

# 立法會 *Legislative Council*

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## **Subcommittee on Poverty**

### **Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 17 November 2015**

#### **Poverty problems of ethnic minorities**

#### **Purpose**

This paper summarizes past relevant discussions by the Council and its committees relating to poverty problems of ethnic minorities ("EMs").

#### **Background**

2. According to the "Thematic Report: Ethnic Minorities" of the 2011 Population Census published by the Census and Statistics Department, there were around 451 000 EMs, constituting 6.4% of the whole population of Hong Kong (around 7 072 000). They or their ancestors were mostly from six South Asian/Southeast Asian countries, including the Philippines (around 133 000), Indonesia (around 133 000), India (around 29 000), Pakistan (around 18 000), Nepal (around 17 000) and Thailand (around 11 000). Among the EM population, roughly more than half were foreign domestic helpers who were mainly from the Philippines and Indonesia. According to the Administration, various government bureaux and departments have been providing a range of services to meet the needs of EMs and facilitate their integration into the community. These services include social welfare services, employment training and support, educational support and community support services.

#### **Deliberations by Members**

##### Support measures for EMs in need

3. Some Members noted from a survey conducted by a concern group on the poverty situation of South Asian EM families that among the 133

working EMs interviewed, more than 60% of them came from families living below the poverty line. These Members were concerned about the poverty situation of and support for EMs in need. The Administration advised that it had taken measures to provide the needy with financial assistance. People who could not support themselves financially might apply for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance to meet their basic living expenses. Financial assistance programmes were also launched by the Community Care Fund ("CCF") to provide assistance for people facing economic difficulties, in particular those who fell outside the social safety net or those within the safety net but had special circumstances that were not covered.

4. Some Members were concerned that some needy EM students could not benefit from the CCF's "Subsidy to meet lunch expenses at whole-day primary schools for students from low-income families" programme as their schools failed to provide them with food that conformed to their religious rules. These Members considered that lunch subsidy should be provided directly for the needy EM students. The Administration advised that after thorough discussion with the Commission on Poverty ("CoP"), it had decided that instead of providing subsidy for lunch suppliers through the schools, lunch subsidy would be provided directly for the participating schools so that students could have more choices of food.

5. Some Members held the view that the publicity of CCF assistance programmes to EMs was inadequate, resulting in only a small number of EMs applying for the programmes. According to the Administration, CCF mainly promoted its assistance programmes to EMs through non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") and schools. EMs were welcomed to provide suggestions on how to step up the publicity of the assistance programmes.

#### Employment support for EMs

6. Some Members opined that the Administration lacked new initiatives to help EMs seek employment. They took the view that the Labour Department ("LD") should set up an employment services division dedicated to providing services for EMs.

7. According to the Administration, LD provided comprehensive employment services to help all job seekers, including EM job seekers, through a network of 13 job centres, two industry-based recruitment centres, the Telephone Employment Service Centre, the Interactive Employment Service website and numerous vacancy search terminals located throughout the territory. To strengthen employment support for EMs, all job centres

had set up special counters to provide job referral services, bilingual information and interpretation services for EM job seekers. Besides, EM job seekers could meet employment advisors to obtain personalized job search advice, information on training/retraining courses, and/or to receive career aptitude assessment as appropriate. In August 2014, LD launched the pilot Employment Services Ambassador Programme for EMs which provided on-the-job training opportunities for young people from EM to work in LD's job centres and recruitment functions. LD also encouraged employers to give employment opportunities to EMs, and advised employers placing vacancies with LD to consider the genuine occupational needs when specifying language requirements. Large-scale and district-based job fairs were organized to provide on-the-spot job interview opportunities. In the light of the dedicated and personalized employment services provided for EMs by LD, the Administration had no plans to set up an employment services division for EMs.

8. Noting the low success rate of job matching by LD for EMs, some Members considered that LD should provide one-on-one job matching service for EMs. The Administration advised that as job seekers who had successfully obtained employment through direct application were not required to report their placements to LD, the success rate of LD's job referral service had not included the placements made through direct application. According to the Administration, job matching on individual basis might not be the only effective means to help EMs find work given the large number and variety of job vacancies placed with LD (around 100 000 job vacancies a month). The personalized employment advisory services provided by LD would equip EM job seekers with skills for finding jobs through LD's job referral services or direct application.

9. Some Members considered that the Employees Retraining Board ("ERB") should provide vocational training courses to facilitate the employment of EMs. According to the Administration, ERB had launched condensed language courses and motivated EMs to spare time to join training courses. In 2015-2016, ERB would provide 800 designated training places for EMs and conduct courses in Support Service Centres for EMs under the Home Affairs Department on a pilot basis to facilitate attendance of EMs. In addition, the Home Affairs Bureau would implement a new scheme to provide subsidies for social enterprises and NGOs, which would offer a total of about 2 000 to 3 000 on-site training places for groups in need, including EMs, to enhance their employment prospect.

### Support measures for EM students

10. Some Members were of the view that measures should be adopted to facilitate upward mobility of EMs. The Administration should assist EM students in improving their Chinese language proficiency and facilitate them to pursue tertiary education. According to the Administration, to enhance support for non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students to learn Chinese, the Education Bureau ("EDB") had provided the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework with supporting learning and teaching materials for secondary and primary schools. In addition, the Applied Learning Chinese Language Course (for NCS students) pegged to the Qualifications Framework had been provided at senior secondary level starting from the 2014-2015 school year in phases. The Special Needs Groups Task Force under CoP would continue to follow up with EDB on the progress and effectiveness in implementing the aforementioned measures.

11. Some Members held the view that EM students' low attainment in Chinese language examinations might account for the low admission rate of EM students to the local universities. They called on the Administration to formulate policies in relation to the provision of an alternative Chinese Language curriculum or imposing alternative Chinese Language admission requirements for EM students to facilitate them to pursue higher education. The Administration advised that alternative Chinese qualifications including the General Certificate of Secondary Education, International General Certificate of Secondary Education, General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary Level and Advanced Level were accepted for consideration for admission to University Grants Committee-funded institutions through the Joint University Programmes Admissions System.

### **Relevant papers**

12. A list of relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

**Relevant papers on poverty problems of ethnic minorities**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Legislative Council	23 February 2011	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 108-111</a>
Subcommittee on Poverty	8 May 2013 (Item II)	<a href="#">Agenda Minutes</a>
Subcommittee on Poverty	17 June 2013 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda Minutes</a>
Subcommittee on Poverty	17 December 2013 (Item I)	<a href="#">Agenda Minutes</a>
Subcommittee on Poverty	25 April 2014 (Item I)	<a href="#">Agenda Minutes</a>
Subcommittee on Poverty	7 July 2014 (Item I)	<a href="#">Agenda Minutes</a>
Subcommittee on Poverty	16 December 2014 (Item I)	<a href="#">Agenda Minutes</a>
Subcommittee on Poverty	23 March 2015 (Item I)	<a href="#">Agenda Minutes</a>
Finance Committee	31 March 2015	<a href="#">Administration's replies to members' written questions in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2015-2016 Pages 261-267</a>
Subcommittee on Poverty	28 April 2015 (Item I)	<a href="#">Agenda Minutes</a>
Subcommittee on Poverty	21 July 2015 (Item I)	<a href="#">Agenda Minutes</a>
Subcommittee on Poverty	20 October 2015 (Item I)	<a href="#">Agenda</a>

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