal pay for equal work between the sexes, etc. (The Hong Kong Council of Women, no date).

In the 1970s, it started a large scale campaign against rape, and it successfully lobbied for the right of rape victims to remain anonymous and to testify *in camera* in court. As a result of the experience gained by the movement, the Council has extended its work to include direct social service for women. Thus Harmony House, pre-school play groups and the Women's Centre were later established (The Hong Kong Council of Women, 1987).

(3) Association for the Advancement of Feminism (founded in 1984).

The Association for the Advancement of Feminism has stated the following as its aim: concern for women's problems, promotion of women's awareness, enhancement of women's self-development and social participation. In the past eight years, the Association has actively worked to achieve equality of the sexes through publications (bulletins, research reports and special issues), studies on public policies (welfare policy for women, women's participation in public affairs, etc.), active promotion of awareness and activities among women at the grassroots level through talks and courses on invitation by community centres, media interviews, articles in special columns in newspapers, drama presentation rotating from district to district, slide shows, etc. (Association for the Advancement of Feminism, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1990).

(C) There are four permanent women's groups with a social

movement orientation and special areas of concern in addition to a concern for women's problems in general:

(4) Committee for Asian Women (founded in 1981).

In 1981, the Committee for Asian Women, an ecumenical programme for women workers, was formed to act on the needs identified among the industrial women workers. Through women worker exchange programmes, national workshops, guided training programmes, regional consultation and publications, the Committee aims at seeking to assist in consciousness-raising among local and Asian women workers towards the realization of commonalities of situations and problems and the need for organized responses; to assist in the consolidation of organized efforts to effect favourable changes in the labour situation in Asia and to facilitate awareness of the need for subregional and regional solidarity and linkages to effect desired changes.

(5) Hong Kong Women Christian Council (founded in 1988).

Apart from exploring the theology of women, fighting for equal religious rights for women and promoting women's awareness among women church-goers, the Hong Kong Women Christian Council also actively joins forces with women's groups to participate in campaigns on social policies affecting women and in the promotion of equal rights for the two sexes.

The Council has shaken many of the conservative forces in the church and, as a result, has incurred criticism for being too extremist, such as supporting legislation to decriminalize homosexual activities, criticizing the church for discriminating against women priests, etc. In spite of heavy criticism and pressure, the Council remains committed to its challenge and mission.

(6) Hong Kong Women Workers' Association (founded in 1989).

Through much hardship, a group of factory workers and

union workers who were interested in the problems of women workers established the Women Workers' Association in 1989.

This nascent vibrant association, despite extreme deficiency in financial and human resources, upholds optimistic and positive attitudes in working for the rights of women workers. Their activities include promoting education of women for their own rights, supplying telephone-information service and case follow-up. The Association is also one of the active groups advocating women's participation in political and social affairs.

(7) Women Affairs Committee, Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (founded in 1990).

Unionization of workers in Hong Kong has so far been confined to men. Because of this deficiency, the Women Affairs Committee of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions was founded in 1990. It hopes to arouse a concern for problems of women workers in the labour circle and help women workers gain the power of decision-making and raise their status.

(D) There are four permanent women's groups with a service orientation and a concern for women's problems in general:

(8) Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association (founded in 1920).

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) is an international organization. The Hong Kong YWCA was founded in 1920 and is the oldest women's organization in Hong Kong. It is a christian organization which, apart from engaging in social services, is also concerned with the situation of women.

The aim of the Association is to promote the character, mental, physical, social and spiritual development of women and to raise women's status. It helps women educate themselves through activities such as seminars, women's leadership skill-

training courses and organization of women's groups.

The women's section of the Association plans to change the existing guiding principle of social service in Hong Kong, i.e., from the traditional and long-accepted view of the family as a basic service unit, to a view of the woman as an independent unit with specific needs and requiring a specific service delivery.

On fighting for women's rights, the Association has commissioned and conducted a number of studies, including "Working Mothers in Family Functioning" (HKYWCA and Hong Kong Shue Yan College, 1982), "Hong Kong Women's Perception of Male and Female Attributes at Different Points of Time in the 20th Century" (HKYWCA *et al.*, 1986) and "Survey on Needs of Women for Education of Their Children and Women's Services" (HKYWCA, 1988). The Association has forwarded these findings to relevant government departments and made recommendations on improving the situation of women in Hong Kong, which include restructuring Family Life Education programmes to educate fathers on their responsibilities in the family and reduce sexual stereotyping, improving nursery services, proposing flexible employment arrangements for working mothers and sensitizing social workers to the avoidance of reinforcing the traditional role of women. Instead, offering women an opportunity for a balanced development, reducing inferiority feelings and encouraging social participation among women.

The Association also joined forces with 80 young women's christian associations in other countries to fight for justice and equality between women and men (Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 1984).

(9) The Hong Kong Chinese Women's Club (founded in 1938).

This is the oldest women's group of Hong Kong origin. The group has changed its focus many times through the years to meet the changing concerns of women in Hong Kong (The Hong Kong Chinese Women's Club, 1988). Its members con-

sist of upper-class women who have social influence. In its early stages, it concentrated on relief work among refugees and soldiers. Then from the 1940s onwards, members lobbied for women's rights through legislation such as the abolition of polygamy in 1971, the introduction of maternity leave and protection for women workers and equal pay for equal work for women and men. From the 1970s onwards, it has focused on social services including the funding and operation of schools, children and youth centres and homes for the aged (Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 1984).

(10) Tuen Mun District Women's Association, Ltd. (founded in 1976).

The aim of the Tuen Mun District Women's Association, Ltd. is to encourage networking among women in Tuen Mun, to increase their participation in social services and to promote women's welfare by organizing cultural and recreational activities (Tuen Mun District Women's Association, Ltd., 1986a). In its first seven years, the Association focused on recreational activities and services to members, their families and the community of Hong Kong. Later the Association became more actively involved in political matters such as participation in the Regional Council election, organization of the seminar on the Future of Hong Kong: the New Territories Land Policy, the presentation of women's views on the draft of the Basic Law for the future Special Administrative Regional Government and the organization of a course on the rights of citizens for young people in Tuen Mun (Tuen Mun District Women's Association, Ltd., 1986b).

In recent years, it increased its emphasis on the advocacy for women's rights and the promotion of social participation of women. The Association cooperated with other women's groups in lobbying for separate taxation for married women, the rights of women of the New Territories to inheritance and legislation for "paternity" leave to allow husbands to contribute a greater share in child birth and care. On promotion of

social participation of women, the Association is highly concerned about problems and community services in Tuen Mun. It is hoped that through political and social participation, women will expand their social circle beyond the family, so that they will increase their self-confidence, develop their potential and raise their social status (Tuen Mun District Women's Association, Ltd., 1989). The Association has also studied women's needs and policies such as child care service and education courses. It has petitioned the government to set up a working group on women's policy to study women's needs, formulate policies and coordinate services for women.

(11) Women's Centre (founded in 1985).

The Women's Centre is an affiliated organization of The Hong Kong Council of Women. Originally conceived as a rape crisis centre at the conclusion of the first War-on-Rape Campaign in Hong Kong, it eventually evolved into a women's centre which emphasizes the promotion of women's development. It offers a whole range of services for women to minimize their life stress, to develop their competence and to promote their empowerment. The Centre's activities include telephone and individual counselling, education programmes and publicity campaigns to raise women's consciousness. At present, the majority of users of the Centre are women at the grassroots level, while professional and middle-class women serve as volunteers for the services.

One of the factors that the Centre has identified as conducive to building up women's competence is women's access to information and resources through self-help. The Centre houses a resource library consisting of books, newspaper cuttings, research reports as well as audio and video tapes. The newly installed Women's Self-Help Resources System (SHERES) is a computer database which supplies women with information on social services, law, education, career, housing, health, etc. Users follow simple computer instructions to search, retrieve and print out the information they

need.

Since its formation, the Women's Centre has been actively involved in public campaigns and recommendations to the government on social policies which have a direct effect on women, including campaigns against sexual violence, maternity leave legislation, separate taxation for married women, child care and the formation of a centralized women's commission.

(E) There are three permanent women's groups with a service orientation for special target groups in addition to a concern for women's problems in general:

(12) Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers (HK) Society (founded in 1981).

The Society aims to provide pastoral and welfare services to Filipino migrant workers in Hong Kong. Despite insufficiency of financial resources, the Society offers a whole range of services: counselling, legal assistance, temporary shelter, para-legal and leadership training.

Apart from the above mentioned services, the Society also engages in case documentation, related research and surveys.

(13) Harmony House (founded in 1985).

Harmony House was initially established by The Hong Kong Council of Women in conjunction with other individuals concerned. It became an independent organization in 1986. The House is a refuge for battered women and their children (up to 12 years old). It offers shelter, individual counselling and other supportive services in accordance with their needs. Temporary lodging is provided to women free of charge. The goal of the refuge is to help battered women find the strength, self-confidence and resources to live a life free from threat of violence (Harmony House, 1989).

(14) Mother's Choice (founded in 1988).

Mother's Choice has been formed to serve unwed mothers. It runs a protection centre which provides unwed mothers with

an alternative to abortion and it teaches them the care of their infants while waiting for adoption. Services which help unwed mothers to settle back in society are individual counselling, career training, practical life plans for their babies and arrangement for school age girls to return to school.

- (F) There is only one temporary women's group with a service orientation and a concern for women's problems in general:

(15) Women Development Project in Shau Kei Wan, Caritas - Hong Kong (founded in 1989).

Caritas is a major social service organization sponsored by the Catholic Church. It has community development and children as its target community services. Recognizing the deficiency of services for women, Caritas started this three-and-a-half-year Women Development Project in one of the local community service centres.

Operating from the community service centre as a pilot scheme, this Development Project offers services, such as a small library space, cultural recreational activities, seminars, a women's self-run bulletin (information on careers, hire, second-hand sale and purchase), etc. It set up the Shau Kei Wan Women Federation on June 4, 1989, which emphasizes women's participation in community services, social affairs and advocacy of women's rights (Women Development Project in Shau Kei Wan, Caritas - Hong Kong, 1990). It intends to raise women's awareness and call for a just society offering equal rights to both sexes.

With the termination of the Women Development Project in Shau Kei Wan, Caritas - Hong Kong in early 1992, The Shau Kei Wan Women Federation became a permanent independent women's group and changed its name to Eastern District New Women Federation on January 1, 1992.

There are eight peripheral women's groups and one social service group (see Appendix D) which responded to the Questionnaire. They organize recreational and social activities and/or social services. They are as yet not specifically devoted to raising

women's consciousness or working for equality and independence of women.

Cooperation

Collective effort is an important force for the women's movement. Cooperation among women, particularly among women at the grassroots level, is needed to change traditional thinking such as sex role stereotyping which puts women in a subordinate position to men, and to create material conditions which are necessary for women's development outside the family (Chan, P.K. 1987).

More than half-a-dozen women's groups of very diverse orientations got together for the first time in 1975 to organize a three-day conference with panel discussions, seminars and workshops to inaugurate and celebrate the Decade of Women. Cooperation brought trust, sharing and networking. In turn, it brought further cooperation.

Since then, women's groups in Hong Kong have often joined forces on social, political and particularly, women's issues by making joint declarations and forming joint committees, such as coalitions to campaign for separate taxation for married women and campaigns against the import of foreign labour.

In 1989, a few women's groups from the New Territories tried to lobby the government to increase and to improve nursery and child care services, and to set up more women centres. They also petitioned the government to set up a working group to study women's needs. This gathered momentum and drew much attention. A coalition of 12 women's groups was formed to draw up a position paper *Women in Hong Kong: A Broadsheet* which was published in January, 1991. The Broadsheet outlined the inequalities between women and men in areas of work, housework, education and training, health, welfare, child care, domestic violence, sexual assault and law. It pinpointed the major problems facing women in Hong Kong and emphasized that there had never been a more urgent need for the Hong Kong government to establish a working group to look into these problems in greater detail and to

make recommendations to tackle them (These recommendations will be described in greater detail in the Goals section below).

In addition, a group of social workers engaged in women's work organized the *Council of Social Workers Working for Women Joint Committee* to exchange views on work theory and techniques. This committee holds informal monthly meetings to exchange views on set topics. This committee contributes positively to the mutual understanding and cooperation among workers working with women clients.

Politicization

Problems faced by women, e.g., family obligations, pressure of child-rearing and social discrimination, are not only personal problems, but are seen as problems of the social structure which must be remedied through social reform. Some women's groups consider that solutions to women's problems require changes in legislation and redistribution of resources (Leung, 1990).

According to some women's groups, the women's movement is a part of the social movement, thus women should participate in the democratization of the political system of Hong Kong. As women's rights are a part of human civil rights, they should be considered when drafting the Basic Law and reorganizing the political structure for the future of Hong Kong (Chan S.H., 1987).

In the traditional Chinese society, women have always been excluded from the political arena, and their views have not been solicited even on policies affecting their status and rights. Being able to voice their opinion on political issues is in itself an awareness of some kind.

The politicization of women's groups may be achieved at two levels: one level is through direct participation, such as becoming a member of a political party and running for election; another level is through indirect participation, including expressing opinions on political issues from the point of view of women, training women voters and politicians, supporting political candidates who adopt a women's platform, etc. Under the present

Hong Kong situation, women's groups may find it difficult to organize direct political participation, i.e., becoming a member of a political party, but they are focusing on an indirect participation which can be vigorous and effective.

Women's groups in Hong Kong have become more political (Leung, 1987). In recent years, a number of coalitions have been set up. Each consisting of a different collection of women's groups which variously supported the introduction of direct election for the Legislative Council in 1988, presented women's views on the Draft of the Basic Law, expressed women's concerns for the Bill of Human Rights, organized the Women Voters Development Plan to educate women voters and drafted a comprehensive Women's Joint Political Platform which will be elaborated on in the Goals section later.

Popularization

Chan (1989) pointed out that even though the women's movement developed actively in Taiwan, most of the leaders of women's groups were either from the middle class or professional circle. Participation of women at the grassroots level is still very limited. This is an important problem that must be tackled.

A similar situation exists in Hong Kong. Most of the leaders or active workers of the women's groups in our study have received tertiary education. In other words, the development of the women's movement in Hong Kong is still at the stage of elite leadership. Notwithstanding the above fact, women at the grassroots level are becoming more organized and involved as elaborated below:

- (1) In the Hong Kong Women Workers' Association, two out of the eight executive committee members are from the general labour force. Of the 30 staff and voluntary workers, six of them are housewives, 12 of them have received education only up to the secondary level and 10 of them only up to the primary level. This is an indication that the extension of the women's movement in Hong Kong is gradually following the

model of active participation of women at the grassroots level.

- (2) One of the tasks of the Women Development Project in Shau Kei Wan, Caritas - Hong Kong was to help women at the grassroots level organize a women's group for themselves. The Shau Kei Wan Women Federation thus formed in 1989 has been working actively for women's rights. Another similar women's group which the Women's Centre helped to set up is the Tsui Yin Society which consists of housewives at the grassroots level.
- (3) The Association for the Advancement of Feminism has been actively involved in educating and training women at the grassroots level to become leaders in women's work, such as helping the Association of Lai Kok Estate Residents to run courses and then acting as consultants to the women's group formed upon the completion of the courses.
- (4) The Association for the Advancement of Feminism also publicizes awareness among women at the grassroots level through talks and courses on women's situation in community and youth centres. Many women's groups, such as Harmony House, Women's Centre, Hong Kong Women Workers' Association and the Women Development Project in Shau Kei Wan, Caritas - Hong Kong, serve women at the grassroots level.

Phases of Development of Women's Groups in Hong Kong

From the analysis of the development of women's groups in Hong Kong, we can divide it into two phases. The first phase began some time between the two World Wars and stretched to the early 1980s, while the second phase followed from then to the present. The first phase was characterized by elitist women organized to render help to less fortunate people in general and to less fortunate women in particular. It began with the founding of The

Hong Kong Chinese Women's Club by some wealthy and high social status women in 1938 mainly to do relief work. It was only later that the Club joined forces with The Hong Kong Council of Women founded in 1947 to fight for women's rights.

The second phase of the development of women's groups is characterized by women trying to raise the awareness of their own rights and to fight for equality of the two sexes. Its beginning may be marked by the founding in 1984 of the Association for the Advancement of Feminism by women who had received tertiary education. Since then, in the short span of eight years, many women's groups have been founded, many of which have been actively engaged in fighting for the rights and/or meeting the needs of special groups of women.

However, the Tuen Mun District Women's Association, Ltd. founded in 1976 spanned across these two phases of development of the women's movement. It started as a neighbourhood/social activities women's group to render support and services to women at the grassroots level in Tuen Mun (a new town). Then it passed the stage of the peripheral women's groups and developed into a women's group actively advocating women's rights and promoting social participation of women. This was made possible because the initiator and then coordinator of the Association, who was a staunch supporter of the women's cause, was a social worker working in the Tuen Mun district. The development of the Women Development Project in Shau Kei Wan, Caritas - Hong Kong Community Development Service is another illustration of an individual woman, who is a staunch supporter of the women's cause, initiating a women's group and leading it to grow into a full-fledge active women's group. It happens that the initiator of the above Project is an active member of an existing women's group as well as the professional social worker employed by Caritas and working in Shau Kei Wan. The above two cases are particular examples in Hong Kong whereby a certain women's group was started and/or flourished due to the active leadership of an individual woman who has a strong conviction about women's rights and equality of the sexes.

Future Development of Women's Groups in Hong Kong

Direction of Development

According to activists, the women's movement in Hong Kong will continue along the five approaches of localization, diversification, cooperation, politicization and popularization. To strengthen the movement, women's groups must develop local resources, look into local sociocultural situations, develop feminism suited to local conditions, examine the history of its development and map out future development. While different groups will continue to focus on and emphasize areas related to their strengths and characteristics – and may vary on the degree and strategy of their participation – they will communicate, coordinate and cooperate on major issues. Particularly in this period of political transition, women's groups must participate in politics to achieve the objective of redistributing rights and resources.

Leung (1990) noted that the women's movement is almost always started by educated women, but popularization will spread to include women at the grassroots level so that they will enjoy equality and independence. Lam (1985) stressed that women's groups in Hong Kong must join hands (cooperation) among themselves and with other social justice groups (politicization) to call for change in legislation in the areas of gender stereotyping, equal pay, victimization of women through rape, incest and sexual abuse. Women's consciousness must be raised through popularization among the mass of women.

On the issue of politicization, Mao (1988) stressed that women must participate more in voting. They must bring what are traditionally considered private matters, such as reproduction, child care and household chores, into the public and political arena. They must also campaign for a higher level of direct election, i.e., more directly elected seats in the Legislative Council instead of indirect election through functional constituencies. By virtue of their lowly paid nonprofessional jobs, women are not represented

or poorly represented in the functional constituencies which are dominated by the business, industrial and professional sectors which play an important role in Hong Kong.

Goals

Goals of the women's movement in Hong Kong have been mapped out by a coalition of 12 women's groups (Women Centre, *et al.*, 1990). They are listed in the *Women's Joint Political Platform* as short-term objectives to be achieved by women's movement in Hong Kong as follows (Women Voters Development Plan Association, 1991):

- (1) Extension of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women to Hong Kong (which has been adopted by both the U.K. and China);
- (2) Advocacy of equal work and equal pay for women and men;
- (3) Provision of vocational training and re-training for women to increase their job opportunities;
- (4) Emphasis that the content of the school curriculum should stress equality between the sexes;
- (5) Provision of more community support for women: women centres, programmes to promote women's health care and to abate sexual violence against women;
- (6) Direct election to ensure that women can express their opinion through the vote; and
- (7) Creation of a working group on women's policy in the government to study women's needs, formulate policies and coordinate services.

Difficulties

Women's groups in Hong Kong whose aim is to raise women's awareness are very young indeed. Most of them were founded in the 1980s. The Hong Kong Chinese Women's Club (founded in 1938) and The Hong Kong Council of Women (founded in 1947)

had to fight a long lonely battle for women's rights. Though young, women's groups in Hong Kong have achieved quite a lot. A real and severe problem faced by women's groups in their future growth is financial stringency.

Of the 15 women's groups under investigation, only six have a sound financial footing, namely, the Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association, Women's Centre, Harmony House and Mother's Choice which are beneficiaries of the Community Chest (a centralized welfare fund), the Gender Research Programme which is funded by a university, and The Hong Kong Chinese Women's Club whose members come from wealthy backgrounds. All other women's groups depend on donations, occasional subsidy from charitable organizations, or even just contributions from members. It is no wonder that 10 out of 15 women's groups (including Harmony House which is a beneficiary of the Community Chest described above) indicated that deficiency and/or instability of financial support hindered the hiring of full-time workers and the development of a stable organization.

One of the founding members of a women's group had to resign from her regular job to work full-time for nine months on a voluntary basis to get the group started. This is an indication of the seriousness of the financial problem as well as the high cost one has to pay for working towards one's ideal. Without regular financial support from the government or other funding sources, the future development of women's groups will be extremely difficult indeed.

Strategies of the Women's Movement

Advocates of the women's movement in Hong Kong and in Taiwan have warned against radical confrontational approaches that would reinforce the negative stereotypes affecting the movement and alienate allies including the media, men and women themselves (Khor, 1985 and Yao, 1985). Instead, they adopt a more conciliatory approach which includes educating the public, rally-

ing the support of both sexes especially those in positions of power, training women leadership skills and strengthening the organization of women's groups. This community psychology approach, a pragmatic rather than fundamentalist stand on feminism, is what women's groups in Hong Kong have been following so far. This is the same approach adopted by many grassroots feminist groups in the United States (Bond and Peterson, 1985).

To illustrate the use of the community psychology approach, several examples of the women's movement will be examined in greater detail. The War-on-Rape Campaign was launched in 1977 with representatives from The Hong Kong Council of Women, The Family Planning Association, The Samaritan Befrienders, The Community Health Project of the United Christian Medical Services and the Salvation Army. A comprehensive community perspective was adopted. It aimed to provide direct services for rape victims, coordinate frontline workers in the assistance of victims, change public attitudes towards rape, advocate social action and promote research on the issue. Rape was presented as a community issue and not just a women's problem so that resources of the whole community would be rallied behind the campaign. It proved a success because not only legislation was passed to protect the rights of the rape victims, but more importantly, the public was generally receptive to the educational and publicity efforts (Cheung, 1988).

The establishment of the Women's Centre (Cheung, 1989) is another example of the community approach in the women's movement. It is a link between community resources, a clearing-house of information on women, a network of women and women's groups, and a forum for women where women can have a collective voice.

Along a similar vein, the *Women's Joint Political Platform*, a coalition of 12 women's groups aligned to educate women voters, has adopted the approaches of empowerment and social advocacy. While Hong Kong is rapidly developing a system of representative government, women must seek to increase their

political power, to protect their rights and to promote women's cause. The work has included consciousness-raising, education, publication, monitoring elections and research (Women Voters Development Plan Association, 1991).

The Community Participation Training Scheme for Women's Groups organized in 1991-92 by the Task Group on Women's Groups Training Scheme of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service is another attempt to raise women's consciousness, participation and independence. It consisted of an invitation to women's groups at the grassroots level to participate in training courses which has been followed by a competition over the planning and execution of a community project. This attracted 23 entries. A presentation of awards for outstanding performance was on Women's Day on March 8, 1992. The goals of the Scheme were to mobilize women at the grassroots level to participate actively in social activities, to develop their leadership skills, to develop in women their social responsibility as citizens and to consolidate existing women services (Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 1991a, 1991b).

Stages of Development in Women's Services

Development of services for women at the grassroots level may go through the stages of engagement, mobilization and organization (Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 1991a). The main focus at the *engagement* stage is on organizing activities or groups directed at meeting the immediate needs and concerns of women as a means to engage them in community participation, such as health issues, employment service, training of assertiveness and living skills, etc. The focus at the *mobilization* stage is to raise women's awareness of their own needs and problems, and to enhance their ability to solve these problems. It encourages women to form self-help groups and to build up their own support network. Leadership training, confidence-building and community education programmes are organized to facilitate the group function process. The focus of the *organization* stage is on consolidation of

groups formed and further development and formation of grassroots organizations among women. Women are then empowered to advocate an equitable sharing of domestic and parental responsibilities and gain equal access to the whole range of economic, social and political activities.

Social service and community workers have only recently included women's development as a target area. The Community Participation Training Scheme for Women's Groups organized in 1991-92 by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, elaborated in the previous section, is one of the first attempts by social workers to raise women's consciousness, participation and independence (Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 1991a, 1991b). This Community Participation Training Scheme for Women's Groups is an attempt at the *engagement* stage of women's service development.

Conclusion

Women in Hong Kong have gained some rights before the law but areas of inequality are still found in employment, education and the family. Women's groups strive for equality and independence for women in the political, economic and social realms. A survey of women's groups in Hong Kong was carried out to discover the goals, activities, clientele and problems of women's groups in Hong Kong. The development of women's groups in Hong Kong passed through two phases, the first phase was characterized by elitist women founding women's groups to offer service to the less fortunate; while the second phase is characterized by educated women initiating women's groups to raise women's awareness and to promote the fight for rights of women, then spreading the idea and action to women at the grassroots level. Thus, the development of women's groups in Hong Kong is closely tied with the effort of a few individual women committed and dedicated to the women's cause. A historical approach including interview of these women will be highly productive as a further exploration of the development of women's groups in Hong

Kong.

Women's groups in Hong Kong have followed the approaches of localization, diversification, cooperation, politicization and popularization. They do not insist on a definite ideological orientation. Rather, they build upon local resources and work on practical issues to improve women's situation. The groups are diversified and generally focused on work related to their strengths and characteristics. They cooperate on major issues and participate in politics to effect changes in policy and legislation. They are particularly concerned that the call for equality should spread to women at the grassroots level.

The community psychological approach adopted by the women's movement has been found to be useful in Hong Kong. Strategies used include educating the public, rallying the support of both sexes especially those in position of power, training women leadership skills and strengthening the organization of women's groups. For all women, especially women at the grassroots level, it is a long passage from the stage of awareness of women's own needs and problems, through the stage of attitude change affirming the possibility of improvement, and then onto the stage of action to improve their situation to meet their own needs and solve their own problems. The next stage of development is to involve both women and men in the re-alignment of gender roles and the depolarization of gender stereotypes. Given the greater changes Chinese women have undergone in their roles relative to those of men, the traditional forms of division of labour and polarized gender roles will become cultural relics which will not fit the new and developing social reality. The paradoxical goal of the women's movement is to de-emphasize gender as the basis for distribution of resources, division of labour and legislation, so that eventually, there will not be a need for a *women's movement*.

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Appendix A: A Survey of Women's Groups in Hong Kong

- (1) Name of Institution: _____
- (2) Institution set up in (year) _____
- (3) Institution goal: _____

- (4) Nature of work of institution, related to:
 (a) raising awareness of women:
 unrelated
 related, (please specify): _____
- (b) raising women's status
 unrelated
 related, (please specify): _____
- (c) helping to gain rights of women
 unrelated
 related, (please specify): _____
- (5) Types of activities: _____

- (6) Service target population:
 for members only
 for the public
- (7) Problems faced: _____

- (8) Future development: _____

- (9) Source of finance:
- [] entirely by Government
 [] Government subsidy
 [] members' contribution
 [] Community Chest
 [] donations
 [] others, (please specify): _____

- (10) Workers:
- (a) Total worker No. _____
 (b) Worker sex: No. of female: _____, No. of male: _____
 (c) Worker status: Voluntary No.: _____, Paid No.: _____

Concerning voluntary workers, nature of their main employment:

Social worker (No.): _____
 Education (No.): _____
 Medical (No.): _____
 Commerce & industry (No.): _____
 Law (No.): _____
 others (No., please specify): _____

- (11) Workers' educational level:
- Primary (No.): _____
 Secondary (No.): _____
 Tertiary (No.): _____

- (12) Clientele:
- (a) Sex: [] Females only
 [] Both sexes, Male to Female ratio: _____ to _____
 (b) Majority age group:
 [] Children [] Adolescents [] Adults [] Aged
 (c) Majority educational level:
 [] Primary [] Secondary [] Tertiary
 (d) Majority social economic status level:
 [] Low [] Middle [] High
 (e) Majority marital status:
 [] Single [] Married [] Divorced [] Widowed

- (13) Remarks (other information): _____

本港婦女團體概況調查

一. 機構名稱: _____

二. 機構概況

(一) 成立年份: _____年

(二) 宗旨: _____

(三) 工作 / 活動概況

1. 工作性質:

· 與提高婦女覺醒: 無關
 有關(請說明: _____)

· 與提高婦女地位: 無關
 有關(請說明: _____)

· 與爭取婦女權益: 無關
 有關(請說明: _____)

2. 活動類型: _____

3. 服務對象: 專為會員服務
 開放式服務

4. 面對困難: _____

5. 未來工作展望: _____

(四) 經費來源

- 全由政府提供
 政府資助
 由機構成員合資
 公益金
 募捐
 其他(請說明: _____)

(五) 機構成員(工作人員)資料

1. 成員數目：

- 總人數：_____人
- 依性別劃分： 女性(_____人)
 男性(_____人)
- 依服務條件劃分： 義務(_____人)
 受薪(_____人)

2. 成員(若為業餘性質)的職業類型：

- 社工界(_____人)
- 教育界(_____人)
- 醫療界(_____人)
- 工商界(_____人)
- 法律界(_____人)
- 其他(請說明：_____)

3. 成員的教育程度：

- 小學(_____人)
- 中學(_____人)
- 大專(_____人)

(六) 服務對象資料

1. 性別：

- 全為女性
- 男、女均有(男女比例約為：_____：_____)

2. 一般年齡組：

- 兒童 青少年 成年 老年

3. 一般教育程度：

- 小學 中學 大專

4. 一般經濟背景：

- 下階層 中等階層 上階層

5. 一般婚姻狀況：

- 多為未婚 多為已婚 多為離婚 多為寡寡

(七) 備註欄(如欲提供其他有關資料, 可填寫此欄)

Appendix B: List of Women's Groups which Responded to the Investigation*

A. Women's Studies Group (婦女研究組織)

1. Gender Research Programme, Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.
(香港中文大學, 香港亞太研究所, 性別角色研究計劃)

B. Women's Rights Groups (婦權組織)

1. Association for the Advancement of Feminism
(新婦女協進會)
2. Hong Kong Women Christian Council
(香港婦女基督徒協會)
3. The Hong Kong Council of Women
(香港婦女協會)

C. Service-related Women's Groups (服務性婦女組織)

1. Family Resource Centre, Hong Kong Family Welfare Society (香港家庭福利會家福中心)
2. Harmony House (和諧之家)
3. Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association
(香港基督教女青年會)
4. Mother's Choice (母親的抉擇)
5. The Hong Kong Girl Guides Association
(香港女童軍總會)
6. Women's Centre, Hong Kong Council of Women
(香港婦女協會婦女中心)

D. Grassroots-level Women's Groups (基層婦女組織)

1. Hong Kong Women Workers' Association
(香港婦女勞工協會)
2. Women Affair Committee, Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (香港職工會聯盟婦女事務委員會)
3. Women Development Project in Shau Kei Wan, Caritas - Hong Kong Community Development Service
(香港明愛筲箕灣婦女發展計劃)

Appendix D: Peripheral Women's Groups Which Responded to the Investigation

Nature of Groups	Area of Concern	Name of Institution
Peripheral Women's Groups	Social service orientation	Zonta Club of Kowloon (1977)
	Personal growth orientation in addition to social service orientation	1. The Hong Kong Girl Guides Association (1961) 2. The Girls' Brigade (Hong Kong) (1964) 3. Hong Kong Jayceettes (1969) 4. Bauhinia Jaycees Ltd. (1979)
	Social activities orientation	1. Women Affair Committee, the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, Hong Kong (1960) 2. The Chinese University Women Organization (1989)
	Religious orientation	Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology (1987)
Social Service Groups	With special concern on women's problems	Family Resource Centre, the Hong Kong Family Welfare Society (1988)

香港“婦女問題關注團體”調查報告

游黎麗玲、區潔珍、張妙清著

(中文摘要)

兩性平等的觀念，在今日的香港表面上似已被普遍認同。但若深究社會實況，不難發現這只是個還未全然實現的理想；尤其在草根階層，問題尤為顯著。

面對這種不合理的現狀，本港關注婦女問題的各個團體，究竟如何開展它們的工作呢？本調查報告嘗試探討有關團體的工作概況及存在的問題，並試圖找出可能的發展路向。

本調查所使用的研究方法包括問卷調查、訪問及文獻分析。研究結果顯示：

一、有關團體的工作，可歸納為五個特點：本地化、多元化、群眾化、政治化及合作化。

二、由歷史角度看，有關團體的發展，可分為兩大階段。第一階段可追溯至兩次大戰間，由上流社會的婦女向草根階層的婦女伸出援手，並積極爭取廢除種種歧視女性的社會規範和制度。第二階段始於八十年代，由一群知識份子自西方引進女性主義，倡議婦女意識及爭取兩性平等，並由此促成不少新興的、關注婦女問題的組織的出現。

三、如何解決不少團體的經費問題、培訓草根婦女成為該等團體的骨幹領導（至少是主力工作人員）及動員男性參與兩性平等運動……等，都是目前本港“婦女問題關注團體”所適宜探索的發展路向。