

立法會 CB(2)1603/17-18(02)號文件
LC Paper No. CB(2)1603/17-18(02)

Honourable Leg Co members,

Thank you for giving me your attention. My name is Nimisha Vandan, currently I am pursuing PhD from School of Nursing, The University of Hong Kong.

I am a registered pharmacist from India and I moved to Hong Kong 9 years back with my husband due to his job transfer. When I came to Hong Kong I applied for practicing licence but due to over demanding accreditation process I could not even reach to the examination stage and after 2 years I gave up trying to get registered here. In addition, I faced a lot of challenges in getting other jobs being non-Chinese speaker. Soon I found that I am not alone, there are many women who are engineers, doctors, pharmacists, accountants and from various professions from India who left their job, moved to Hong Kong accompanying their husband but could not get any opportunity to enter into work force and had to stay at home. They could not contribute to Hong Kong economy as end up staying as dependent.

In the course of my PhD, I got chance to talk to many ethnic minority women living here for many decades. I found that some of them could not get proper education in their home country and mostly are suffering from poverty. Some of them cannot join work force due to family need or their cultural background where women are not allowed to work outside. Many South Asian families have culture of women being homemaker, especially among Muslim community. However, those EM women want to utilize their time to make some money but they lack any opportunity and assistance.

Female ethnic minority students who have received education in Hong Kong local schools are proficient in Cantonese speaking and reading however they find writing very challenging. According to them schools put more focus on Cantonese conversation and reading and less on writing. Most of the office based jobs requires good writing skills. In absence of writing skill they are unable to get those jobs and end up doing low skill jobs even after getting good education.

We all know that employment can reduce and eventually eliminate the risk of falling into poverty trap. But this can happen only when more and more people take up employment or involved in higher skilled jobs. According to Ethnic minority poverty report 2014, SA though generally self-reliant, are still subject to a higher poverty risk as they often rely on the support of relatively **few family members mostly males**. With a low Labour Force Participation Rate females' contribution to household income is not significant. Among Ethnic minorities living in Hong Kong South Asians are the most disadvantaged population followed by South East Asian.

Job creation is necessary such as any home-based work for eg. food packaging, vegetable chopping etc. can be provided to less educated women. Job seeking support and simple accreditation process can help professional women to get back to work force. Targeted, on the job and interactive Chinese language learning assistance can also help EM women to achieve their goal. Gender and Ethnic diversity should be encouraged and incentivised for the employment sector.

For a woman, employment is not only source of income but it is also source of empowerment, up-lift of self-esteem and improved well-being. Women employment may also reduce gender in-equality exist in some EM community. Beyond this, it will support to achieve 1, 3 and 5th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) proposed by United Nations i.e. 1: No poverty, 3: Health and well-being, 5: Gender-equality.

Thanks again for your time!