

**Extract of the submission from the Equal Opportunities Commission
on the Report of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of
the People's Republic of China in the light of the International Covenant
on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [Paper No. CB(2)928/00-01(02)]
for the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs on 26 February 2001**

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Article 13: Right to Education

23. The Government has stated in its report that access to education in Hong Kong is not constrained on grounds of race, religion, sex, age or language. Yet, children of certain ethnic minorities, such as the Nepalese, are unable to commence their primary school education because of language difficulties. Although this is not an issue directly linked to the EOC's remit, the EOC is concerned at the adverse effect such lack of schooling has on young girls from ethnic minority groups.³

24. In particular, the EOC is concerned at the attitude of the Government in respect of girls' education generally and points to the specific problem with the Secondary School Places Allocation System (SSPA). In its Formal Investigation Report published in August 1999, the EOC recommended the removal of the discriminatory elements of the SSPA. The Education Department, however, maintains that the policy is necessary to ensure equal opportunities for boys, who would otherwise be left behind by girls who do much better at school.

25. The Government's refusal to remove the discriminatory elements of the SSPA has led to the EOC taking judicial review proceedings against the Government.

³ Also relevant to Article 14: Free and Compulsory Primary Education.

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