

A.I.M. Group

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(Voice. Justice. Labour.)

To Legislative Council members of the Subcommittee on Poverty:

Community Care Fund (CCF) to Support Employment for Ethnic Minorities

The CCF since 2011 has been supporting disadvantaged groups not covered by safety net. Throughout three years of the implementation of a range of subsidies under the CCF, little has been done for ethnic minority grassroots. The CCF, from its foundation till today, had only two assistant programmes, namely Financial Assistance for Non-school-attending Ethnic Minorities and New Arrivals from the Mainland for Taking Language-related International Public Examination (1.05 million), and the Subsidy for Non-school Attending Ethnic Minorities and New Arrivals from the Mainland Participating in Language Courses (0.5 million)¹, which received applications respectively in total 45² and 18³ ethnic minorities and due to inadequate transparency of figures provided, fewer actual beneficiaries are expected. The remedial effect of the CCF to ethnic minorities remained minimal.

We observed a shared phenomenon in the implementation of the CCF schemes with other similar remedial measures adopted by the Government – low application or usage rate among ethnic minority residents. For instance, over 80% ethnic minorities did not use employment services in the Labour Department (LD) job centres and nearly 60% did not apply for Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme, and over 70% were not covered by Kindergarten & Child Care Centre Fee Remission Subsidy Scheme. Significant feedbacks for low usage rates included difficulties experienced in application (40.7%), information not available or accessible in ethnic minority languages (73.7%), and time consuming application procedures (42.1%)⁴. Apart from the unacceptably low usage from ethnic minorities, the above two CCF Schemes only addressed the needs of young working ethnic minorities. The majority of the ethnic minority population who are in their mid-age and often the sole breadwinner, were overlooked of their needs by the CCF.

Another imminent issue, poverty, is still a major one within ethnic minority communities, which suffers, ironically, from unemployment and underemployment when general unemployment rate reaches new low. Reports reflected the plight of ethnic minorities economically – the monthly median income (excluding foreign domestic workers) of working Pakistanis, Nepali and Filipinos is \$10,000 and \$12,000 for the general Hong Kong working population; poverty rate for Pakistanis had hit 51.1%, with general ethnic minority population's 23.9%, higher than the overall percentage⁵. The 6.2% job-matching success rate⁶ of the Labour Department (LD) for ethnic minorities reflected current services provided by the Labour Department job centres are insufficient in alleviating unemployment issues faced by ethnic minority grassroots. With few alternatives available, ethnic minority workers are prone to exploitation as well as limited choices in industries but mainly construction, security guards and deliverymen⁷. In our own

¹ LC Paper No. CB(2) 1819/13-14(01). For information on 23 June 2014. Legislative Council Subcommittee on Poverty, Community Care Fund.

² July 2013, Home Affairs Department. Community Care Fund – Assistance Programme Financial Assistance for Ethnic Minorities and New Arrivals from the Mainland for Taking Language-related Public Examinations Evaluation Report

³ July 2013, Home Affairs Department. Community Care Fund – Assistance Programme Subsidy for Non-School-Attending Ethnic Minorities and New Arrivals from the Mainland Participating in Language Courses Evaluation Report

⁴ December 2012. Research Report on the Enforcement of Statutory Minimum Wage and Accessibility of Anti-Poverty Government Social Services or Measures among South Asians Residents

⁵ The Hong Kong Council of Social Service. Poverty Focus 2013: Poverty Situation of South & Southeast Asian Ethnic Minorities

⁶ 2013, LCQ18: Employment services for the ethnic minorities,
<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201311/13/P201311130454.htm>

⁷ January 2014, Shadow Poverty Situation Research Report on the Hong Kong South Asian Ethnic Minorities Families, Hong

experience, there exists stereotyping images among local employers on the working abilities of the ethnic minorities. Moreover, the local employers usually hesitate to employ ethnic minorities in view of the language barrier especially on those middle-aged who might not possess adequate Chinese and English proficiency. In this regard, we see there is a service need on bridging the gaps in promotion of mutual understanding between, and facilitating employers to consider special accommodations for potential ethnic minority workers.

The A.I.M. Group, under the Diocesan Pastoral Centre for Workers (Kowloon), urges the Subcommittee through the CCF to formulate future proposals in alleviating the deplorable employment situation of ethnic minority workers and job-seekers. The Group also hereby demands solemn consideration of the Subcommittee in putting forth on this new direction of the CCF in its meeting on 16th December, 2014, allowing the CCF could show care from our community in strengthening support to ethnic minority residences. The A.I.M. Group also sees need for a public hearing as a platform for us as well as other mid-age ethnic minority job seekers regarding the issue of their employment quality.

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**The A.I.M. Group is a concern group formed by South Asian ethnic minority workers, concerning issues including labour protection, employment quality as well as employment and retraining service provisions by the public sector to ethnic minority communities.*