



SUPPORT HONG KONG

Flat -D, 13/F, Arts Mansion, 46-58 Arthur street, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon
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Reg No: CP/LIC/SO/19/56051

Our Ref. No. :

Support Hong Kong's Submissions to Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minority

Employment Support Services for Ethnic Minorities (EM)

Support Hong Kong (SHK) is a non-profit making and one of the new non-government organizations working with ethnic minority societies in Hong Kong established with vision to support and improve the awareness and liabilities of ethnic minority people in HKSAR. We're happy to know that the Subcommittee on the Rights of Ethnic minorities under the House Committee of the LegCo has been established. We came to know about the formation of the sub-committee at a meeting with the Equal Opportunities Commission. We would like to submit our concerns for its upcoming meeting on 13 February 2017 to discuss about Employment support services for ethnic minorities:

1. Support Services of the Labour Department (LD)

We welcome the new initiatives introduced by the LD to help EM find jobs in the market. The LD has also established 13 job centres, three industry based recruitment centres, and a telephone employment service hotline. But, we are concerned about the usage rate of these centres/facilities by EM. There could be many reasons behind it. We believe that the jobs available at these centres are mostly blue collared jobs and require reading/writing proficiencies in the Chinese language, which deter EM to apply for these jobs. The jobs in question are primarily the jobs from those industries which have labor shortages but lack attractions among the local Chinese e.g. elderly homes, machinery mechanics, bus captain etc. In fact, this has reinforced negative stereotypes that the dirty jobs and the jobs which do not attract locals are for EM. We strongly recommend that the LD should find out the reasons why the usage rate of these facilities is low and implement effective ways to increase the rate. Likewise, the Chinese language requirement, when it is not necessary for the specified jobs, should be excluded in the job vacancy notice.

Similarly, the LD organizes job fair across the city each year targeting EM job seekers. But, we share the view that this, in fact, is not a job fair for EM job seekers. There is no doubt that the fair covers a lot of industries and posts, but the jobs available for EM are mainly the low-paying jobs related to housekeeping, cleaning, beauty parlour, restaurants and bars. There are other job vacancies available but are not suitable for EM as they do not meet the Chinese language requirement. We are surprised to know that EM youths who studied primary/secondary schools in Hong Kong do not meet the Chinese language requirement jobs like sales person or receptionist. The job fairs should focus to increase the job pool including high-paying jobs for EM. We believe that the vacancy available at the job centres or at the job-fair for EM don't match the expectations of EM especially youth that's why many of them don't use the service from the LD.





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2. Support Services of the ERB

ERB is offering a wide range of courses, but the courses offered to EM, for example in the construction industry, are of lower levels, mainly involving low-skilled jobs. Many of the popular courses are not offered in English, and we have encountered situations where the courses offered are ultimately canceled saying that the training body did not receive enough enrollments.

Case 1: One of our members was interested to take a beautician course so that she could start her own beauty parlor. She called the training body for more details. Even though the course was included in the list, the training body suggested her to enroll in the other beautician course which was not the course of her interest. Further, the training body said that they are not sure when they would be able to offer that particular course.

3. Support Services of the VTC/IVE/higher academic institution.

All the courses in the intermediate or above level are offered in Chinese only. These courses should be offered in English to cater the needs of EM.

Case 2: One of our members applied for the safety training officer course at the Open University of Hong Kong. The course details mentioned that the course would be offered in English but in fact the course was offered in Cantonese with supplemented materials in English.

4. Support Services of the CIC

The courses like Train the Trainer, Artificial Resuscitate are offered in Chinese only despite demand from EM. We have learned that the Hospital Authority (HA) provides a course on Artificial Resuscitate for health professionals in English. The CIC may make reference to HA course & consider offering this course to interested EM.

Similarly, CIC conducts all the machinery trade exams in Chinese only and it has put unreasonable burden on us.

Case 3: One of our members is a certified crane operator for many years and he is required to renew his certificate once in every 3 years. As he doesn't read/write Chinese and the exam is conducted in Chinese only, he had to hire an interpreter for a day by himself at his own cost of HK\$ 2,160 (HK\$ 270X8 hrs).





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Case 4: As mentioned before, many of the courses of our interest are offered in Chinese. One of our members suggested to the CIC that he would arrange an interpreter by himself but his request was rejected. He said that it is not fair for him as the CIC doesn't provide interpreter and also doesn't allow him to arrange one by himself.

When we approach CIC to offer certain courses in English we are often told that they don't have English instructors, or it would be expensive to hire an English Instructor. We believe that this is not a genuine reason. We as EM are entitled to get training in English. To address the above problem, we strongly recommend the government/CIC to hire and train instructors from the EM community. As EM instructor speaks the EM language, we think that the effectiveness of the training would also be enhanced.

When we compare the courses offered by the CIC we found that the courses offered to locals have more choices, a high degree of flexibility and availability of more time slots. But for EM, the choices are limited- it is rather like a "Take it or Leave it Offer". A single time slot or a type of course might not be appropriate for all. We strongly recommend the CIC to adopt an open enrollment policy so that the interested participants can enroll in the course and CIC would run the course at the end of the year if they receive enough enrollments. This would also help the CIC to identify the courses for EM. We are often told that many courses can't eventually be offered because of lack of minimum number of participants. May be an effective partnership with the EM community leaders/organization/unions can help recruit interested participants for the training.

5. Support Services of Y.E.S. Centre

The Government has established two Y.E.S. Centres which offers wide range of services (personalized service, support services entrepreneurs, career seminar, workshops training) for youth. But we believe that many EM youth don't know about this centre. The centre training courses offered by the centre are in Chinese only. If so, the benefit of the services provided by this centre can't be reaped by EM youth. It should also provide services targeting EM youth in English.

6. Other Issues

a. Medium of Instruction provision under the Race Discrimination Ordinance

If you are looking for a good job in Hong Kong then you must be proficient in writing and reading Chinese. Almost all EMs can't meet this criterion. At one hand the government is trying to help EM integrate in to Society but on the other hand they are not provided with enough support and sometime the policy make it even worse.





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Language and religion is not included in the definition of Race under the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) but language and religion is the strongest marker of any racial group. Furthermore, the vocational training bodies and the education institutions are exempted from the medium of instruction requirement as they are have no obligations under the law to modify for persons of any racial group its arrangements regarding holidays or medium of instruction; or (b) to make different arrangements regarding holidays or medium of instruction for persons of any racial group. We believe that this is not fair for EM and because of this exception the training bodies can offer vocational training in Chinese only. We request the government to repeal this provision of the RDO.

b. Support to the Community Team from the Government

The government has funded several centres which provide wide range of services to the EM for several years. Questions have been raised on the effectiveness of the programmes organized by these centres. The effectiveness of these programs should be reviewed and only programs with good results have to be implemented in future. Similarly, the government has funded a Community Support Team for EM Community but the actual programme cost is too little to organize any meaningful event. The significant amount of the fund goes to salary bills and paying for utilities such as water and electricity and other expenses, there was not much to left to spend for the community.

Conclusion

Training courses of higher levels should be offered in English. Rigid framework and "One door" policy to offer training for EM should be relaxed. Possibility of hiring EM as training instructors should be explored. The trade exams should be bilingual (Chinese and English). Similarly, interpretation services should be arranged for EM who is not proficient in both Chinese and English. Hong Kong claims itself as "Asia's World City". Hong Kong should treat its EM community more fairly and should provide equal opportunities to them in education, employment, vocational carrier boosting training. EM contribution in making this city great and prosperous should be recognized. Lastly, the exception regarding the medium of instruction in vocational training and educated on the RDO should be repealed.

