

立法會 CB(2)1921/16-17(03)號文件
LC Paper No. CB(2)1921/16-17(03)

Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic minorities
Poverty problems of Ethnic Minorities-2017
By Cleaning Workers Union

Situation

Since 2015 till the present, Cleaning Workers Union has met numbers of ageing ethnic minorities from Nepal and Thailand.

According to the statistical data¹, ethnic minority population is increasing, such as South Asian population increased to 76,000. Over 32% of them are non-skill workers. Majority are Pakistani and Nepalese. In Hong Kong, EM working in Sub-contracting cleaning company is known as grassroots worker and is mostly entitled with low Socio-economic status. EM coming to settle in Hong Kong can only engage in lower-skilled jobs such as cleaning job, as they struggle with the Chinese language. Thus, they are urged to work where they also struggle with the low salary.

As to the median monthly employment earnings, the median wage is HKD 10,000 for EM cleaner which is lower than the median wage compared with HK\$12,000 for all workforces in HK. Hence, their earnings aren't sufficient to support their families and support their living. Usually they take two jobs or overtime work and reduce the daily food to save money for their children.

Based on the Poverty Situation Report on Ethnic Minorities 2014², the report showed that among the other EM, Nepali had a poverty rate of 13.6%. The poverty rate of EM family is being underestimated. They are facing many un-justice situation and narrow development path. Reflecting from the data of statistic, the Government has not provided effective service for the mid-age EM workers. With no doubt, the disadvantage will pass on to the next generation if no policy assists to change the situation. And thus, inter-generational poverty will occur.

Recommendation on Policy

1. Statutory Minimum Wage should be reviewed every year because the minimum wage is not update with the food price.
2. Standard working hour need to be legislated since long working hours workers don't have time for their family.
4. Since the common language of HK is English and Chinese, for mid-age EM workers, there are not enough language translators in hospital service, housing department, etc. Also, not enough support in social service, e.g. no ERB course for mid-age Nepalese.
5. Universal Pension scheme is required to protect the EM workers and their young generation.

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References:

¹Source: C&SD

²Data from Statistic Department 2016