

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs

**Support Services for Ethnic Minorities
Provided by the Home Affairs Department**

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the latest position of the support services for ethnic minorities (EMs) provided by the Home Affairs Department (HAD).

Background

2. Various government bureaux and departments have been providing a range of services to meet the needs of EMs and help them adapt to life in Hong Kong, with a view to facilitating them to integrate into the community as early as possible, such as educational support for EM students provided by the Education Bureau, employment training and support for EMs provided by the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Labour Department, and social welfare services for EM families in need provided by the Social Welfare Department.

3. The provision of support services for EMs has been transferred from the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) to HAD since April 2011. CMAB continues to be responsible for the overall policy on the promotion of racial equality and the Race Discrimination Ordinance. Under this arrangement, HAD makes good use of the district network of District Offices (DOs), and through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and district organisations, to provide effective support services to facilitate the early integration of EMs into the community.

EMs in Hong Kong

4. 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.

Major Support Services provided by HAD for EMs

Support Service Centres for EMs

5. Since 2009, the Government has commissioned NGOs to run four support service centres for EMs in Wan Chai, Kwun Tong, Tuen Mun and Yuen Long, providing various tailor-made learning classes and after-school tutorial classes, as well as counselling and referral services, integration programmes, interpretation services, etc., to help them integrate into the community.

6. To further enhance the support services for EMs and to address the needs of individual districts, HAD set up a centre in Yau Tsim Mong District and two sub-centres in Sham Shui Po and Tung Chung in December 2012. In addition to Chinese staff, the five centres and two sub-centres also employed EM staff to provide services for EMs. The planned number of participants of all the above centres and sub-centres is around 45 000 per year.

7. Generally speaking, the centres are operating very smoothly and the comments from the service users and EM organisations are very positive. Participants are generally of the views that they have gained a better understanding of Hong Kong and the districts they live in through the activities provided by the centres, thus enhancing their sense of belonging and their integration into the community. EM participants consider that the tailor-made learning classes, such as Cantonese classes, computer classes, etc. have strengthened their ability and confidence in adapting to life in Hong Kong. In addition, various thematic talks have enhanced their knowledge of home safety, personal hygiene, healthy diet and community resources. HAD will continue to monitor the operation of the centres, and will review and adjust the services from time to time to better suit their needs.

District-based Integration Programmes

8. Since April 2011, HAD has implemented the District-based Integration Programmes to help EMs to better understand Hong Kong, encourage them to participate in community activities and facilitate their early integration into the community. The Programmes are implemented in districts with greater service demand, i.e. Wan Chai, Kwun Tong, Yau Tsim Mong, Kwai Tsing, Tuen Mun and Yuen Long. Having regard to the circumstances of their districts, the DOs concerned have engaged NGOs and district organisations to provide a wide range of activities for EMs, including adaptation courses, mutual help networks for families and women, employees' training, volunteer service, thematic talks on family care and health education, community visits, etc.

9. In 2012-13, more than 8 000 EM participants have benefited from the Programmes. According to the feedback collected through DOs, the Programmes were well received by EMs. Most participants opined that the Programmes allowed them to make more local and EM friends living in the districts, strengthened their self-confidence and understanding of the community, as well as enhancing their sense of belonging. HAD will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the Programmes.

EM Ambassador Scheme

10. HAD commissioned an NGO to implement the EM Ambassador Scheme since March 2012. The Scheme aims to arrange EMs of similar background and experience to act as ambassadors to reach out to the disadvantaged EMs, to build up relationship with them, to care and understand their needs and difficulties, and to introduce to them public services and make referrals to government departments for follow up where necessary.

11. The NGO concerned has recruited five EM workers (comprising three Nepalese, an Indian and a Pakistani) and about 50 multi-ethnic volunteer ambassadors (including Nepalese, Indian, Pakistani, Thai, Filipino and Chinese) to implement the Scheme.

12. As at end March 2013, the ambassadors of the Scheme have visited around 3 000 EM families. While expressing care and concern for EMs, the ambassadors also introduce to them services provided by government departments and NGOs during the visits. Besides, after the home visits, the NGO has continued to keep in touch with the families and referred 130 cases to appropriate government departments or social

service agencies for follow up. The cases mainly involved family, education, finance, housing and employment matters. In addition to home visits, the Ambassador Scheme has also organised seminars and exhibitions for EMs on education, housing, employment, vocational training and health issues in places such as community centres and religious venues.

13. HAD and the commissioned NGO plan to recruit more ambassadors and volunteers, with a view to cultivating a caring culture for EMs in the community. Moreover, we will closely monitor the implementation of the Scheme so as to facilitate the early integration of EMs into the community.

Collaboration with the Media

14. The Government has progressively sponsored three weekly radio programmes broadcast in Nepali, Urdu¹ and Bahasa Indonesia since 2004. The programmes cover government bulletins, news and music, etc. Through these programmes, the citizens of Nepalese, Pakistan and Indonesian origins can keep abreast of the current situation of the society and enhancing their understanding of and sense of belonging to the community.

15. Since March 2013, HAD has launched two more weekly radio programmes broadcast in Hindi and Thai respectively to meet the needs of citizens of Indian and Thai origins.

16. Apart from the abovementioned radio programmes broadcast in EM languages, HAD has fostered media partnership with the local radio network to promote racial harmony to local Chinese audiences. These radio programmes are as follows: –

- (a) In February and March 2012, the two hosts of the radio programme “On a Clear Day” (“在晴朗的一天出發”) have visited social enterprises (SEs) employing EMs in the territory, including the Hong Kong Translingual Services and the Bread Bunch Bakery. The interviews were dynamic and interactive featuring EMs working in SEs, the mutual help between fellow workers and how EMs live up to their abilities and potential.

¹ Urdu is a major language of Pakistani.

- (b) There was also a six-episode special radio programme titled “少數族裔文化村” broadcast from February to March 2013, with the host interviewing representatives from the support service centres for EMs and some EMs, introducing the festivals, cross-cultural exchange, culinary culture and social etiquette of different ethnic groups, and inviting EMs to share their successful integration stories.

These programmes help the general public better understand EMs and promote racial harmony.

Other Support Services

17. At the same time, HAD also provides other support services for EMs, including: –

- (a) Community Support Teams: Since 2006, the Government has commissioned a Pakistani organisation and a Nepali organisation to set up two community support teams to provide special services to EMs through members of their own communities. Services include visits, escorting EMs to apply for public services, referral service, after-school tutorial classes, support groups for women and children, as well as integration programmes. According to the survey of EM service users, they opined that the services met their special needs and promoted community care and support;
- (b) Language-related Financial Assistance Programmes under the Community Care Fund (CCF): Subsidies have been provided through the CCF programmes for EMs to attend language courses and language examinations to help pursue further study and employment;
- (c) Language Programme for Adults and Cross-Cultural Learning Youth Programmes: Since 2002, the Government has been providing funds to NGOs to organise Chinese and English courses for EM adults to enhance their communication ability. In addition, the Government has been providing funds to NGOs since 2006 to organise Cantonese classes and after-school tutorial classes for EM youths to improve their language proficiency;
- (d) Harmony Scholarship Scheme: Scholarships have been granted to EM students with outstanding performance in schools and community services;

- (e) Website: A dedicated website (<http://www.had.gov.hk/rru>) available in six EM languages has been set up to introduce public services for EMs provided by HAD and other government departments, and to provide a platform for government departments to disseminate information to EMs;
- (f) Mobile Information Service: To distribute information kits to newly arrived EMs at the airport and answer their enquiries in their own languages; and
- (g) Service Guidebooks: Since 1998, the Government has been published Guidebooks in English and six EM languages (i.e. Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog, Thai, Hindi, Nepali and Urdu) to provide EMs with information of services provided by government departments and NGOs. Since local families proceed to employ foreign domestic workers from Bangladesh, we plan to introduce service guidebooks in Bengali.

18. HAD will continue to monitor the implementation of the support services for EMs, and to keep abreast of the needs of EMs through service users and the agencies commissioned for service provision. We would make adjustments as appropriate and when necessary to ensure that our services meet the needs of EMs and facilitate their early integration into the community.

Advice Sought

19. Members are invited to note the above measures implemented by HAD.

Home Affairs Department
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