

立法會
Legislative Council

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LC Paper No. CB(2)2041/16-17
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities

Minutes of the meeting
held on Monday, 12 June 2017, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room 2 of the Legislative Council Complex

Members present : Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP (Chairman)
Hon Alice MAK Mei-ken, BBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Claudia MO
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung
Hon Dennis KWOK Wing-hang
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon IP Kin-yuen
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin
Hon SHIU Ka-fai
Hon SHIU Ka-chun

Member absent : Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding

[According to the Judgment of the Court of First Instance of the High Court on 14 July 2017, LEUNG Kwok-hung, Nathan LAW Kwun-chung, YIU Chung-yim and LAU Siu-lai have been disqualified from assuming the office of a member of the Legislative Council, and have vacated the same since 12 October 2016, and are not entitled to act as a member of the Legislative Council.]

Public Officers attending : Ms Doris HO, JP
Head, Policy and Project Coordination Unit
Chief Secretary for Administration's Private Office

Mr Esmond LEE Chung-sin, JP
Head, Working Family and Student Financial
Assistance Agency

Ms Reddy NG Wai-lan, JP
Principal Economist (5)
Economic Analysis and Business Facilitation Unit

Mr Charles HUI, JP
Assistant Commissioner (Employment Services)
Labour Department

Ms Fiona AU Tsz-kwan
Assistant Secretary (Corporate Services)
Corporate Services Branch
Education Bureau

Clerk in attendance : Ms Joanne MAK
Chief Council Secretary (2) 3

Staff in attendance : Miss Cindy HO
Senior Council Secretary (2) 3

Mrs Fonny TSANG
Legislative Assistant (2) 3

Action

I. Poverty problem of ethnic minorities

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1571/16-17(01) to (03), CB(2)1591/16-17(01) and FS08/16-17]

The Subcommittee deliberated (index of proceedings attached at **Annex**).

Follow-up actions required of the Administration

Admin 2. The Administration was requested to:

- (a) take on board Ms Claudia MO's suggestion of introducing a central mechanism to oversee the provision of interpretation

service for ethnic minorities ("EMs") to facilitate the use of public services by EMs;

- (b) relay members' concern to policy bureaux/departments about the need to collect data on the ethnicity of users of various public services so as to ascertain the usage rate of EMs in the use of various public services;
- (c) relay the Equal Opportunities Commission's suggestion to the Belt and Road Office that, as local EM youth had the dual advantage of knowing Hong Kong and some countries along the proposed belt and road, assistance should be provided to them to help them gain the necessary skills to participate in projects that were part of the Belt and Road Initiative [LC Paper No. CB(2)1591/16-17(01)];
- (d) conduct a study by way of focus groups to look at the issue of low labour force participation rate of EM women and enhance support measures (e.g. child care services) in this regard; and
- (e) enhance staff training on cultural sensitivity and follow up on related complaints.

II. Any other business

3. Members agreed to invite deputations to give views on the poverty problem of EMs at the next meeting scheduled for 10 July 2017 at 2:30 pm.
4. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:10 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
25 August 2017

**Proceedings of the meeting of the
Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities
on Monday, 12 June 2017, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room 2 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Time marker	Speaker(s)	Subject(s) / Discussion	Action required
<i>Agenda item I - Poverty problem of ethnic minorities</i>			
000930 - 002213	Chairman Administration	Opening remarks Briefing by the Administration [LC Paper No. CB(2)1571/16-17(01)]	
002214 - 002857	Chairman Deputy Chairman Administration	<p>Deputy Chairman expressed the following concerns:</p> <p>(a) assistance and support for ethnic minorities ("EMs") in seeking employment should be strengthened given their relatively high unemployment rate. With reference to paragraph 13 of the Administration's paper, she enquired about the effectiveness of the pilot scheme of engaging two employment assistants proficient in EM languages at the Kowloon West Job Centre and the Employment in One-stop, and the publicity of this pilot scheme; and</p> <p>(b) as reflected in the Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on Ethnic Minorities 2014 ("EM Poverty Report"), many EMs were unaware of key public services. It was necessary for relevant frontline departments/authorities to compile statistical information on the number and percentage of their service users who were EMs in order to facilitate evaluation as to how far the existing public services were able to meet the needs of EMs.</p> <p>The Administration responded that the Labour Department ("LD") had since May 2017 engaged two employment assistants proficient in EM languages at the Kowloon West Job Centre and the Employment in One-stop on a pilot basis to strengthen employment support for EM job seekers. The employment assistants partnered with experienced employment officers in providing employment advisory services to EM job seekers and rendered support in the provision of other employment services for EMs. They also helped LD proactively reach out to EMs with employment needs and encourage them to make use of LD's employment services.</p>	
002858 - 003517	Chairman Mr POON Siu-ping Administration	<p>Mr POON Siu-ping enquired:</p> <p>(a) whether measures were in place to assist EMs in poverty to apply for the Low-income Working Family Allowance</p>	

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		<p>("LIFA"), as he noted that only 1 763 applications were submitted by EMs to the Working Family Allowance Office ("WFAO") and only 1 349 applications were approved, which fell far short of the poor South Asian ("SA") population of 14 000; and</p> <p>(b) about the details of the Community Care Fund ("CCF") assistance programme to be launched in September 2017 to subsidize non-local qualification holders with financial needs to apply for qualification assessment for general purpose by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications.</p> <p>The Administration responded that:</p> <p>(a) before the rollout of the LIFA Scheme, WFAO had organized a number of briefings for non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") and the Support Service Centres for EMs ("SSCs") under the Home Affairs Department to brief them on the Scheme. In April 2016, when the LIFA application form became available, WFAO launched a series of territory-wide community briefings for the public (including EMs) and collaborated with NGOs in organizing sessions particularly for EMs to assist them in applying for LIFA. Through these interactions, WFAO came to know of other EM organizations and with their consent, visited their organizations to promote the Scheme before or after they held their religious activities. In late 2016, WFAO explored new ways to step up the reaching out to the community. Since October 2016, WFAO had set up enquiry desks at the lobbies of various Government Office buildings from time to time, and at the Housing Authority Customer Service Centre at Lok Fu daily since November 2016 to handle enquiries about applying for LIFA; and</p> <p>(b) starting from September 2017, the three-year programme was expected to benefit about 3 000 persons (i.e. \$2,545 per person). Additional funding would be sought from CCF if necessary. The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications would offer professional opinions on whether the totality of the educational qualifications of an individual could meet the standard of a particular level of qualification in Hong Kong.</p>	
003518 - 004034	Chairman Mr SHIU Ka-chun Administration	Referring to the relevant survey on the use of public services by the EM households in the EM Poverty Report, Mr SHIU Ka-chun pointed out that 84.5% of the respondents indicated that they had "never used" and "never faced difficulties" in	

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		<p>using public services. He suggested that "never used" and "never faced difficulties" should be put under two separate categories when collecting data from the EM people. He further pointed out that, according to the outcome of the survey, 15.5% of respondents indicated difficulties in gaining access to certain government services, and 7.5% of them attributed this to the lack of interpretation services. It reflected that the language barrier was the major obstacle to their use of public services.</p> <p>The Administration advised that the Government commissioned a think tank in December 2016 to conduct the Study on Ethnic Minorities' Awareness and Satisfaction towards Selected Public Services ("the Study"), which covered major public services, including interpretation service, that were frequently used by EMs and were essential to facilitate their employment and integration into society. The Study was expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2017 and would put forth specific recommendations. The Administration envisaged that with the younger generations born and raised in Hong Kong, more and more EMs could master Cantonese in daily communication. The Administration undertook to consider the comment of Mr SHIU when conducting a similar survey on the use of public services by EMs in future.</p>	
004035 - 004825	Chairman Dr Fernando CHEUNG Administration	<p>Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed the following concerns:</p> <p>(a) while there were 2 100 poor SA working households and 2 600 poor SA households with children, only about 870 EM families were granted LIFA. He said that for SA households with children, their poverty rate was as high as 29%; and</p> <p>(b) many EMs had reflected to him that they encountered great difficulties in filling out the application form for LIFA. He suggested that the six SSCs should assist in filling out the LIFA application form.</p> <p>The Administration advised that:</p> <p>(a) the Government had undertaken to conduct a comprehensive policy review on LIFA one year after its implementation. Areas to be examined would include the eligibility criteria for the scheme (e.g. working hour requirement and income limit). Consideration would also be given to how to further assist LIFA applicants including EM applicants; and</p> <p>(b) WFAO had adopted an all-out approach in assisting low-income working families in applying for LIFA,</p>	

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		<p>including actively inviting NGOs to refer applicants in need of assistance to WFAO for handling. However, the number of referrals was limited. WFAO also engaged four NGOs from January to May 2017 to assist needy families, including EM families, which had difficulty in filling out the LIFA application form by themselves. The NGOs had handled about 380 such applications so far. Prospective applicants could call the WFAO's hotline so that WFAO would be able to consider how best assistance could be provided.</p> <p>Dr CHEUNG further suggested that the Housing Authority should also provide on-site interpretation service to EM applicants at its Customer Service Centre at Lok Fu and the same arrangement should be provided to EM applicants of LIFA when they approached the enquiry desks of WFAO at the Customer Service Centre.</p>	
004826 - 005605	Chairman Dr Helena WONG Administration	<p>Dr Helena WONG enquired:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) about the amount of subsidy to be granted under the new CCF assistance programme for assessment of overseas qualification, and whether the granting of subsidy was subject to any quota; (b) the details of the pilot "Employment Services Ambassador Programme for Ethnic Minorities" ("ESA Programme"); and (c) whether there were measures to assist EM women with children to enhance their labour force participation rate ("LFPR"). Taking the Pakistanis as an example, their female LFPR was only 4% and the average size of SA households with children was five persons. <p>The Administration advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) a subsidy at a rate of \$2,545 per person would be provided for qualifications assessment of general purpose and the three-year CCF assistance programme was expected to benefit about 3 000 persons; (b) LD had implemented the ESA Programme since September 2014, under which trainees of the Youth Employment and Training Programme who could communicate in EM languages were employed as ESAs for six months to work in job centres or industry-based recruitment centres to help job seekers use various job search facilities and services. The ESA Programme had two objectives. On one hand, ESAs helped LD enhance 	

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		<p>its employment services for job seekers, in particular EMs. On the other hand, the Programme enriched the working experience and qualifications of the engaged EM trainees, thereby enhancing their employability in the open market. On the whole, the response to the ESA Programme was positive and it was effective in facilitating the employment of these young EM trainees in the open market. For the first four batches of ESAs who had received on-the-job training under the Programme and intended to find work, they could all secure employment afterwards. In the light of the positive outcome, the ESA Programme would be conducted on an on-going basis;</p> <p>(c) to meet the wishes of some job seekers, such as EM women, to find part-time jobs so that they could have more spare time for fulfilment of their family or other commitments, LD had since 2015 organized district-based thematic job fairs providing part-time openings, including some vacancies with little or no Chinese proficiency requirements; and</p> <p>(d) EM job seekers, including women, had also been provided with dedicated employment support services and personalized employment advisory service, including job matching service in LD's job centres.</p> <p>Dr WONG considered that most EM women were not aware of the availability of such jobs due to the language barrier and she urged LD to address the problem.</p>	
005606 - 010124	Chairman Ms Claudia MO Administration	<p>Ms Claudia MO was very concerned that while the unemployment rate in Hong Kong was low, some statistics indicated that the unemployment rate amongst EMs was as high as 23%. She stressed that EMs should be given equal opportunities in employment as discriminatory practices in employment were not uncommon, citing the example that some deputations had told the Subcommittee at previous meetings that while they approached employers who advertised their job vacancies with LD, their applications were turned down by them upon knowing their status as EM applicants even though these EM applicants could speak fluent Cantonese. She further suggested extending the scope of protection of the Race Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 602) to cover all areas of public services. The Administration advised that it had been introducing measures in the provision of public services to cater for the specific needs of EMs (e.g. provision of interpretation service and support services through the six SSCs).</p>	

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		<p>Ms MO further suggested that the Administration should introduce a central mechanism to oversee the provision of interpretation service for EMs to facilitate the use of public services by EMs so as to eliminate the language barrier. The Administration was requested to take on board Ms MO's suggestion.</p>	<p>Admin (paragraph 2 of minutes)</p>
010125 - 010539	Chairman Administration	<p>On LD's publicity of support measures for EM job seekers, the Administration responded that:</p> <p>(a) to promote its employment services, LD had translated relevant leaflets into six EM languages and distributed them through various channels e.g. their religious bodies, schools, government departments, NGOs serving EMs, etc. The promotional messages were also disseminated on the Internet and through radio programmes broadcasted in EM languages. With the support of ESAs and employment assistants for EMs, LD had also proactively reached out to the EM communities at locations such as mosques, district-based organizations and grocery stores frequently visited by EMs; and</p> <p>(b) in 2016, about 1.1% of the job seekers registered for employment services of LD were EMs of SA origins (comprising Indians, Pakistanis and Nepalese). This figure was commensurate with the corresponding EM population of SA origins which constituted around 1.1% of the whole population in Hong Kong according to the summary results of the 2016 Population By-census.</p> <p>The Administration was requested to relay members' concern to policy bureaux/departments about the need to collect and provide data on the ethnicity of users of various public services so as to ascertain the usage rate of EMs in the use of various public services. Members considered that this would facilitate evaluation on how far EMs' service needs were met and inadequacies of the existing public services in meeting their needs.</p>	<p>Admin (paragraph 2 of minutes)</p>
010540 - 011938	Chairman Dr Fernando CHEUNG Administration Dr Helena WONG	<p>Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed grave concern that even after policy intervention, the poverty rates of EMs remained high. The Administration was urged to take more proactive measures to address the specific needs of different ethnic groups, citing the following examples:</p> <p>(a) Pakistani men in Hong Kong tended to go back to their homeland for marriage and their spouses then followed their husbands living in Hong Kong. These Pakistani women did not speak English or Chinese and encountered many problems due to the language barrier and cultural differences; and</p>	

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		<p>(b) for Nepalese and Pakistanis, many worked in the construction industry and got a salary lower than local workers or were only employed as casual workers.</p> <p>The Administration advised that LD had introduced the interpretation service provided by the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents to 1 072 EM job seekers from January to May 2017, and in light of their needs, arranged interpretation services on 11 occasions. Each of these 1 072 EM job seekers had been shown and invited to sign on a leaflet prepared in seven EM languages for ascertaining whether or not they required the interpretation service. Among those EM job seekers who did not require interpretation service, 1 042 indicated that they could communicate in English and/or Cantonese and two were accompanied by friends who could offer the required assistance whereas some others conveyed that adequate support had been given by ESAs or employment assistants who were proficient in EM languages. Starting from January 2017, statistics on the waiting time for interpretation service had been kept by LD in response to the suggestion of the Subcommittee. It was recorded that for the period from January to May 2017, the average waiting time was less than five minutes.</p> <p>Dr Helena WONG suggested that LD should conduct a study by way of focus groups to look at whether EM women wanted to work and how support measures could be enhanced (e.g. child care services) in this regard. She also requested the Administration to follow up on the Equal Opportunities Commission's suggestion that, as local EM youth had the dual advantage of knowing Hong Kong and some countries along the proposed belt and road, assistance should be provided to them to help them gain the necessary skills to participate in projects that were part of the Belt and Road Initiative [LC Paper No. CB(2)1591/16-17(01)]. The Administration advised that it would relay the suggestion to the Belt and Road Office for consideration.</p>	<p>Admin (paragraph 2 of minutes)</p>
011939 - 012620	Chairman Mr SHIU Ka-chun Administration	Mr SHIU Ka-chun pointed out that the Gini coefficient for households in Hong Kong rose from 0.537 in 2011 to a record high of 0.539 in 2016. He was particularly concerned about the situation of EMs as a study showed that their poverty rate was 23.9% in general, and in particular, 51.1% for Pakistanis. He enquired whether the Administration had come up with measures to tackle the problem of inter-generational poverty for EMs.	

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		<p>The Administration advised that education was crucial to the alleviation of inter-generational poverty. Starting from the 2014-2015 school year, the Education Bureau ("EDB") implemented the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework with a view to facilitating the early adaptation of the non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") children to the local education system and mastery of the Chinese Language. EDB would implement the free quality kindergarten ("KG") education policy with effect from the 2017-2018 school year and KGs admitting more NCS students would be given additional resources for enhancing support services. Besides, LIFA was launched in May 2016 to provide cash subsidy to the low-income working poor families. Apart from the family-based monthly allowance under LIFA, each child would be given a monthly allowance of \$800 or \$400 depending on the household income.</p>	
012621 - 013204	<p>Chairman Ms Claudia MO Administration</p>	<p>Ms Claudia MO considered that EMs in Hong Kong were not given equal opportunities due to racial discrimination. Noting that some EMs had complained about poor staff attitude of government departments, she suggested that the Administration should enhance staff training on cultural sensitivity and follow up on such complaints.</p>	<p>Admin (paragraph 2 of minutes)</p>
013205 - 014330	<p>Chairman Dr Fernando CHEUNG Administration Dr Helena WONG</p>	<p>Referring to page 28 of the powerpoint slide attached to the Administration's paper, Dr Fernando CHEUNG questioned why the number of LIFA applications received fell far short of the Administration's estimation of benefitting 5 100 persons. Noting that when LIFA was introduced, it was the Administration's estimation that the number of poor persons and poverty rate of SA households with children would be reduced by 1 500 and 6.3 percentage points respectively, he asked about the latest position in this regard.</p> <p>Referring to the statistics on the Fact Sheet prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat [FS08/16-17], Dr CHEUNG pointed out that over 80% of poor Pakistani families had five members or above, with an average household size of 5.6 persons. They usually had only one breadwinner in the family due to an extremely low female LFPR of Pakistanis (4%). He suggested that specific measures (e.g. childcare services, publicity, training and education) should be put in place to assist Pakistani women to join the labour market. As regards the poor Nepalese families, he pointed out that housing was their major challenge as two-thirds (69.9%) of them were tenants of private housing. Moreover, there were an average of just 1.1 working member per household and most of them were engaged in elementary occupations. He considered that vocational training should be provided to them to help them take up jobs with better pay.</p>	

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		<p>The Administration advised that having regard to the poverty figures of EMs of SA origins (i.e. Pakistanis, Indians and Nepalese), Pakistanis were particularly susceptible to poverty risks in Hong Kong as their households in general had fewer working members and greater number of dependent children. Most Pakistanis households earned a meagre income as their breadwinners were engaged in low-skilled jobs due to their low educational attainment. Besides, the female LFPR of Pakistanis was particularly low due to their traditional custom and the fact that the women had to look after their children. In addition to LIFA, the Administration was exploring different ways to enhance the incomes of poor EM households, including the provision of retraining to EMs engaged in lower-skilled jobs to facilitate them earning a higher income through better employment.</p> <p>Dr CHEUNG suggested that more EMs should be recruited to the civil service (e.g. Police Force) to enhance their employment opportunities.</p>	
<i>Agenda item II - Any other business</i>			
014331 - 014351	Chairman	<p>Arrangement for inviting the public to give views at the next meeting</p> <p>Closing remarks</p>	