

If she can do it, so can you! The story of Clarie, a female leader in Hong Kong Ms. Amelia LO (Hong Kong)

“Life is a combination of choices and sacrifices. I count my blessings and try my best.”

—Ms. Clarie Ku.

How to balance your work and life is a question faced by more female professionals in Hong Kong. Many of those in Hong Kong have realized the impossible demands made on working mothers, which many have been a significant contributing factor to the decreasing birth rate. It is indeed a pity that more than half of those women who joined the workforce at a junior level quit because of difficulties in balancing the tasks of motherhood and work.

Ms. Clarie Ku is a shining example on how one can be both a successful career woman and a beloved mother. A graduate of elite universities including Stanford and Oxford, Clarie previously served in a number of senior positions in the Hong Kong Government, including Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Commissioner for Narcotics and Deputy Director of Housing. She received commendation for her Outstanding Government Service and is one of the few Hong Kong Government officials who received the Service Award from Singapore Minister of Home Affairs.

In 2001-02, Clarie was selected as President of the Financial Action Task Force, the leading global governmental organization working to address anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing issues. In 2007, Clarie helped the former HKSAR Chief Executive Hon.

Tung Chee Hwa to establish the China-United States Exchange Foundation and became the founding CEO. In 2011, she was named Executive Director of one of the major banks in Hong Kong and is currently Managing Director of a private company.

One of her most memorable achievements was her journey to the United States almost immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, during which she led world leaders to cooperate to legislate new laws to curb and prevent terrorism financing. Risking antagonizing her then young children for being constantly absent, Clarie put on a brave face and boarded the plane that would lead her



Ms. Clarie with the Former Chief Executive of Hong Kong

to the Washington D.C. less than a month after the 9/11 attacks.

She steered the Task Force in the formulation of the Eight Special Recommendations on Terrorist Financing post 9/11. Her work was openly praised by US Treasury Secretary O'Neill, Attorney General Ashcroft, UK Chancellor Gordon Brown and other officials around the world for outstanding, effective leadership amidst the global crisis.

When recollecting about the event, she recounts: "Some say I was heroic for saving the world, some say I was foolish to risk my life when I could have easily delegated the task to other colleagues. Like many working mothers, I felt a mother's guilt when I had to miss out on many important occasions in my children's life as a result of my many overseas meetings. But that's part of being a responsible leader, and a leader has to be strong in uncertain times, and cannot cave into fear and insecurities."

As far as being a mother is concerned, Clarie says she tries to put quality before quantity, and tries her best, with the limited time she has, to make her children feel loved and valued. She makes sure that her children are welllooked after, and cultivates in them the core values of responsibility, dedication and hard work and impresses on them the importance of helping those less fortunate in society by inviting them to join volunteer events with her.

Balancing the life of a mother and a female leader is rarely easy, she admits. Time is a scarce commodity, and good time management is key, but even with good time management, prioritization and sacrifice is unavoidable.

And since helping others live a better life is something that speaks to her as a person, Clarie finds time despite her busy schedule to help others at a global and local level. She has been appointed as a member of the Steering Committee of the Hong Kong Basic Law, a member of the Appeal Board of the Financial Disputes Resolution Council, and serves on a number of NGOs boards on US-China relations, antidrug, youths and women issues.

So for those new or aspiring working mothers out there, have faith in yourself, if she can do it, so can you!

"When my children ask me why I work so hard, I reply, I work hard because I choose to, I love my family and I love my work, you are both my priorities."—Ms. Clarie Ku