

For information
on 9 July 2018

Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities

**The Work of the Steering Committee on Ethnic Minorities and
Support Measures for Ethnic Minorities**

Objective

This paper briefs Members on the Steering Committee on Ethnic Minorities (the Steering Committee) and the Government's services and support provided to ethnic minorities (EMs).

2. The population of EMs in Hong Kong stands at about 250 000 (excluding foreign domestic workers) who constitutes around 3.8% of our total population. The size of EM population has been growing at a faster pace than the local population in recent years. EMs form an integral part of the local community.

3. Some EMs have encountered difficulties in adaptation and social integration owing to language barriers and cultural differences. According to the Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on EMs 2016, the poverty rate after policy intervention (recurrent cash) of EMs was 17.6% and that for South Asians was higher at 23.0%. These were higher than the 14.7% of the whole population. On the other hand, the study on EMs' awareness and satisfaction towards four major public services commissioned by the Special Needs Groups Task Force (the Task Force) of the Commission on Poverty in 2017 indicated that EMs' awareness of public services was relatively low. The study report put forward a number of suggestions for promoting the awareness and utilisation of public services by EMs, including strengthening out-reaching efforts to engage potential users, devising more targeted approach in promotion and publicity, utilising EMs' networks to build mutual trust with EMs, etc.

Steering Committee on Ethnic Minorities

4. The Government attaches great importance to the well-being of EMs. The Government always strives to ensure equal access to public services and facilitate EMs' integration into society. Relevant Government bureaux and departments are providing services and

dedicated support for EMs according to their respective policy purviews.

5. As the service needs of the EM community have become more diversified, we see the need for enhanced cross-bureau coordination of the support for EMs within the Government. To support this important area of work, a high-level steering committee has been set up under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary for Administration to enhance collaboration within the Government on support for EMs, and to coordinate, review and monitor the work in this area and consider how the \$500 million as earmarked in the 2018-19 Budget should be effectively utilised for strengthening support services for EMs. The Steering Committee comprises Directors of Bureaux and Heads of Departments who are overseeing the provision of key public services relevant to EMs.

6. To support the work of the Steering Committee, the Task Force arranged two focus group meetings in May and June 2018 with EM representatives and service providers to gather views and suggestions on how best to enhance the services for EMs and the priorities on which the Steering Committee should focus. The Chief Secretary for Administration personally chaired these meetings. The organisations which attended the meetings and made written submissions are set out in **Annex A**.

7. Views and suggestions gathered at the focus group meetings are consolidated at **Annex B**. Participants of the meetings gave valuable advice on how to bridge the gaps in the current support network for EMs in various respects, including interpretation service, education, learning of Chinese language, social welfare, healthcare, employment, social integration and engagement. The Steering Committee will carefully consider these views and suggestions with a view to drawing up actionable measures to address the diversified needs of EMs. The Steering Committee will continue to engage the EM community in order to further its work.

Services and Support for EMs

8. EMs, like other residents in Hong Kong, enjoy equal access to a wide range of public services. To facilitate EMs to access to these services, Government bureaux/departments and public organisations have all along put in place various support measures, such as the provision of interpretation service, hiring of EM staff or “ambassadors”, devising special programmes, etc. A gist of the services and support for EMs are

set out in **Annex C**.

Advice Sought

9. Members are invited to note the paper.

**Chief Secretary for Administration's Office
July 2018**

**Focus Group Meetings
Organisations Present**

26 May 2018

1. A.I.M. Group
2. Caring for Ethnic Minorities Organisation
3. Catholic Workers Centre/Equal Access Group
4. Ethnic Minorities Employment Concern Group in Kwai Chung
5. Health Connection
6. HEY Group
7. Hong Kong Christian Service - Support to Ethnic Elderly (SEE) Project*
8. Hong Kong Council of Social Service*
9. Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions*
10. Hong Kong Integrated Nepalese Society Limited
11. Hong Kong Nepalese Federation
12. India Association, Hong Kong*
13. Indian Businessmen's Association
14. Nepalese Parents & Children's Club*
15. Nepali Social Service Hong Kong
16. PathFinders
17. Society for Cultural Integration
18. Ms Puja Kapai Paryani, Faculty of Law, The University of Hong Kong

19. WEDO Global
20. Zubin Foundation

4 June 2018

1. Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service
2. Boys' & Girls' Club Association of Hong Kong
3. Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong Diocesan Pastoral Centre for Workers – Kowloon*
4. Christian Action SHINE Centre
5. Health in Action*
6. Hong Kong Christian Service CHEER Centre*
7. Hong Kong Community Network LINK Centre
8. Hong Kong Council of Social Service*
9. HKSKH Lady MacLehose Centre
10. Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children*
11. Hong Kong Unison
12. International Social Service Hong Kong Branch HOPE Centre
13. KELY Support Group
14. Lok Sin Tong Benevolent Society, Kowloon
15. New Home Association HOME Centre
16. Oxfam Hong Kong
17. Salvation Army
18. Dr Elizabeth Loh, Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong*

19. Mr Poon Wing Lok, Social Work and Social Administration
Department, The University of Hong Kong
20. Yan Oi Tong Community Centre
21. Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service

* Organisations which have made written submissions

**Focus Group Meetings
Major Views**

Overall Views

- Ethnic minorities (EMs) should be invited to join Government advisory bodies such that their views could be heard.
- Multi-cultural policy should be formulated and a Commissioner for Multi-Cultural Affairs should be appointed to co-ordinate inter-departmental initiatives.
- The Steering Committee should adopt a bottom-up approach when collecting views from the public. Focus groups on various areas of interest should be formed and EMs should be invited to join the focus groups so that they could express their views on an ongoing basis.
- The Steering Committee should coordinate the commissioning of regular studies on, and monitoring of, the support services for EMs to ensure that EMs enjoy equal access to public facilities and services.
- General surveys on the demographic characteristics, geographic distribution, family and health status, etc. of EMs should be conducted and regularly updated to better identify the needs of EMs on education and public services for long-term planning.
- Coordination of Government departments which provide services to EMs should be enhanced, with mandatory adoption of the “Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality” (the Guidelines) by such departments.
- Government departments which have adopted the Guidelines should be required to engage with EM stakeholders on an ongoing basis and collect relevant statistics to better understand the service needs of EMs and review the effectiveness of such services.
- Mandatory training courses should be provided to civil servants to

enhance their cultural sensitivity.

- New services to EMs could be introduced in selective districts on a pilot basis before they could be regularised or implemented on a larger scale after assessing the demand and reviewing the services.
- The needs of different districts should be taken into account in resource allocation, having regard to the EM population in different districts.

Education

- The “Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework” implemented in primary and secondary schools should be extended to kindergartens (KGs) to provide teachers with appropriate teaching and assessment tools for systematic Chinese language teaching to non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students.
- KGs which have admitted less than eight NCS students should be provided with a basic subsidy, and the subsidy to KGs admitting eight or more NCS students should be reviewed so that such subsidy should be increased in proportion to the number of NCS students admitted.
- Training on cultural sensitivity should be made mandatory for all teachers.
- Pre-employment and on-the-job training and teaching support should be provided to teachers teaching Chinese as a second language to NCS students.
- Resources should be provided for the development of an appropriate curriculum, teaching methods, tools and evaluation systems for the teaching of Chinese language to NCS students.
- Chinese language should be taught in Cantonese (and not in Putonghua) to NCS students.
- Learning support to NCS students, in particular on the learning of the Chinese language and Chinese history subjects, should be enhanced.

- Mental health education for youths should be incorporated into the school curriculum.
- Assessment tools should be developed for NCS students with special education needs (SEN).
- Research should be conducted or commissioned on the service model for SEN NCS students from KG to tertiary education levels.
- Parental workshops should be organised for parents of SEN NCS students to enhance their knowledge in taking care of SEN children.
- Additional funding should be allocated for child development and parental education for EM parents, and to deepen their understanding of the local education system.
- It should be made a mandatory requirement for schools to provide information in both Chinese and English on their website.

Employment

- The Government should be more pro-active in employing EMs, including hiring them as EM ambassadors to engage EMs, to increase the awareness of EMs about the public services available and to strengthen multi-cultural understanding amongst relevant bureaux and departments.
- The Chinese language proficiency requirements set for all grades of the civil service should be regularly reviewed to ensure that they are no more than necessary for performance of the job, so that EMs, like other applicants, have equal access to government job opportunities.
- Funding should be allocated to commission non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to operate designated teams for providing employment assistance services to EMs, including encouraging employers to review the actual Chinese language proficiency requirements for their jobs, providing longer-term case management

for EMs after job placements to help manage the expectations of employers and EM employees, and strengthen the education of EMs on issues such as labour rights and occupational safety.

- An “Ethnic Minorities Work Placement Scheme” should be drawn up to provide allowance/wage subsidies as incentives for employers to recruit EMs, and to provide pre-employment induction, job skills training, work placements and post-placement follow-up services for Ems, etc.
- Collaboration with the business sector should be strengthened to provide EMs with a more diversified range of job opportunities.
- Subsidies should be provided to small and medium enterprises to provide a multi-cultural working environment (e.g. all communications in writing in the office could be bilingual), and to encourage employers to allow their EM employees to attend Chinese language courses during working hours.
- More resources should be allocated to provide a more comprehensive range of Chinese language courses for EMs. In particular, Chinese language courses of a greater variety and more advanced levels should be available for working EMs.
- More flexibility should be introduced in respect of the admission criteria and the tuition hours of the courses for working EMs.
- Training for teaching NCS students and teaching Chinese as a second language should be enhanced for teachers of EM adult courses.
- More English courses should be provided under the “Youth Employment and Training Programme” and other vocational training programmes; and examination papers for vocational examinations should also be available in English.

Social welfare and medical services

- Relevant statistics should be collected to facilitate early identification of the needs of EMs (in particular elderly EMs) in medical and social welfare services and for better planning.
- Assessment tools should be developed for NCS elderly people.
- Mental health education should be provided to EMs.
- Domestic and sexual violence education should be provided to EM women.
- Subsidies should be provided to social welfare organisations for the recruitment of EMs as interpreters or staff.
- Outreaching efforts should be strengthened with the setting up of designated teams to reach out to communities with a higher concentration of EM population, to promote services to those in need (in particular newly arrived EMs) and to assist EMs in their application for social welfare services and social security.
- More information on social welfare and medical services as well as instructions on the use of medication should be made available in EM languages. Graphic presentation should be encouraged to facilitate understanding.
- Child care training should be provided to EM women so that they could help to provide child care support within their own EM community.
- More concern should be accorded to EM rehabilitated offenders with more follow-up services to prevent them from relapse into crime.
- Training for front-line staff should be strengthened to enhance their sensitivity and awareness of providing services to EMs and refine their techniques in handling cultural differences.
- Performance indicators and monitoring mechanism should be introduced to ensure that public services to EMs meet the service

standards.

Interpretation and translation services

- Interpretation and translation for more EM languages should be made available, having regard to the needs of different ethnic groups.
- More resources should be allocated to enhance the quality and quantity of interpretation and translation service, and service indicators should be introduced to ensure service standards.
- The awareness of interpretation services amongst frontline staff of public services should be strengthened, so that they could encourage more EMs to use interpretation services.
- Information and statistics on the use of interpretation services should be collected by Government departments to better understand the service needs of EMs and the effectiveness of interpretation services.
- Accreditation of interpretation and translation services in EM languages should be introduced to upgrade the quality of the services and expedite service development.

Community education and integration

- Step up publicity on the Racial Discrimination Ordinance.
- A “Fair Customers Service Charter” should be formulated to encourage the provision of equal services in the private sector.
- Integration of the Chinese and NCS population in the community and schools should be promoted through community and sports activities regularly.
- Appropriate venues and facilities should be made available for popular sports activities amongst EMs (e.g. cricket).

- The subject of racial harmony should be incorporated into the school curriculum.
- A more comprehensive range of Chinese language courses should be provided to newly arrived EMs and parents of NCS students to facilitate their integration into the community and to support them in the schooling of their children.

Promotion of public services

- Enhance collaboration with NGOs, provide them with resources and make better use of their district and service network with a view to promoting public services to EMs in a more focused and effective manner; NGOs may help to refer EMs in need to receive appropriate public services.
- Make better use of technology (e.g. online platforms and smartphone apps) to promote public services and disseminate information.

Services and Support for Ethnic Minorities in Hong Kong

The Government is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for the ethnic minorities (EMs) in Hong Kong as well as encouraging and supporting their integration into the community. Relevant bureaux, departments and public organisations are providing services and dedicated support for EMs according to their respective policy purviews. The policies and measures being provided to support EMs are summarised in the ensuing paragraphs.

Promotion of Equal Opportunities and Community Integration

2. The Race Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 602) (RDO) came into full operation in July 2009 to protect all people in Hong Kong, including EMs, against racial discrimination, harassment and vilification. RDO has been enforced and reviewed by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC). The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) allocates recurrent funding to EOC for setting up an EM Unit, which aims to address EMs' needs through the three-pronged approach of policy recommendations for the Government, business associations, employers, etc.; devises cultural sensitivity training for service providers; and outreach to EM leaders, community groups and stakeholders.

3. CMAB issued the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality (Guidelines) in 2010 to provide general guidance to relevant Government bureaux and departments as well as public authorities to promote racial equality and ensure equal access by EMs to public services in the key areas concerned, and to take this into account in their formulation, implementation and review of relevant policies and measures. The scope of application of the Guidelines has been extended to 23 authorities. CMAB and the relevant authorities will continue to keep the scope and coverage of the Guidelines under review.

4. Relevant Government departments and public organisations are required to implement suitable measures, such as providing interpretation services, to ensure EMs' equal access to public services. To facilitate their communication with EM service users, they may make use of the Centre for

Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents (the CHEER Centre)¹ or the interpretation services provided by any appropriate service provider that can meet their specific needs. For example, the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority arrange interpretation services to EMs through other service contractors. Posters, leaflets, notices and publicity materials are also translated into EM languages by various Government departments and public organisations for postage or dissemination to EMs at their service outlets or through non-governmental organisations (NGOs), support service centres for EMs and schools having non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students² as appropriate.

Education Support for Non-Chinese Speaking Students

5. The Government is committed to encouraging and supporting the early integration of NCS students (notably EM students) into the community, including facilitating their adaptation to the local education system and mastery of the Chinese language. The Government has implemented a series of measures to step up the support for NCS students in learning the Chinese language. The Education Bureau (EDB) has, starting from the 2014/15 school year, implemented the “Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework” (“Learning Framework”), which was drawn up in consultation with teachers and language experts, in primary and secondary schools to help NCS students overcome the difficulties in learning Chinese as a second language with a view to facilitating their effective learning of Chinese and bridging over to mainstream Chinese language classes as early as possible.

6. To facilitate schools’ implementation of the “Learning Framework” and creation of an inclusive learning environment in schools, EDB has, starting from the 2014/15 school year, provided all public sector schools and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools offering the local curriculum which admit 10 or more NCS students with additional funding ranging from \$800,000 to \$1,500,000 per year³ depending on the number of NCS students admitted. The additional

¹ The CHEER Centre is one of the support service centres for EMs funded by the Home Affairs Department.

² For the planning of educational support measures, students whose spoken language at home is not Chinese are broadly categorised as NCS students.

³ The funding model is as follows:

Number of NCS students	Additional funding (\$ million)
10 –25	0.80
26 –50	0.95
51 –75	1.10
76 –90	1.25
91 or more	1.50

funding allows schools to adopt diversified intensive learning and teaching modes such as pull-out teaching, split-class / group learning, after-school consolidation, etc. as appropriate based on the needs of their NCS students. As regards schools admitting a handful of NCS students (i.e. 1 to 9), their NCS students can benefit from the immersed Chinese language environment of the school as well as the “Learning Framework”. Nevertheless, from the 2014/15 school year, they may apply for an additional funding of \$50,000 on a need basis to offer after-school support programmes in learning Chinese to consolidate what their NCS students have learnt in classes. EDB will also continue to commission a tertiary institution to operate the Chinese Language Learning Support Centres in different districts to support NCS students (particularly those who have a late start in learning Chinese language) by offering after-school remedial programmes.

7. In addition, EDB has been organising diversified and advanced teacher professional development programmes to help schools implement the “Learning Framework” and ensure that all teachers teaching NCS students are provided with adequate training opportunities. Besides, EDB has launched the “Professional Enhancement Grant Scheme for Chinese Teachers (Teaching Chinese as a Second Language)” to encourage serving Chinese language teachers to enroll in courses by way of subsidy.

8. For kindergartens (KGs), the new kindergarten education scheme (Scheme) has been implemented starting from the 2017/18 school year. The KG Education Curriculum Guide, launched in February 2017, has included recommendations on how schools could support NCS students. There is a section specifically on Chinese learning for NCS children. Besides, EDB is strengthening teacher training and school-based support services for NCS students in KGs. All KGs, regardless of the number of NCS students admitted, may apply to join. For KGs joining the Scheme and admitting eight or more NCS students, they are also provided with an additional grant comparable to the salary of a KG teacher to help them enhance the support for these students. The provision is about \$360,000 in the 2017/18 school year.

Employment Support Service for EMs

9. Employment helps EMs integrate into the community, and hence the Government has all along been very concerned about the employment situation

of EMs. The Labour Department (LD) and the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) have been actively providing appropriate employment support services and job-related training for EMs with a view to enhancing their employability and skills. LD has been providing dedicated employment services for EM job seekers through special counters, resource corners and employment briefings, etc. LD has also implemented the Employment Services Ambassador (ESA) Programme for EMs since September 2014, under which trainees of the Youth Employment and Training Programme⁴ who can communicate in EM languages are employed as ESAs to undergo six-month on-the-job training at job centres, industry-based recruitment centres and job fairs. The programme helps LD serve EM job seekers and enriches the EM trainees' own working experience and résumé, benefitting their job search in the open market. LD has employed 117 ESAs since the launch of the programme.

10. In addition, since May 2017, LD has engaged two employment assistants proficient in EM languages at the Kowloon West Job Centre and the Employment in One-stop on a pilot basis to strengthen employment support for EM job seekers. Apart from partnering with experienced employment officers in providing personalised employment services for EM job seekers, these employment assistants conversant with EM languages and cultures also help LD proactively reach out to EMs with employment needs and encourage them to make use of LD's employment services.

11. As the largest employer in Hong Kong, the Government ensures that the Chinese language proficiency requirements (LPRs) set for all grades of the civil service are no more than necessary for performance of the job, so that EMs, like other applicants, have equal access to government job opportunities. After the comprehensive review mentioned in the 2017 Policy Address, 22 grades will lower their Chinese LPRs, bringing the number of grades that have lowered/ will lower their Chinese LPRs since 2010 to 53.

12. With a view to improving the employability of EMs and facilitating their integration into the community, ERB provides dedicated training courses delivered in English to suit EMs' aspirations and training needs. In 2018-19, ERB has reserved 800 training places to offer 33 dedicated training courses for

⁴ The Youth Employment and Training Programme implemented by LD provides pre-employment and on-the-job training to young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below.

EMs, including eight full-time placement-tied training courses and 25 half-day or evening non-placement-tied ‘Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus’ and generic skills training courses. ERB could arrange teaching assistants who can speak English and EM languages to provide interpretation services or guidance in class to assist those who have difficulties in understanding English. EMs who have completed the dedicated placement-tied training courses are provided with a longer period of six-month placement follow-up services in order to help them enter the job market. To enhance the training network for EMs, ERB continues to collaborate with the Home Affairs Department (HAD) to offer training courses at its support service centres for EMs.

13. ERB distributes pamphlets in English and multiple EM languages and Course Prospectus in English to EMs. Advertisements are placed in newspapers in English and EM languages to promote training courses for EMs. To strengthen publicity, ERB sponsors training bodies to organise district-based promotional activities, such as course and employment exhibitions, district guided tours, etc. to disseminate training and employment information to members of the public (including EMs). In addition, ERB organises “Career Talks for School” for upper secondary EM students with a view to assisting them in formulating future learning and career plans.

14. Separately, eligible charitable organisations may apply for subvention under the Adult Education Subvention Scheme from the Labour and Welfare Bureau to conduct language and re-orientation courses designed for EMs, with a view to enhancing their ability to integrate into society and be self-reliant.

Community Integration

15. HAD makes use of its district networks to provide support services for EMs to facilitate their integration into the community. It commissions NGOs to operate six support service centres and two sub-centres to provide tailor-made classes, counselling, integration programmes, etc. for EMs. One of the centres, the CHEER Centre, also provides general interpretation and translation services between English and seven EM languages in addition to its basic services. The interpretation services are mainly provided over the phone. Overall, the centres had over 93 000 service recipients in the 2016-2017 project year.

16. Apart from the support service centres, HAD also implements other programmes, including community support teams, ambassador schemes, district-based integration programmes, Harmony Scholarship Scheme, etc. to help EMs' early integration into the community. To provide EMs with information on services provided by the Government and NGOs, HAD publishes guidebooks and operates a dedicated website (<http://www.had.gov.hk/rru/>) in English and six EM languages, funds five radio programmes in EM languages as well as commissions an NGO to distribute information kits to newly arrived EMs and handle enquiries at the airport. In addition, HAD conducts school talks and roving exhibitions on cultural diversity and provides secretariat support to the Committee on Promotion of Racial Harmony.

Social Welfare Services

17. The Government provides social welfare services for all Hong Kong residents in need, irrespective of their gender or race, as long as they meet the relevant eligibility criteria. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has long been concerned about the service needs of EMs, and provided services in different areas to assist their integration into the local community, alleviate their adjustment problems and enhance their social functioning and capacity of self-sufficiency.

18. The 65 Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) and the two Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) operated by SWD or NGOs over the territory provide a range of preventive, supportive and remedial family services for families in need (including EM families). To address the needs of EMs in the localities, the Centres have, from time to time, organised various types of groups and programmes. The Centres will also arrange volunteers to reach out to the needy EM families and encourage them to receive services under the Family Support Programme.

19. Apart from publishing leaflets, posters and other information documents in multiple EM languages, SWD will make use of interpretation and translation services from various sources, such as court interpretation service, interpretation service provided by the Hospital Authority, CHEER Centre and other NGOs, etc. to facilitate EMs to overcome the language barrier and receive social welfare services.

20. SWD has also issued a 'Points-to-note in providing welfare services for EMs' to social workers / social security staff of departmental units and to social workers of IFSCs / ISCs operated by NGOs with a view to providing frontline staff with some reference information, including the cultural and life habits of different EM groups and ways to arrange suitable interpretation / translations services, etc. In order to facilitate EMs to get access to welfare assistance as well as interpretation / translation services, service units are required to post up at reception areas a notice on "Assistance and Interpretation Services for EMs" (the notice), which has been translated into seven EM languages. EMs would also be given a copy of the notice in their EM languages when they turn up for enquiries / services.

21. In addition, SWD has assigned a designated person in each administrative district to render internal support to district colleagues for providing welfare services to EMs.

Working Family Allowance Scheme

22. Other than social welfare services mentioned above, in order to encourage self-reliance of low-income households through continuous employment and alleviate intergenerational poverty, the Government launched the Low-income Working Family Allowance (LIFA) Scheme in May 2016. Households meeting the eligibility criteria for the Scheme, regardless of the race of their household members, will be granted the allowance.

23. The Working Family Allowance Office (WFAO) of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency has been striving to provide different measures to assist EMs in applying for the allowance. Apart from publishing leaflets, posters and samples for completing application form in multiple EM languages, WFAO has enlisted the assistance of the CHEER Centre to handle telephone enquiries on the LIFA Scheme in EM languages, and provide free telephone and on-sight interpretation service to EMs during the application process. WFAO has also organised a number of briefing sessions or enquiry sessions on filling out the application forms for both NGOs supporting EMs and various EM communities.

24. The Government introduced a series of enhancements to the Scheme on 1 April 2018. These include extending the Scheme to cover singleton

households, allowing household members to aggregate their working hours, relaxing the income requirements and increasing the rates of allowances, and renaming the Scheme as the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme. To facilitate EMs in understanding the WFA Scheme and its application details, apart from continuing to organise / attend briefing sessions for EMs, with the provision of interpretation services in EM languages where necessary, WFAO has arranged for the distribution of promotional leaflets and posters in EM languages by support service centres for EMs of HAD, NGOs supporting EMs and schools with more EM students. With the consent of these schools, WFAO also arranged briefing sessions and set up enquiry counters on campus to introduce the WFA Scheme to students and their parents.

25. In addition, WFAO has commissioned over 70 service units of NGOs, including those serving EM groups, to help first-time WFA applicants fill out the application form during the period from April to December 2018. When there is a need to make written enquiries to EM applicants during the application process, WFAO will enclose an information sheet in EM languages in the letter on how to seek language support. WFAO will also proactively arrange telephone interpretation service through the CHEER Centre, or by engaging interpretation service on its own, to facilitate communication between WFAO and EMs who speak neither Chinese nor English. The Government encourages eligible individuals to apply for WFA.