

**Legislative Council Subcommittee on Poverty
Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on Ethnic Minorities 2014**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the “Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on Ethnic Minorities 2014” (the Report).

Background

2. On 31 December, 2015, the Government released the “Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on Ethnic Minorities 2014”. The Report aims to analyse the characteristics of ethnic minorities and understand their poverty situation and forms of poverty, with a view to identifying the more disadvantaged ethnic group(s) and household type(s) with the highest poverty risk.

Overview of Ethnic Minorities in Hong Kong

3. Adopting the analytical framework of the poverty line endorsed by the Commission on Poverty (CoP) and based on the data from the 2011 Population Census and the Survey on Households with School Children of South Asian Ethnicities (dedicated survey) commissioned in 2014 by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the Economic Analysis and Business Facilitation Unit of the Financial Secretary’s Office in collaboration with the C&SD analysed the poverty situation of ethnic minorities (EMs) in Hong Kong in detail in the Report. The key findings are:

- (a) Based on the 2011 Population Census, the number of EM poor households and the size of the poor population after policy intervention were estimated to be 9 800 households and 26 800 persons respectively in 2011. The EM poverty rate was 13.9 per cent, lower than the overall poverty rate of 15.2 per cent after recurrent cash policy intervention over the same period. However, wide variations were observed across ethnic groups. Among the ethnic groups, the poverty

rate of South Asians (SAs) was rather high, at 22.6 per cent. Within the SA households, households with children were subject to an even greater poverty risk.

- (b) Based on the dedicated survey focusing on SA households with children, the number of poor households, the size of the poor population and the poverty rate in 2014 after recurrent cash policy intervention were 1 500 households, 7 400 persons and 30.8 per cent respectively. The Government's recurrent cash items lifted 4 200 persons in 700 households out of poverty, reducing the poverty rate by 17.3 percentage points. Meanwhile, the average poverty gap of the poor SA households with children after policy intervention was \$4,000 per month, representing a sharp reduction of \$5,200 from the pre-intervention figure. Such reductions in the poverty rate and the average monthly poverty gap were both more than three times the overall figures (the overall reductions were 5.3 percentage points and \$1,500 respectively). This reflects the effectiveness of the Government's recurrent cash policies in relieving SA households with children of their financial burdens.
- (c) Nevertheless, the 2014 poverty rate of SA households with children after recurrent cash policy intervention (30.8 per cent) was still markedly higher than that of the overall households with children in Hong Kong (16.2 per cent). A comparison reflects that though the poor SA households with children were generally self-reliant, their notably larger family size and markedly lower proportion of working members, coupled with a more severe unemployment situation and lacklustre employment earnings, led to higher poverty risk.

Key Observations

4. The dedicated survey also collected data on the language ability and the extent of community involvement of the poor population in SA households with children in 2014. The main observations are as follows:

- (a) The poor population in SA households with children usually spoke in the mother tongue at home, in contrast to their general use of Chinese and English in school or at work.

They were generally more proficient in English than in Chinese, and fared better in listening and speaking than in reading and writing. The children were more adept at English and Chinese than adults, but were much weaker in reading and writing with their mother tongue. While most of the poor persons indicated no difficulties in study or at work, those with such difficulties mostly attributed the major obstacle to their use of Chinese.

- (b) The poor population in SA households with children had developed social networks with the wider population to a certain extent, and youths had more extensive networks. However, the lower voter registration rates among SAs reflected their lower level of community involvement, while more than half of them expressed a fair sense of belonging to Hong Kong, especially the younger generation. Furthermore, a small number of those who had encountered difficulties in using government services cited language and communication as the major barriers. Many indicated that they were not aware of certain support services. This shows indirectly that language barriers may have prevented them from learning about existing support services.

5. The Government attaches great importance to poverty alleviation, in particular on how to better cater for the needs of the underprivileged, including EMs. To help them adapt to life in Hong Kong, the Government will continue to introduce targeted support measures well suited to the needs of EMs through various bureaux and departments, and step up publicity to improve accessibility for EMs to public services for more effective and fruitful implementation of policies.

6. More detailed analyses on the poverty situation of EMs are available in the “Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on Ethnic Minorities 2014”, which has been uploaded to the CoP’s dedicated website (www.povertyrelief.gov.hk). The Executive Summary of the Report is also available in six EM languages (Tagalog, Hindi, Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Nepali and Urdu) for reference.