



醫護行者 Health In Action

*To eliminate health inequity in societies 消除社會上的健康不公平*

**The Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities**  
**27 March 2018 Meeting on**  
**"Issues relating to the employment of ethnic minorities"**  
**Submission from Health In Action**

1. Employment is an important social determinant of health, as described in our previous submission, which plays an important role in physical, mental, and social wellbeing on an individual.<sup>1</sup> Another important aspect which is closely related to employment is poverty. According to the latest Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on Ethnic Minority 2016, pre-intervention poverty rate among the ethnic minority (EM) population is 19.4% and post-intervention rate is 17.6%.<sup>2</sup> Pre-intervention analysis showed that South Asians falling under poverty line accounted for 40.6%, in which Pakistani alone constituted about one-fifth (20.2%).<sup>2</sup>
2. One of the key observations (Observation No 4) in the report, listed “unemployment” as the reason for higher incidence of certain ethnic groups falling below the poverty line. Given the comparatively low level of educational attainment and skills, EM populations face additional challenges in employment which further increases the poverty. Hence, there is an urgent need to work towards increasing the employment rate for the EM population as employment is effective in lowering poverty risk.
3. The government has been taking continuous efforts to improve upon the services being provided to EM populations regarding the employment. The successful employment of two EM language-proficient individuals as Employment Assistants in the Labour Department has been a successful model in increasing employment of EM population in the public sector. The Hospital Authority has also recently starting to study the introduction of including patient’s preferred language in the computer system to improve upon the smoother arrangements of translation services.<sup>3</sup>
4. With the mentioning of EM in the current Policy Address, the government highlights the need to step up the social integration of EM populations in Hong Kong. The government has also announced in its latest budget to earmark \$500 million to enhance the support for EM populations. This provides the perfect opportunity for the government to employ targeted EM population. Despite previous measures by the government, there remains gaps to be filled:
5. Setting up of Community Officer Fund for EM Population  
The recently released results from the Study on Ethnic Minorities' Awareness and Satisfaction towards Selected Public Services highlighted the need for improvement in the efforts made by government departments and public bodies (particularly Labour Department, Employee Retraining Board, Social Welfare Department, and Home Affairs Department) to promote social integration, mutual trust and long-term relationship with EM populations. To strengthen the support provided by the government in a sustainable manner, **we suggest the government to establish a “Community Officer Fund” using funding from the \$500 million earmarked budget to enable**

<sup>1</sup> Health In Action (2017). The Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities 13 Feb 2017 meeting on “Employment support services for Ethnic Minorities”. LC Paper No. CB(2)773/16-17(03)

<sup>2</sup> Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on Ethnic Minorities 2016

[https://www.povertyrelief.gov.hk/eng/pdf/Hong\\_Kong\\_Poverty\\_Situation\\_Report\\_2016\(2017.11.17\).pdf](https://www.povertyrelief.gov.hk/eng/pdf/Hong_Kong_Poverty_Situation_Report_2016(2017.11.17).pdf)

<sup>3</sup> LCQ22: Translation services provided by the Hospital Authority for ethnic minorities.

<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201803/21/P2018032100242.htm>

departments in the public sector, which provide key public services, to employ EMs as **Community Officers as frontline workers**. Such departments include those providing public services in health, welfare, education, housing, and other important services that are related to the social determinants of health. This fund could facilitate contract-based and short-term employment opportunities in public service departments, taking reference from the successful model of Labour Department.

#### 6. Purpose and Benefits of Community Officer Fund

- Setting up of this fund will be a win-win situation for various stakeholders involved. Public authorities, such as Hospital Authority, who wish to employ EM on a part-time or contract basis could use this fund to support the remuneration of the employed EM. This will lead government one step closer towards promoting social integration among EM populations and government can also set themselves as a role model for private sectors, since they are the largest employer in Hong Kong.
- One of the important factor to be considered regarding the employment of EM population is the expectation and working culture among employers. This fund will provide government bodies as well as EM populations the opportunity to understand the working culture, environment and expectations necessary to build on the mutual trust among employees of diverse ethnicities.
- The existing “Youth Training Programme for Ethnic Minority” provides youth EM with vocational training and skills. However, this programme is only for six months and upon completion the youth often found it difficult to find jobs. This fund will allow the public bodies to employ EM populations where they can enhance their learned vocational skills and gain practical working experience. This will help to build long-term sustainability of the vocational skills trainings.
- The government can use this fund to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision for service provided to the EM population as well as facilitate the authorities in the public sector to develop further on the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality.
- Lastly, hiring Community Officers who are EM in public service departments can facilitate the wider EM community to access public services to redress the current problem of underutilization of public services by EM communities. The Community Officers would have the appropriate language and cultural understanding to cater for the EM clients, as well as disseminate such public information among their communities.

#### 7. Execution of the Community Officer Fund

- We propose to set-up the Community Officer Fund as a pilot scheme to employ EM populations on a rotation basis for one year in different public services departments.
- No defined age limit should be set as a criterion for employment so that opportunities are not restricted to any specific subsector in the EM community.
- Lastly, proper learning and training should be provided to the employed Community Officers in each department for better understanding of the roles and responsibilities.

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*Health In Action was established in 2011 and is a registered non-governmental organization in Hong Kong. Our vision is to eliminate health inequity in societies and we firmly believe that health is a fundamental human right for all, irrespective of race, religion, gender or political affiliation. We aspire to drive positive social change through cycles of service, research, and advocacy. Our current target beneficiaries include local working poor families, ethnic minorities, and refugees. Health In Action is a member of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and is in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council.*