

**Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities**  
Difficulties encountered by ethnic minorities in gaining access to  
healthcare services



**Submission from Health Connection**

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**1. Gap in Health Promotion**

Language has been the greatest barrier for ethnic minorities to access the healthcare services and despite the provision of multilingual information available there has been ineffective health promotion for the ethnic minorities as there are not effective channels and media for dissemination of health information and health promotion.

It is found that health information in their language can only be achieved if they visit some NGOs in their communities or only during the time they visit the hospitals, not during other times and places such as where they frequently visit or even in public spaces and around their neighbourhood.

**2. Gap in Medical Interpretation and Translation Services**

Although there has been medical interpretation services available in the hospitals, we have found that most of the ethnic minorities are unknown about this service. The booking procedure of the medical interpreters can only be made by the hospital, so it is difficult to access the healthcare services and health information by ethnic minorities by their own or even with the help of their family members or relatives and sometimes even from NGOs.

Furthermore, we have also found that most of the health information that is available in different ethnic minorities' languages are not easily understandable by the ethnic minorities in the community. The reason being that either that information is written either in very highly academic way or translated by machine translation (such as Google Translate), which does not give appropriate meaning to the readers.

**3. Cultural Competence for Healthcare Workforce**

Apart from language barrier, our experience as well as studies show that better culture competence can help better understanding between patient and healthcare workers but also improve the delivery of care. But it is found that most of the healthcare workers in Hong Kong are unaware on culture in healthcare practice as in promoting health for the ethnic minority population.

#### **4. Inadequate Health Information in Suitable Languages**

It is found that despite there has been availability of health information in different ethnic minority languages, still there are many more information regarding health conditions that are only available in Chinese, which cannot be accessed by the ethnic minorities. Because of such inadequate information, health promotion, disease prevention as well as usage of healthcare services appropriately (such as government vaccination programme, elderly health care voucher scheme, etc.) seems to be lacking in ethnic minority population.

#### **5. Inadequate research on ethnic minorities' health status**

To provide effective and efficient healthcare services, monitoring and research on different health conditions specifically on ethnic minorities here can be of help for the government to plan effective services for this population.

#### **6. Employment training and opportunities in public healthcare workforce**

While there is an increase demand of healthcare workforce in public healthcare sector, it is also found that there are many ethnic minorities who are interested or some of them even have their education and background in healthcare service who are struggling to be recognized by the public healthcare workforce. Along with them, other ethnic minorities can be trained for serving in the health sector, because of them we can not only help to decrease the demand but also serve mainstream as well as ethnic minority's health needs.