

Submission to the Subcommittee on Poverty,  
Legislative Council  
14 April 2014

## **Background**

According to the research by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service in 2013<sup>1</sup>, the South and South East Asian ethnic minority population living under the Poverty Line is higher<sup>2</sup> than the local population and the rising trend in those who are fallen under the poverty line is even higher<sup>3</sup> than the local population. 32.5% of the ethnic minority children were living under poverty, much higher than the local children poverty rate (25%). The average proportion of engaging in “elementary occupations” among the whole working population was 19.5%. However, the proportion of Pakistanis and Nepalese were as high as 36% and 42.3% respectively. On top of this, the dependency ratio of Pakistanis was as high as 4.03 while Nepalese was 1.71. This reflects that each Pakistani worker has to support 4.03 Pakistanis financially and so as each Nepalese labour has to support 1.71 Nepalese financially.

## **Zero Measures to Support New Immigrants’ Employment**

There were 113,815 residents from South and South East Asian countries living in Hong Kong in 2011. However, there was only 53 ethnic minority residents<sup>4</sup> could find jobs successfully through Labour Department in 2012 according to the written reply to a question in the Legislative Council on 13 Nov 2013, by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare<sup>5</sup>. The number of registration for Labour Department employment services was also extremely low too - only 822 residents in 2012. The extremely scarce job seekers and low successful employment rate in Labour department (LD) indirectly **reflect that ethnic minority could not access to the LD service and are ignorant of their legal protection.**

With a view on the ZERO MEASURES offered by the Hong Kong government and the

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<sup>1</sup> Situations of South Asian Ethnic minorities (not yet published)- analysis on the situations from 2011 population Census, Hong Kong Council of Social Service.

<sup>2</sup> 23.9% of South and South East Asian are living under poverty line when compared to 20.4% among whole population.

<sup>3</sup> The population under poverty line rose from 17.3% to 23.9% among South and South East Asian while the whole population rose from 19.1% to 20.4% during the period of 2001 to 2011.

<sup>4</sup> From South and South East Asian countries (Pakistan, Nepali, Indian, Thailand, Indonesian and Filipino).

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201311/13/P201311130454.htm>

more difficulties incurred for those non-Chinese speaking EM job seekers, the consequence is EM workers' exploitation in employment relationships. As high as 22.4% of local ethnic minority workers were taking wages LOWER than the Statutory Minimum Wage<sup>6</sup>, however, they dared not to complain on this as the ways of finding jobs were very limited.

Moreover, the trainings for the betterment of career for EM are also not matching to the needs of the EM to improve the poverty situations. In our service experience, the EM residents in poverty could not afford to stop working for a single day. EM residents needed special designs in training to fit their special needs for career betterment.

### **Suggestions**

Language barrier, education and qualification beyond recognition, inaccessibility to Labour Department employment service, lack of skills upgrading channels, are the main causes leading to the employment and also poverty problems faced by ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. Therefore,

We suggest:

1. The Labour Department to expand its present Selective Placement Division to serve, apart from disabled people, also the ethnic minorities residents with personalized employment service as well as building up future ethnic minorities workers' employers network.
2. The Labour Department to enhance the enforcement of Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) by increasing the frequency of labour inspections so as to decrease the SMW violation situation commonly found among ethnic minorities workers.
3. Upon 2-4 non-Chinese speaking residents enrolled for courses, the Construction Industry Council should offer onsite interpretation to their Chinese classes to the small group of EM attendees so that EM residents could access to the professional licenses to improve their livelihood.
4. To subsidy ethnic minorities new arrivals for the service of Qualifications Assessment service in Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic & Vocational Qualifications.

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<sup>6</sup> Research Report on the Enforcement of Statutory Minimum Wage and Accessibility of Anti-Poverty Government Social Services or Measures among South Asian Residents in Hong Kong, by the Hong Kong Catholic Commission for Labour Affairs and Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong Diocesan Pastoral Centre for Workers (Kowloon) (2012)

5. To review the present unhelpful “Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality” as launched by the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau in 2010 – so that ethnic minorities who speak neither Chinese nor English have equal access in all government departments to ensure their right to receive and use its public services.

Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong

Diocesan Pastoral Centre for Workers (Kowloon)

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