

KEY OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government insists that there is no evidence of prejudice on grounds of race in Hong Kong or that the existing policies are neutral and, therefore, any negative impact on particular groups is merely incidental or specific to individual circumstances. However, the following findings suggest that serious reflection is needed in order to understand the underlying causes for why ethnic minorities seem, at worst, to be failing or at risk of failing and at best, always faring poorly in all areas of life compared to their Hong Kong Chinese counterparts. That this distinction falls neatly along the lines of race is of significant concern.

CORE AREAS FOR REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT LAW & POLICY

The research findings lead to the following Key Observations:

- There is a growing ethnic minority population under the age of 15: they are going to be tomorrow's productive workforce of Hong Kong. Is the system preparing them well?
- There is a higher number of ethnic minority students are not in school between ages 3 – 5 years when compared with the Hong Kong Chinese.
- There are higher rates of dropout from school between ages 13 and 17 among some ethnic minority groups when compared with the Hong Kong Chinese.
- There is an overrepresentation of ethnic minority children in selected schools. This leads to *de facto* racial segregation.
- There is a lack of Chinese language acquisition amongst ethnic minorities presenting a barrier in multiple areas of life including access to higher education, employment, healthcare, and other services. The lack of proficiency also compromises protection and is a barrier to help-seeking in cases of domestic violence, access to social welfare and police protection or due process rights.
- There is a shockingly low rate of university attendance among ethnic minorities compared to Hong Kong Chinese counterparts.
- There is an overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in elementary occupations.
- The lowest participation in the workforce is among Pakistani women compared with Hong Kong Chinese and other ethnic minority counterparts.
- The largest household sizes are among ethnic minority communities.
- There are shockingly high rates of poverty impacting child and youth ethnic minorities at a significantly higher rate than their Hong Kong Chinese counterparts.
- There is an overall significant difference between poverty rate among the Hong Kong Chinese population and ethnic minorities as a group.
- There are stark differences in median monthly household income between ethnic minorities and Hong Kong Chinese.
- The elderly ethnic minorities continue to work well beyond the retirement age at a significantly higher rate than their Hong Kong Chinese counterparts.
- There is a significantly high rate of domestic violence among the ethnic minority population when compared with the Hong Kong Chinese when accounting for likely

underreporting. There are also worrying reports about a lack of confidence in and satisfaction with the legal process and law enforcement officers, social workers and NGOs.

- There is a shockingly high sex ratio in some ethnic minority groups.
- Interpretation services are being provided and are supported with ample resources but they remain underutilised and language barrier continues to emerge as a core barrier and complaint in relation to discriminatory or substandard treatment.
- Crime rates by age continue to grow for the ethnic minority population.
- There are high levels of prejudice reported towards people of colour. The darker the skin colour (with the exception of Africans), the less accepted there are in different spheres of life.

Each of these trends is closely related and interlinked to other phenomena listed in these Key Observations. This requires us to think broadly about the key policy areas which need a multipronged approach to tackle the interlocking issues effectively. For example, current trends reveal a deeply troubling impact of the exacerbation of situations of poverty due to multiple deficiencies in core areas of life for ethnic minorities, particularly impacts education, employment, living conditions, health and prospects for upward social and economic mobility. The figures reveal differences, however, between ethnic groups. There is a need for targeted interventions to address situations of specific ethnic minority groups. In some instances, there is a need for diversity mainstreaming by accounting for the impact of policies on ethnic minority communities and to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and entrenchment. To that end, there is a need to address specific needs of ethnic minority groups living below or critically close to the poverty line; to identify individuals and families at critical risk of falling below the poverty line due to particular factors ('at risk' groups); to study the link between childhood poverty and other indicators (including education, employment, and health) and a need to maintain and scale-up the current bottom-up initiatives to facilitate contact with and integration of ethnic minorities into the local community

A reformed approach to diversity management and governance urgently requires taking several and steps forward if we are to stall this ticking time bomb that is spiralling towards a destructive end. At the same time, given that Hong Kong's ageing population is an area of critical concern and that the youngest population group in Hong Kong is predominantly comprised of ethnic minorities, this has important resource implications. This group of Hong Kong youth needs to be nurtured for its talent pool and potential to contribute to Hong Kong and support our elderly.

The Key Recommendations based on the findings of this Report are:**EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY-MAKING**

- An evidence-based approach to informing policy and decision-making is required.
- To facilitate this, a systematic data collection and collation mechanism needs to be rolled out across public service bodies. NGOs need to be brought on board so that their intake processes can be aligned with feeding relevant information into the database.
- Data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, age, and various other variables and the possibility for permutations to better understand the interrelationship between different variables is vital to implement effective evidence-based governance.
- A rights-based approach should be adopted towards the development of policies.
- Cultural sensitivities should be incorporated into the policy-making process, understanding that healthcare, education, employment law and other fields cannot be approached with a one-size-fits-all attitude.
- Regular impact assessment should be conducted to measure outcomes and an outcome-oriented approach should dictate resource allocation going forward. This requires mechanisms for reporting, evaluation and accountability.

**RAISING AWARENESS OF RIGHTS AMONG ETHNIC MINORITIES,
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND CIVIL SERVANTS, NGO STAFF AND ALL
HONG KONG CHINESE**

- A review and immediate reform of existing laws protecting the rights of ethnic minorities, in particular, the Race Discrimination Ordinance is needed and alignment with international best practices is a critically important standard of reference.
- Ethnic minorities need to be made aware of their rights. This requires targeted interventions, timely and accessible information dissemination and support mechanisms.
- Greater trust needs to be developed towards legal, social and other resources (including law enforcement, immigration and other civil service personnel) that are available to assist ethnic minorities.
- Rights related awareness needs to be raised for all Hong Kong Chinese, including government officials, civil servants, NGO staff, teachers, doctors, and other professionals regardless of whether their portfolio of work entails proximate work with ethnic minorities or the issues that impact them.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY TRAINING

- Training in Human Rights and Cultural Sensitivity should be mandatory and a regular refresher course should be required for government officials, civil servants, NGO staff, teachers, doctors, and other professionals regardless of whether their portfolio of work entails proximate work with ethnic minorities or the issues that impact them. This is of particular significance for police, lawyers, judges, immigration and customs officers, healthcare and social work personnel, etc.

ENHANCING VISIBILITY AND LEADERSHIP OF ETHNIC MINORITIES

- Set up a high level taskforce, including ethnic minority experts, to focus on review, development, evaluation of policies and laws for their impact on ethnic minorities and to make recommendations for reform.
- Appoint ethnic minorities to advisory and high-level government committees.
- Appoint a high-level minister in the government to be in charge of ethnic minority affairs.
- Groom ethnic minorities to develop skills in political participation so that they can represent their own constituencies in electoral reform processes and during Legislative and District Council elections.
- There need to be regular opportunities for consultation with ethnic minority communities to hear from them about the priority areas that need most urgent attention.
- Develop a mentorship mechanism to facilitate communication and relationship building between senior mentors and ethnic minority youth, including senior ethnic minority members of the Hong Kong community.

CULTIVATING INCLUSIVE CITIZENSHIP AND A HONG KONG IDENTITY

- A review of the Chinese nationality eligibility guidelines should be undertaken, as ethnic minorities are frequently eliminated for trivial reasons.
- Prospects for ethnic minority participation in public life need to be enhanced. Such a drive should start in the classroom to develop a Hong Kong identity in addition to fostering confidence in one's ethnic identity. Facilitating knowledge acquisition about the social, political and cultural life of Hong Kong from a young age will contribute to the development of mutual trust and respect through interaction, intercultural learning and cross-cultural dialogue. This will pave the way for a responsible citizenry that is inclusive of all its counterparts, regardless of ethnicity.
- Revisiting terminology and discourses surrounding ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. Rethinking the use of the term 'ethnic minority' and incorporating aspects of Hong Kong into their identity so that they can legitimate their sense of belonging here without feeling dislocated from both Hong Kong and their place of origin or other home.

- Incorporating the history of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong into textbooks and teaching Hong Kong Chinese children about their counterparts early on.
- Incorporating experiential learning to facilitate intercultural exchange to foster an understanding of cultural and religious identities.
- A citizenship education curriculum is needed to encourage ethical and responsible citizen behaviour towards each other.
- Outside the classroom, spaces for civic engagement should be developed and greater efforts need to be made to encourage ethnic minority participation in such forums.
- Chinese language education must be provided within both the schooling system and as part of workplace training for ethnic minorities. The impact of their inability to speak Chinese has a noticeably detrimental effect on numerous areas of life. Fluency in Chinese is required on all fronts. It relates to our basic accessibility to information and opportunities; without this skill, ethnic minorities cannot learn about their rights, access the services on offer, explain themselves to authorities, find employment, or understand the wider community in which they live.

OUTREACH

- Some groups are living in isolation and are at particular risk during critical phases in life. During these periods, children, the youth and in particular, women, need to be provided with support and mentorship to ensure that they stay the course of maximising their potential.
- For families who are living in poverty, are on welfare or have sought the assistance of the social welfare's family related or other services, it is important to facilitate genuine outreach through network building. In particular, solidarity needs to be fostered by ensuring social embedding in one's locality or neighbourhood.
- Outreach work should involve Hong Kong Chinese individuals and members of the ethnic minority community to enhance the visibility of ethnic minorities in the community and to facilitate trust building.

FURTHER RESEARCH

- Better demographic data disaggregated by ethnicity is needed.
- A number of areas need to be researched and better understood through such disaggregated data, including:
 - Child Poverty
 - Domestic Violence
 - Crime
 - Female infanticide
 - Female circumcision
 - Ageing
 - Elderly working population
 - Child marriage / forced marriage

- Minimum wage
- Special Education Needs
- Religious and Cultural Identities and Practices
- Health patterns of ethnic minority men and women