

Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities

Employment support services for ethnic minorities

Meeting on 13 February 2017

Submission from the To Kwa Wan Employment Concern Group: -

This submission is set out to provide information regarding the problems being faced by Ethnic Minorities (EM) people in Hong Kong. EM people in Hong Kong have performed a vital role in Economic and social development of Hong Kong. Despite of their role in Hong Kong economy, EM community is facing employment problems as follows:

1. Under paid/ less facilities comparing with Chinese Community: It has been experienced by many of the EM people that they are being less paid as well as provided with less facilities comparing with Chinese people, i.e. not entertained with annual, appropriate hourly rate or paid sick leaves.
2. Chinese Language as a barrier: The biggest problem is a language problem of Cantonese being faced by EM people. They are not good at Chinese that is why there are not being assigned for an appropriate job for them according to there efficiency as well as their qualification. No matters how well educated they are, all their education go to vein in front of their weak command on Chinese language.
3. Unclear terms of a contract: Most of the employers get benefits from uneducated employees (who don't understand English or Cantonese) by getting them signed on some unclear terms of contract. It has been experienced that an employer verbally tells their employees differently than that is written on the contract as they are not able to understand written English or Chinese which is not even challengeable in courts in case any dispute occurs as it had been already signed by an employee.
4. Religious belief: It is considered one of the biggest obstacle for the EM people to get a decent job, especially for Muslim people as they need to pray for five times a day and most of the employers don't accept it. Their cultural dresses are also a factor for being denied from a good offer.
5. Lack of employment information: Although labor department is available to assist the job seekers to obtain suitable jobs, it is not sufficient to serve EM community in this regard as the information for employment is accessible only in Cantonese or English.

Suggested steps:

- 1 Exemption of Cantonese for EM community will work as a treatment to find a suitable job.
- 2 Rigid policy has to be implemented to make sure no one is being paid less than the minimum wages as assigned by the government.
- 3 If possible, contract should be written in more than two languages which can be easily translated by a translator on request.
- 4 Cultural Sensitivity training should be provided more often by Labor department to the employers on regular intervals.
- 5 Though some interpreters are available in labor departments but more facilities like this will be provided for the sake of fairness with EM community.

Conclusion: Though some efforts are being done by the government but for sure these are very low than the actual need of EM community. Government has to take some rigid steps to provide justice for EM people in the field of employment.

Our employment concern group will be very thankful for your kind consideration and cooperation to take steps to obtain fairness for EM people. Your future action regarding above said problems will be highly appreciated.

On behalf of To Kwa Wan Employment Concern Group.