

THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

Views on EM employment and integration policy

The Legislative Council Subcommittee on Poverty invited written submission and oral presentation on “Measures to support ethnic minorities in relation to employment and integration into the community” on April 25, 2014. Our Council’s Network on Ethnic Minorities Service consists of 26 member agencies have the following views:

Overall Integration Policy

1. The increase population of EM is a valuable source of social and economic development. In order to do this, sufficient support and equal opportunities should be provided.
2. Currently, the integration policy is rather piecemeal and the promotion, resource input and monitoring system for the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality is very insufficient. Hence, a more comprehensive integration policy and strategic directions on how to achieve racial harmony and integration should be established. Our Council propose to review the current integration policy and deliberate what kind of support and measure needed for the local ethnic groups.
3. Besides, the government should adopt an EM’s perspective in working out different policies, including housing, education, employment, immigration and etc. Also, the Government should involve EM in the policy consultations.
4. As there will be new EMs immigrants migrate to Hong Kong every year, the existing training and integration programmes for EM communities should be continued.

Proposed Strategies and Measures:

5. *Diversifying Education Structure and Curricula for the Ethnic Minorities:* Education concerns the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong most as it shapes their life chance in Hong Kong. As our education structure and curricula are based heavily on local Chinese culture, the ethnic minorities have experienced a lot of difficulties in language and schooling. The fundamental problem lies in the lack of policy to diversify our education structure and curricula such that people of the ethnic minorities, including those who may be coming to Hong Kong, can be better educated and obtain a culturally relevant education qualification for their development in Hong Kong.
6. A more diverse education structure and curricula implies taking special considerations of

the different backgrounds of different cultural/ethnic groups in the planning and policies related to school placement, curricula and qualification standards.

6.1 In the long run, our Council believes that schools designated for ethnic minorities should be phased out to promote ethnic/racial integration, though we consider individual designated schools may still be needed for the newly arrived ethnic minority for transitional purpose. All schools have to be provided with adequate resources to be ready, in terms of facilities and professional inputs (in language, teaching, and social service), to take students of different ethnic groups and render them with adequate supports.

6.2 We welcome the newly announced Policy Address has clearly stated that from 2014/15 school year, the government will implement a “Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework with supporting learning and teaching materials as well as assessment tools for ethnic minority students in primary and secondary school”. Our Council believes that the problem of access of adequate and equal education opportunities for the ethnic minorities can only be resolved with clear policy goal and sustained efforts. Our Council hopes that the government can state a long-term goal of this policy and development target in terms of social inclusion. For example, school attendance of the ethnic minorities at university level is significantly lower than that of the general population, pre-primary education support and senior secondary education support are of particular importance to the children of the ethnic minorities. Access to basic information of school and admission, qualification standard, curriculum and teaching support and so on are to be strengthened to ensure the ethnic minorities have equal access to education of all levels.

6.3 The curriculum and qualification standard under the policy of “Chinese as second language” are to be made also available to ethnic minority adults who are not in schools but in need of a proper Chinese language qualification for education or career advancement of various kinds.

6.4 We believe that the knowledge, skills and attitude of teachers matter in the provision of education to ethnic minorities. If we are to build an inclusive society, the government should ensure that systematic training for teachers to develop cultural sensitivity is in place. We suggest that at least in the near future, NGOs with rich experiences in working with the ethnic minorities can be engaged to develop and provide the training.

7. ***Support for Career and Advancement of Ethnic Minorities:*** As the ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong constitute a significant quantity of labour force in our economy. As much as our economy needs this labour force, the ethnic minorities are in need of opportunities for them to participate and contribute to our society and to develop their own potentials. Ethnic minority groups face many problems in employment. Part of these

problems is related to their language and qualifications resulting from barriers to education advancement. Others are related to stereotypes and discrimination. Our Council thinks that to develop and activate the potentials of the ethnic minorities, the following long-term strategies have to be considered:

- 7.1 Enhance the incentive structure for employers to employ the ethnic minorities, including tax incentives as well as concrete service or measures encouraging and assisting employers in recruiting and employing the ethnic minorities. Employers should be given more opportunities to broaden their experiences in working with the ethnic minorities. Promoting partnership between schools/universities and the employers can help create such opportunities.
- 7.2 The government should be a role model as the biggest employer in Hong Kong, such as setting up a quota system to employ EM.
- 7.3 The Qualification Framework specifying how we would recognize overseas qualification and professional experiences may help the newly arrived ethnic minorities in employment.
- 7.4 The government has mainly relied on the Labour Department as the first point of contact for the ethnic minorities. However, not many ethnic minorities are informed of the services provided by the Labour Department. The success rate of Labour Department in helping them to find a job has always been very low. It shows that formal channel itself may be necessary but not sufficient. The government should seek to work with NGOs and community entities working with the ethnic minorities to provide information and training for the ethnic minorities to enhance their chance of being employed.
- 7.5 Many employers are not unwilling to employ ethnic minorities with professional skills and technique simply because they cannot read and write fluent Chinese. However, some of the job duties may not need such competence. The government to re-examine the Chinese language requirement of different job duties, in respect of listening, speaking, reading and writing, so that more ethnic minorities may enter the job market.
- 7.6 ERB or VTC should provide after school Chinese language training courses and vocational Chinese classes which could be recognized by employers. Currently, the language courses provided by ERB or VTC are not able to help EM to obtain or secure a job. Furthermore, many ERB courses are not available for working adults and school leavers with degree or above which may block ethnic minorities to take the Chinese language courses.
- 7.7 NGOs can be engaged to provide job matching and support employers to employ ethnic minorities. Besides, NGOs can render community Chinese classes in a more structural way after the CSL framework and teaching material are ready.

8. ***Social Participation of the Ethnic Minorities:*** In many other aspects of basic livelihoods and social participation, the ethnic minorities have experienced a lot of barriers and discrimination. Due primarily to language barrier, they have great difficulties in getting access to information about education, health, housing, and social service. Although Radical Discrimination Ordinance is enacted, equal access to information and hence services has yet been achieved. Language support is the most basic service that they are in need of. On top of this, many public services, which have long been designed based on the culture and social practices of local Chinese, are yet fully accessible to them due to social and cultural reasons. A lot more have to be done in those service settings and public facilities to accommodate the unique set of needs of the ethnic minorities before they can fully participate in our society.

8.1 Community-based service should be enhanced, seeking to actively engage the ethnic minorities as well as the local Chinese to establish community mutual help network.

8.2 Other than the Ethnic Minorities Forum at the Home Affairs Bureau, there is no formal broad-based channel for the government to directly listen to the voices and experiences of the ethnic minorities. Our Council believes that if the government is committed to facilitating their integration into our society, there should be regular platforms for the ethnic minorities to dialogue with the policy makers on major areas concerning their most basic livelihood. Alternatively, the government can work with the community service operators and explore how regular dialogues can be organized so that the policy makers can always stay informed of the difficulties and concerns of the ethnic minorities.

8.3 Before all the people of ethnic minorities are able to speak fluent everyday Cantonese and/or English, translation and interpretation service should be made available in all public service settings, particularly those ones as essential as education, career, medical service, welfare benefit, legal services etc.

8.4 In terms of both education and career advancement, the life chance of ethnic minorities is being affected by the involvement of their families and parents. Due primarily to their own social and cultural limitations, parents are themselves not in an informed position to help their children to plan for their education and career. Support to parents is therefore of strategic importance for both the parents themselves and their next generation to fully participate in Hong Kong society.

9. ***Support service for Ethnic Minorities:***

9.1 The provision of Support Service Centres should be a continuous measure instead of a time-limited contract as it would hinder the service planning and development. Instead of only contracting out the service, the government should take a more active role in conducting related researches for service improvement and identifying the best model in providing support to EMs.

9.2 Currently, the on-site interpretation service is insufficient and could not be initiated

by EM. According to the practical experience of overseas service providers, on-site interpretation and escort services are the majority service modes that EMs requested. On-site service is in particularly importance when deep conversations where sensitive information is exchanged and in heavily emotional loaded situation. Therefore, instead of providing only telephone interpretation, on-site interpretation and escort services should also be provided. And the proportion is about 35% for telephone and 65% for on-site.

9.3 To promote equal access to public services and information, the government should provide free-of-charge interpretation and translation services for all the public and community services, and areas regarding matters of livelihood of the ethnic minorities. The government should also allocate extra resources in developing training and accreditation system for providing interpretation service and translation service in the long run.

9.4 In spite of the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality was introduced since 2010, ethnic minorities are still facing lots of difficulties in assessing social services. We propose Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) to monitor the progress of the Guidelines and evaluate if EM can have equal access to the relevant public services.

10. ***Strengthen Legislation on Discriminations Against Minorities and Proactive Programme to Promote Social Inclusion:*** The government should strengthen legislation on discriminations against specific population and make sure that the fundamental rights of all socially disadvantaged groups in Hong Kong are adequately protected. While protective measures are required, preventive measures are also needed to proactively engage different social groups at the community level, facilitate their exchange and interaction as well as mutual help, and thereby promote social inclusion in the community. As our community becomes more and more socially and culturally diverse, we suggest that the government should coordinate and communicate with related stakeholders, including the community-based service and support service centres, so as to provide service according the needs of the community. The government should take the lead to mobilize and promote social inclusion among different social groups at different localities. Besides taking up a stronger leading role, the government should also review the subsidy model on EM services.

11. For the domestic helpers who contribute to release the women workforce and give care support to the Hong Kong families, the government should look into the work condition of those domestic helpers and take up a more proactive role to protect their rights and step in if they are being exploited by the subcontractors and employers.

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