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THE WOMEN'S FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES A NEW STUDY TO SPEARHEAD CHANGE IN POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES FOR THE PROTECTION AND ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

The 9-month research project will fill a critical gap in gender research. The report will make recommendations for further research, policy changes and new community programmes to enhance the welfare and prospects of women and girls in Hong Kong.

HONG KONG, 7 March, 2011 - The Women's Foundation, Hong Kong's leading not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls, today announced the launch of a comprehensive study focusing on the status of women and girls in Hong Kong. The project was announced at The Women's Foundation annual 2011 Gala Lunch which this year celebrated the centenary of International Women's Day (IWD).

The new study, which will be completed in November of 2011, will fill a critical gap in gender research in Hong Kong and make recommendations for policy and programme changes for the protection and advancement of women across thirteen areas: women and poverty, the education of women, women and health, violence against women, migrant women, women and the economy, women and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights and women, women and the media, women and the environment, the girl child and women and the family. The study has also been timed to coincide with Hong Kong's reporting obligations under the UN's Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). According to Su-Mei Thompson, CEO of The Women's Foundation, "The current statistical data available from the Government is woefully inadequate because of a lack of gender sensitivity in the collection and analysis of data across Government departments. Critical gaps include comprehensive data regarding teen pregnancies, household spending on childcare and elderly care, disaggregated data on individuals with disabilities and ethnic minority women - making it difficult for effective policies and programmes to be developed in these areas. In addition, while there have been improvements in recent years in the protection and education of women and girls in Hong Kong, large gaps remain. The extreme income inequality divide in Hong Kong has thrown a spotlight on the number of people in Hong Kong living in poverty including women who are particularly vulnerable due to lower levels of literacy and their responsibilities as care givers. Domestic violence against women is also rising as are incidents of teenage pregnancy and narcotics abuse by girls. Meanwhile, although women are better educated and more prevalent in the workforce than ever before, women remain significantly under-represented in management and leadership positions in Hong Kong. The study will analyse the root causes behind these issues and make recommendations for further research, policy changes and new community programmes to enhance the welfare and prospects of women and girls in Hong Kong. Our hope is that this research will enable Hong Kong as a CEDAW signatory to more ably identify and address the barriers and deficiencies that persist in relation to women and girls in Hong Kong."

The study represents a collaboration between The Women's Foundation and two of Hong Kong's most respected institutions for independent high-calibre research: the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and the Gender Research Centre at the Chinese

University of Hong Kong (CUHK).

"We are delighted to partner with The Women's Foundation on this important study. The broad range of women's issues is simply not receiving the attention and rigorous analyses they deserve. These issues have implications across all sectors of society including not only family, welfare, healthcare and other public services, but also education, business, economy, media, environment, politics and human rights. Our research will draw on the expertise of the academic community to provide the reality check, examine root causes, and recommend policy and programme changes to enable women and girls to achieve their full potential as members of the community." said Fanny Cheung, Founder of the Gender Research Centre at CUHK and the founding chair of the The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC).

According to Christine Fang, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS), "We are proud to collaborate with The Women's Foundation on this timely study which spotlights the lack of Government support for gender-sensitive data collection and analysis across a number of key social development areas. The Government should consult with major stakeholders over the kind of gender-related data they need access to so that resources can be more effectively and efficiently deployed to enhance the welfare and prospects of women and girls in Hong Kong. We hope that our report will be a catalyst for greater consultation and collaboration in the future."

J. Michael Evans, Chairman of Goldman Sachs Asia, said, "Goldman Sachs is pleased to again partner with The Women's Foundation on this research project. The study builds on earlier works by the Foundation which have provided insight into gender equality as well as key issues faced by women and girls in Hong Kong. We believe that independent credible research is key to changing the lives of women and girls in Hong Kong and elsewhere."

International Women's Day initiatives

The Women's Foundation is working with the Education Bureau to hold an Inspirational Women Schools Talk on March 8, 2011. The event will bring a panel of inspirational women speakers from civic life before an audience of secondary students. Confirmed speakers include Christine Constantin - Vice Consul, Political, Economic and Public Affairs of the Consulate General of Canada, Christine Loh - Founder and CEO of Civic Exchange, Mara McCaffery - Founder of Orangutan Aid and Irene Tam - Founder and Director of the Canada-China Culture & Education Association.

The Women's Foundation has also organised a city-wide retail campaign to celebrate International Women's Day which sees leading brands and outlets donating a portion of their proceeds to The Women's Foundation and women's causes. Supporting brands include Anne Klein, Caran d'Ache, Colour Me Beautiful, Dragonfly, Edible Arrangements, EQ: IQ, I Scream, Joan David, Karen Millen, Lisa T, Magnolia, Mischa, Rue Madame and Shiseido.