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教區勞工牧民中心-九龍

For information on 27th March 2018

**Submission on ‘Issues relating to the employment of ethnic minorities’ to the
Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities**

1. The Diocesan Pastoral Centre for Workers - Kowloon of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong has all along been paying close attention to the plight of the grass-root ethnic minority groups. We dedicate our all-out effort to assisting them in getting the public service and employment support provided by the government all the time.
2. The latest study released by the government revealed that the poverty situation of ethnic minorities (EM) in Hong Kong is getting worse, with close to one in five EM individuals living in penury. Even after policy intervention, the poverty rate of EM rose from 13.9% in 2011 to 17.6% in 2016, and was obviously higher than that of the general population. Worryingly, the number of poor working households has increased. Among these poor family circles, 64.7% of them are EMs, and around 80% these EMs are Pakistanis and Nepalese.
3. The report attributed this severe EM poverty to a number of reasons. However, given the comparatively high unemployment rate of EM (4.6%), we have observed that 5.3% of South Asians are out of jobs, and 9.2% of Pakistanis are unemployed. Barrier to employment is a main issue which is the cause for a considerable number of these ethnic groups falling below the poverty line. Thus, the government should pay more attention to strengthen employment supports for EM to eliminate the gap between the employment rates of the ethnic minority and general populations. The phenomenon is more discouraging in that some particular ethnic groups has high education levels, but a relatively large proportion of them are working as elementary labourers, with low salaries, as proved by statistics from 2016 by-census.¹

¹ According to the 2016 by-census figures, the proportion of Nepalese with post-secondary

4. The Labour Department (LD) claimed that it provides comprehensive employment services to all job seekers, including EMs. However, data shows that in 2016, 63 814 able-bodied registered for using the LD employment service, only 1.36% of them were EMs. Among the registered job seekers listed for employment through the referral service, only 7.86% were EMs while 19.6% of them were from other groups. It shows that EMs were at a disadvantage. Our experience and the recent study on “Ethnic Minorities' Awareness and Satisfaction towards Selected Public Services”² (stated “the Study” as below) show that the department’s services are insufficient to enhance EM’s employment opportunities. Furthermore, mismatches between EM job seekers’ talents and the employers’ demands constantly came to light.

Comments on the LD’s service for the EMs:

5. Special counters to provide EM job seekers with job referral service and employment information:

5.1 When EM, approach the job centres to seek assistance from the Employment Services Ambassadors (ESA) for Ethnic Minorities, they find it difficult to identify the relevant counters. The EMs consulted in the Study commented that the roles and responsibilities of the Ambassadors manning the “counters” were “rather limited”. When EM job seekers try to use the facilities and services at the centres or job fairs, the ambassadors could only assist them in breaking the language barriers, short of providing information about local job market due to lack of such knowledge. (pt. 10.6)

5.2 The LD has hired two full-time EM Employment Assistant (EA) to partner experienced employment officers to serve EM job seekers. This new initiative was welcomed by the respondents in the Study. Yet, as their entry requirement is graduation in Form 5 or equivalent and the monthly salary is \$12,120, The meagre pay is hardly appealing to job seekers with talent, technical knowhow and experience of the labour market. Even if the job is taken by gifted persons, it is foreseeable that they will not stay long in the post. A number of job

qualifications working as “managers and administrators” and “professional/associate professionals” is only 7.7% and 32.4% respectively, far lower than that of the overall population with the same qualification (18.2% and 53.5%). Meanwhile, 48.3% of highly-educated Nepalese were earning less than \$15000 per month, comparing to only 23.8% of the overall population of the same education level.

² <https://www.povertyrelief.gov.hk/eng/pdf/A%20Study%20on%20EMs'%20Awareness%20and%20Satisfaction%20towards%20Selected%20Public%20Services%20-%20Report.pdf>

seekers who sought help from the LD responded that the EA only acted as ESAs and failed to provide further assistance towards EM job-seekers but mere amateur-level interpretations.

5.3 Employment officers are obliged to help job seekers of different cultures with different needs. Yet without good training and EM ethnic backgrounds, it is difficult to match the job seekers with suitable vacancies and remove the barriers for employers to hire EM.

6. Experienced employment officers to provide personalized employment advisory service:

6.1 A genuine personalized employment advisory service is crucial to EM job seekers as they are lack of job-seeking information and skills, knowledge on local cultures, employers' expectations, ways to pursue their careers, etc. However, the Study shows that although the EM job seekers consulted found the LD staff in the job centres friendly and courteous, as far as finding jobs is concerned, their services are not helpful. (pt.10.8)

6.2 A number of EM job seekers who approached our centre complained that they were not informed of the "personalized employment advisory service". Even those who had the chance to meet the Employment Officers were not consulted about their career aspiration or provided with any pathways to their career ladder. Frustratingly, some EM job seekers with high education attainment expressed that they were offered elementary job vacancies.

6.3 A genuine personalized employment advisory service for EM job seekers should have case managers who have abundant knowledge of both EM cultures and local labour market to provide intensive vocational counselling and follow-ups. The case managers should not only be able to match the job seekers to suitable employment, but also provide the necessary incentive to encourage employers to hire them.

7. Special efforts to constantly remind employers to consider the genuine occupational qualifications

7.1 Though special efforts had been made by the LD to advise employers to do away with the Chinese language requirement, EMs consulted in the Study

reflected that such requirement is still quite frequent for many jobs. It was suggested the LD should review such job advertisements and discuss with employers concerned to ascertain if the language requirements stated are really a must for the posts concerned. (pt.10.3)

7.2 Even though ability to read and write Chinese is missing as one of the requirements in the job advertisements prepared in English, such requirement is verbally conveyed to EM job seekers when they attend job interviews with the employers. The LD should proactively follow up such cases.(pt.10.3)

7.3 We have come across vacancies marked as “Ethnic Minorities are welcomed for the post”. They are in fact mostly elementary occupations with low salaries. It discouraged the EM jobseekers to use the LD service and limits their options. The LD should take a more proactive role to explore more job opportunities for EM.

8. Talent hunting support for employers: “Study on the Training Needs of Ethnic Minorities” reveals employers’ expectation on ERB and the LD when hiring EM. They suggested the government to provide training techniques as well as funding to help employers organize such training courses for their EM employees. Employers also found very few channels to recruit EM.³

Recommendation: Designated Employment Centres with intensive vocational training and follow-up for EM

9. To make up for the above insufficiencies, the LD must carry out prompt amelioration to better serve the EM job seekers. Genuine personalized employment service is critical to ensuring that appropriate and effective assistance is delivered to them. It also provides the incentive to motivate them to look for work proactively throughout their period of unemployment.

10. To address the above important issues, we **urge the Labour and Welfare Bureau to set up designated employment centres for EM in districts densely populated by EMs, so that EM job seekers can gain access to the LD’s case management and intensive employment support services.** The Government should make “Employment in One Stop” in Tin Shui Wai⁴, employment support

³ Employees Retraining Board, “Study on the Training Needs of Ethnic Minorities”, 2011, p. 151-156.

⁴ <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201802/28/P2018022800708.htm>

services for job seekers with disabilities and other overseas experiences as references to develop the service. The elements outlined in paragraph 11 to 14 should be included in the service.

Elements in the “Designated Employment Centres for EM”

11. Employing well-trained case managers, with some of them having EM ethnic backgrounds, to engage with EM job-seekers with intensive follow-up by :

- providing career counselling, exploring their job preferences commensurate with their qualification, experiences, interests and aspirations;
- giving information on local work culture and updated market situations;
- matching job seekers with suitable vacancies within employer network in a more efficient manner;
- addressing their vocational and non-vocational barriers to achieve sustainable employment, and designing suitable supportive measures for them;
- connecting jobseekers with activities or trainings that will enhance their employment opportunities;
- **rendering post recruitment support to foster effective labour-employer communications on job experience and facilitate a more diversified but inclusive working environments.**

12. Hiring Specialist Employment Advisers to proactively open up employment opportunities in more sectors by building strategic and innovative relationships with employers in the following ways:

- conducting market research to locate the available job opportunities and human resource policies;
- creating a data base of employers’ network to match up to that of the EM job seekers;
- encouraging employers to hire EM by discussing with employers the business benefits of a diverse workforce;
- advising employers on how to create a workplace with cultural diversity;
- exploring with employers the genuine language proficiency requirement for the jobs;
- providing information packages on social and cultural accommodations for employers and corporate HR personnel;
- introducing suitable incentive schemes provided by the government to support employers to hire EM and train them after being employed;
- Enhancing employers’ awareness on racial discrimination issues.

13. To reinforce the efforts in engaging employers in breaking barriers for EM employment, we urge the Government to launch incentive and supportive schemes for employers. We suggest the Government to provide allowances to employers who allow their employees to attend both language and vocational courses during working hours. Funding should also be available to employers to support them in making adaptations and accommodations when they hire EM, e.g. translation of internal notices, instructions and safety precautions.
14. Concrete service goals and measurable achievements for ethnic minority employment should be stipulated for continuous monitoring, assessment and improvement. The Government should also set a goal for closing the employment gaps between EM and the overall population.

Conclusion

15. As cited by the Chief Secretary Matthew Cheung, Hong Kong is home to EM living here. The economic boom and prosperity of Hong Kong could not be sustainable unless stable supply of manpower is guaranteed. It is unreasonable that the EM community has endured high unemployment of for years when we claim “full employment” enjoyed by the population at large. The dire situation can be changed if more employment opportunities and relevant supports can be brought to EM. Then we can rightly name our city a culturally diversified international city, and a real integration in daily life in workplaces.
16. Hence, we urge the Government to allocate part of the \$500 million fund promised in the 2018 Budget to establish Designated Employment Centres for EMs and strengthen support for ethnic minorities.