

**SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL
ON HOME AFFAIRS**

Tuesday 13th February 2001

**TOPIC: Sample Survey of the Characteristics of the Ethnic Minorities
in Hong Kong**

The Indian Resources Group and Hong Kong Against Racial Discrimination (H.A.R.D) hereby submit comments in response to the findings concluded in the sample survey.

General Comments

We are satisfied that the existence of the survey demonstrates the Government's acknowledgement that the needs of the ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong must be identified and addressed. However we are nonetheless disturbed and concerned in relation to ;

- i) the methods adopted in conducting this vital survey;
- ii) the failure to meet one of the two objectives cited in the survey ;
- iii) and the apparent gaps in the findings.

Of primary concern is the failure of the Government to use the opportunity to ascertain the extent of racial discrimination faced by the groups surveyed. Secondly the survey fails to identify the special needs of the respondents thereto. Thirdly the findings on 'difficulties faced' by the ethnic minorities were ambiguous and inadequate and consequently provided no constructive data to address the needs of this group.

Of the 44 page report only 3 pages addressed the issue of 'difficulties' encountered by the ethnic minorities. No reference was made to their special needs. Clearly the survey failed to achieve its second objective.

The inclusion of those of "Caucasian" origin in the category of "others" leads us to conclude that the survey was commissioned to understand the needs of the minorities in HK who claim to have faced problems of racial discrimination.

Should our conclusion be correct, we are extremely alarmed that the survey did not address the issue of race discrimination.

Methodology – Lack of consultation

As a consequence of the small sample size of the group subject to this survey the information available was necessarily limited. It is for precisely this reason that we fail to understand why interest groups representing members of this diverse population of minorities were not consulted. The report accepts that the disproportionate sampling design was based on districts believed to have a higher proportion of ethnic minorities. It is not clear from the report what the foundations for such belief were.

The report accepts that contacting and interviewing members of the ethnic minority groups proved difficult (page 6 full report) .

Logical advantages or benefits of such consultations would have:

- 1) provided detailed information of locality;
- 2) examples of difficulties and racial discrimination faced by the groups;
- 3) afforded a more focused and consequently reflected a more accurate basis for the survey

The Home Affairs Bureau has access to names and contact details of representatives of interest groups. Was such information provided to the consultants?

It is the considered opinion of HARD and IRG that prior consultation would have enabled the survey to more effectively locate the targetted respondents.

‘Difficulties Encountered’

The entire three pages devoted to the topic of ‘encountering difficulties in Hong Kong’ was disturbing primarily because of the perceived deliberate attempt to avoid focusing on the very real problem of race discrimination.

- 1) No definition of “difficulties” was provided. The word difficulty covers an entire spectrum of problems, from the most trivial and mundane to life altering catastrophes. Such a simplistic approach to ascertaining problems faced by ethnic minorities can be interpreted as the Government’s steadfast refusal to recognise the problems faced by these persons.
- 2) What is meant by ‘sought assistance’?
- 3) Why was “legal assistance” excluded from the list?
- 4) Please provide a list of Government Departments from which the respondents sought assistance.

- 5) Were respondents asked whether the assistance sought provided a solution to their “difficulties”? If not why not? Surely the Government should be interested in whether existing steps taken to deal with the ‘difficulties’ have been successful? And of course whether or not Government Departments were able to assist.

Intention to stay permanently in Hong Kong

It is a cause for concern that data as to respondents’ intention in respect of permanently remaining in Hong Kong or otherwise has been omitted from the executive summary. This gives the impression that the Government lacks foresight or vision in genuinely attempting to understand the difficulties and needs of the ethnic minorities. We submit that the intention to permanently remain on a longterm or permanent basis in Hong Kong is directly relevant to meeting the second objective cited in the report.

In relation to the reasons given for the decision that they were not likely to stay or were undecided, cultural problems were cited amongst common reasons for not wanting to stay. The reasons provided should have been further identified. (Table 12a) The Government should be seeking further information on isolating these factors and examining ways to resolve these problems.

Inability to secure employment and language difficulties were also cited as reasons given by those unlikely to stay. There is also a category for ‘other reasons’ given.

Please provide us with any information you possess outlining or describing the specifics of ‘other reasons’.

Questions

- 1) Will the findings of this survey be used by Government departments in formulating policies? If so how and when ?
- 2) What is the monthly median income of the HK population?
- 3) In respect of respondents who were limited in their command of the Cantonese or English language, how were the interviews conducted to ensure accuracy?
- 4) The survey identified limitations in the methodology adopted (refer to caveat) Will this methodology be adopted in subsequent surveys? Will any changes be made in light of the limitations exposed in this report? Will the Government recommend that comments and suggestions made by interest groups be incorporated in conducting future surveys?

- 5) Once it was identified that the survey discovered no persons of Indian origin born in Hong Kong, contrary to the known reality, why were no steps taken to locate members of this group and interview them to achieve more accurate findings?
- 6) Were statistics from the Immigration Department used to ascertain numbers and location of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong?
- 7) Our own research has established that not a single minority contact of ours was interviewed for the survey. Given the relatively small number of minorities in HK, we find this quite unusual. Is there any explanation for this anomaly?

Conclusion

The survey provides interesting background information in relation to the characteristics of a small sample of a particular section of the ethnic minority population. Their special needs were never addressed beyond stating this as an objective at the beginning of the report. However we are concerned to ensure that the results of this particular survey not be utilised or relied upon as a policy formulating database, as it does not provide an accurate reflection of the situation. This of course is accepted in the report.

Finally we submit that of fundamental concern is why no questions were asked on the incidence of race discrimination when embarking on this survey. The government has clearly been alerted to the prevalence of racism in Hong Kong. The failure to take the opportunity of the survey and the acceptance of the methodology is indicative of the Governments closed mind to the problem of racial discrimination in Hong Kong. While this attitude remains it is unlikely that any progress can be achieved.

Submitted by :

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13th February 2001