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HKSAR Legislative Council Subcommittee on Poverty
Measures on Enhancing Ethnic Minorities' Employment and Social Integration

Submission on Suggested Measures

(English Translation of the Chinese Paper)

The Golden Era – When HK People Worked Hand-in-Hand Regardless of Ethnicities

For those born in the 1960s and 1970s, certain cross-cultural memory fragments should have once flashed in mind: a Pakistani police officer wearing beard was chatting in fluent Cantonese; an Indian lady working hard at the immigration counter with a welcoming smile.... These were the good old times when Chinese locals and South Asians worked hand-in-hand in various fields of living.



Chinese Proficiency Becomes the Major Barrier to Employment

Nonetheless, when Hong Kong reverted to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, the government has comprehensively raised the Chinese language requirement of recruits to the Civil Service. Gradually following the footsteps of government, lots of professions and trade as well as the education system also lifted the emphasis on Chinese usage. For those ethnic minorities who are lacking Chinese proficiency, chances to be employed are then greatly limited. In result, the above-mentioned cross-cultural scenario no longer flourishes.

Two Opposing Extremes: Easy Fall to the “Low Education Level and Low Income” Vicious Cycle



With such Chinese-emphasized setting, the ethnic minorities would easily lead to two opposing extremes: For most wealthy enough Indians as well as a few Pakistani and Nepali, international schooling and professions regardless of Chinese proficiency are their usual choices. Yet, there is still a great population of ethnic minorities who are not able to reach the high-rank schooling, career fields and even the access of public resources. This eventually leads them to the fall of a “low education level and low income” vicious cycle.

Our Suggestions

I) Civil Service Bureau takes the lead: supervising departments on the refinement of Chinese proficiency requirement

The Civil Service Bureau should take the lead on supervising all governmental departments. All departments should submit report evaluating different job ranks' Chinese proficiency requirement and listing possible measures, for example, setting up different levels of requirement, so as to enhance the flexibility of civil service entry. The Junior Police Call, HK Police Force has set a good model in raising the opportunities for ethnic minorities to participate in civil service. They have now provided training for those non-Chinese applicants who are going to take the Chinese entry test of the force. Yet, such measure is just a drop in the ocean. The Civil Service Bureau should take the initiative to provide specified Chinese courses as well for those ethnic minorities who plan to enter the civil services.

We believe once the government begins such measure, more professions and trade would follow and create fair job entries for the ethnic minorities.

Nonetheless, the Civil Service Bureau should also include results of Applied Learning (Chinese) course as one of the civil service entry requirements so as to enhance the ethnic minorities' chance of employment.

II) Labour Department takes the lead: cooperating with employers and NGO on job-matching process

In regard of the extremely low successful job-matching cases via the Labour Department, concrete improvement especially targeted on ethnic minorities should be applied on the existing services. For instance, most recruitment posts on the interactive employment service webpage are poorly-translated. Therefore, the recruitment information should be refined with an all-rounded translation in order to ensure a better understanding among the ethnic minorities.

Actually with the increasing awareness of ethnic minorities' situation, more employers are willing to offer them job opportunities. The Labour Department should then actively contact the employers and cooperate with different NGOs to undergo appropriate job-matching process for the ethnic minorities.

Like some of the public service units, employing ethnic minorities as *Service Ambassador* is an effective way to promote services among various ethnic groups. The Labour department should form a supporting team led by both locals and ethnic minorities, which establishes a stable employer network for the acquirement of newest employment information and provides comprehensive job-seeking supports to the ethnic minorities.



III) Comprehensively make use of existing translation services to ethnic minorities



At this stage, there are various translation services targeted on ethnic minorities, yet these services are never applied to their fullest extent. The Housing Authority, Labour Department and Home Affairs Department should comprehensively make use of the translation services, and enhance the ethnic minorities' access to public service.

In refer to the successful launch of an accreditation system on sign language translation service by the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee of Labour and Welfare Bureau, the Home Affairs Department should as well set an accreditation system for ethnic minorities translation services. Such system can no doubt boost the qualities of existing translation service. Also, more ethnic minorities can be

encouraged to join the translation profession and pay full their potentials.

IV) Concern with the practical needs of big families

Ethnic minorities, especially for Pakistani and Nepali, usually have big family size. Though government always encourages the importance of giving birth, yet the existing welfare system is insufficient to ease their family burden. For instance, the Commission on Poverty (CoP) has endorsed to roll out the assistance programme under the Community Care Fund (CCF) to relieve the financial pressure of low-income families. However, this subsidy is not enough for ethnic minority families in big size. According to CCF,

In this case, the subsidy does not help much for family of 4 or above. Therefore, in response to the relative large family size among ethnic minorities, resources should be allocated according to their actual family size and upper limit should be set in accordance to actual number of family members.