

A Study on Ethnic Minorities' Awareness and Satisfaction towards Selected Public Services

Report

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background

- 1.1 According to the 2016 Population By-Census, excluding foreign domestic helpers, there were about 84 900 ethnic minorities (EMs) of South Asian origin in Hong Kong, out of which 36 500 were Indians, 25 500 were Nepalese, 18 100 were Pakistanis and 4 800 were others. While the EMs of South Asian origin only represented about 1.2% of the total population, their annual average growth rate of 5.5% in the decade between 2006 and 2016 was notably higher than the 0.7% growth for the overall population.
- 1.2 Many EMs of South Asian ethnicities have settled here for generations and taken Hong Kong as their home. Nevertheless, some of them, owing to language barriers and cultural differences, coupled with lower education and skills, encounter considerable challenges in integrating into the community and moving upwards along the social ladder.
- 1.3 In 2010, the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) of the Government issued the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality (the Administrative Guidelines) to provide general guidance to relevant government bureaux, departments and public authorities to promote racial equality and ensure equal access to public services in key areas concerned, and to take this into account in their formulation, implementation and review of relevant policies and measures. The Administrative Guidelines cover the key public services which are particularly relevant to meeting the special needs of EMs and facilitating their integration into the community, namely, medical, education, vocational training, employment and major community services.
- 1.4 Having equal access to public services is crucial to the integration of the EMs into the community. However, there was concern in some quarters of the EM community that the EMs still had difficulty in accessing public services. According to the Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on Ethnic Minorities 2016 (the EM Poverty Report) published in February 2018, the poverty rate of EMs of South Asian ethnicity (after policy intervention) was 23.0%, which was higher than that of the overall population of 14.7%. On the other hand, a survey on households with school children of South Asian ethnicities conducted by the Census & Statistics Department of the Government between May 2014 and June 2015 showed that about 85% of poor persons aged 12 or above in South Asian households with children had never used/ never faced difficulties in their use of various kinds of public services. A similar number also had not used services specifically for EMs, with about half indicating that they did not know such services existed.
- 1.5 The Special Needs Groups Task Force (SNGTF) of the Commission on Poverty (CoP), which is tasked to review existing policy and measures for supporting underprivileged groups with special needs, including EMs, in the community, sees the need for engaging an independent party to conduct a study to assess EMs' awareness and satisfaction towards major public services and identify the underlying causes for the phenomena identified in

the study. The SNGTF considers that the study should be pursued on the following terms: –

- (a) in the interests of having a manageable scope without compromising the depth, the study should cover selected public services of greater relevance to the integration of EMs. It was decided that the following four public services would be covered in the study, namely,
 - (i) employment services of the Labour Department (LD), including job search, referral and employment advisory services provided mainly through its job centres;
 - (ii) training/ retraining programmes provided by the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) through its training bodies;
 - (iii) family and child welfare services, services for the youth, community development services, and services for the elderly provided through the Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) / Integrated Services Centres (ISCs), Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres (ICYSCs), District Elderly Community Centres/ Neighbourhood Elderly Centres as operated or subvented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD); and
 - (iv) integration services provided by the Home Affairs Department (HAD) through its support service centres and sub-centres (EM centres), including the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents (CHEER Centre) which provides general interpretation and translation services in addition to its basic services.
- (b) the target EM groups would be EMs of South Asian ethnicities (viz. Indians, Nepalese and Pakistanis) as the EM Poverty Report has identified this ethnic group as more vulnerable to poverty risk¹. They may have a greater need for public services in their integration into the local community; and
- (c) as one of the objectives to identify underlying causes or factors for the assessed awareness and satisfaction levels with a view to formulating improvement measures, it was agreed that a qualitative study should be conducted via focus group discussions or interviews with stakeholders. That said, efforts should be made to ensure that the EM participants cover a sufficiently wide cross-section of target EM respondents based on parameters such as age, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and length of residence in Hong Kong.

¹ Within the South Asian EMs, the poverty rate of Pakistanis was the highest at 48.6%.

II. STUDY METHODOLOGY

2. The information gathering process

Approach adopted

- 2.1 In conducting this study, attempt was made to reach EMs with different economic activity status, language ability and educational level in order to effectively gauge problems faced by them in accessing public services. The measures adopted are summarized below:
- a) EMs residing in different districts were approached through NGOs serving EMs in different districts;
 - b) A balanced mix of EMs in terms of age, educational attainment and economic activity status (whether employed, homeworkers, unemployed and retired) were invited to focus group discussions;
 - c) Efforts were made to reach out to hard-to-be-contacted EMs who did not participate in activities organized by NGOs. Examples of such efforts were approaching them at the entrance of religious places where EMs usually frequented, and referrals by other EMs using a snow-ball sampling approach;
 - d) To overcome language barriers, EMs were employed as translators/facilitators in focus group discussions in which the discussants do not speak Cantonese, Putonghua or English;
 - e) To further reduce reluctance on the part of female EMs to participate in focus group discussions, female researchers from the Project Team were deployed to be facilitators of focus group discussions when there were female EMs present; and
 - f) As a further indication of cultural sensitivity on the part of the consultant team, separate focus group discussions were arranged for Indian and Pakistani discussants. As a result, more focus group discussions than earlier planned were held, and the size of the focus group discussion was as a result smaller than the planned size of 8 – 20.
- 2.2 This study is conducted against the backdrop that there was concern in some quarters of the EM community that the EMs still have difficulty in accessing public services. Being qualitative in nature, this study does not purport to come with evidence supporting or refuting findings of other studies on EMs' awareness and utilization of public services.
- 2.3 Views gathered in the study are meant to provide references to the government and organizations concerned on possible gaps in their service delivery as well as ways and means to further raise the effectiveness of their services. The study is not designed as an evaluation of the services provided by HAD, LD, ERB and SWD. There are incidents in which some EMs consulted have mistaken views of the services provided by the four organizations. It is hoped that this will not be used as an excuse to dismiss views of EMs consulted too quickly. The research team believes that such misconception, if any, is itself a cause for concern for relevant organizations in planning and implementing their promotional and

engagement efforts for EMs. Besides, such misconception arises partly from the high expectation of EMs on public services.

Sampling

2.4 For in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, we will not adopt scientific sampling design as in the case of quantitative surveys which are conducted based on a representative sample of the target population. That said, the research team has ensured that the focus group discussants cover a sufficiently wide cross-section of target respondents.

2.5 Participants of this study comprised EM individuals recruited via the measures adopted under paragraph 2.1 above, non-EM stakeholders (being academics, operators of EM support services and non-governmental groups), as well as representatives from Government departments/ agencies and EM associations. A breakdown of the interviewees is set out below: -

Interviewees/discussants		No. of in-depth interviews	No. of focus group discussions	No. of stakeholders participated
Key informants		6	-	6
Government departments/agencies		11	-	23
Service providers	Support service centres	4	-	6
	Other NGOs	7	-	9
	EM organisations	2	-	5
EMs*		-	16	130
Total		30	16	179

* EM participants covered a diverse background in age, gender, education attainment, occupation and length of residence in Hong Kong.

2.6 EM participants covered a diverse background in terms of, amongst others, age, gender and length of residence in Hong Kong. Out of the 130 EM participants, 34 were Indian, 57 were Pakistani and 39 Nepalese. About 65% of them were female. Approximately 72% of the participants were aged 25-64, with 16% aged between 15-24 and the remaining 12% aged 65 or above. Nearly 58% of EM participants have resided in Hong Kong for more than 10 years, whilst another 21% have resided in Hong Kong for less than 7 years.

2.7 Out of the 130 EM participants in this study, only 7 were users of all selected public services, while 22 were non-users of any of the selected public services. Of all the participants, less than half were users of services of LD, ERB and SWD, at approximately 31%, 14% and 44% respectively. Approximately 62% of the EM individual respondents have used the services provided by HAD through its EM centres. The above utilization rates of the services covered in this study may be attributable to the degree of awareness or satisfaction of these EM participants towards such services, or the fact that they do not need such service after all. A list of stakeholders consulted and the profile of EM respondents are set out in **Appendix 1**.

- 2.8 Depending on the focus of services and characteristics of EM clients served, there are inevitably variations in the services provided by different non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Some NGOs serve EMs of different countries of origin, while others may target EMs from one or two countries. Certain NGOs provide a wide variety of services to EMs, ranging from training classes on Cantonese, English and computer to counselling, mutual support, training on cultural sensitivity and integration, and various support services like employment support, integration and translation as well as escort services. Others focus their attention on specific area of services for EMs.
- 2.9 It is necessary to take into account the different perspectives of NGOs. This in turn calls for a comprehensive coverage of different NGOs in the study, within the constraints of time and resources available. The following measures were taken to ensure that a comprehensive coverage of different NGOs was achieved:
- a) Prior to selection of NGOs to be visited, a thorough stocktaking exercise was undertaken to list out all NGOs providing services to EMs. The stocktaking exercise was conducted through Internet search of NGOs' websites, supplemented by information provided by key informants and referrals made by EMs during focus group discussions.
 - b) NGOs identified in the stocktaking exercise were classified into different categories based on the target groups these NGOs are serving, the geographical coverage of their services and the nature of their services;
 - c) A total of 11 NGOs providing services to EMs were identified and approached with a view to conducting in-depth interviews with the social workers in charge as well as the frontline social workers.

Procedures adopted in focus group discussions

- 2.10 To facilitate discussions, the size of the focus groups would not be too large. Conducting in-depth interviews and focus groups are very much different from face-to-face or telephone interviews in questionnaire surveys. An in-depth interview/focus group does not intend to seek definitive responses from individual respondents, following the sequence dictated by the interviewer based a pre-designed structured or semi-structured questionnaire. Instead, the role of the moderator in a discussion is to encourage the respondents' response to a particular topic and to elicit their thinking, attitudes and ideas on the issue. The purpose is not to reach a consensus in a focus group, but rather to encourage the respondents to express different points of view.²
- 2.11 Thus, it is essential that the moderator should avoid, during the discussion, putting forward his own thinking on the subject matter, or trying to guide the group towards a particular direction, or worse still, conclusion. In summarizing the findings of the discussion, the moderator should also avoid letting his/her own thinking on the subject matter affects the reporting.

² Vaughan, Sharon et al. (1996), *Focus Group interviews in education and psychology*, pg.5.

Indeed, some researchers even raised concern on possible biases introduced if the moderator shared the professional culture of the discussants or an expert in the field under study.³

2.12 The following procedure was adopted in conducting the focus group discussions:⁴

- a) At the beginning of discussion, the moderator would try to warm up the group by going through the purposes of the discussion. The moderator would have to ensure anonymity of opinions expressed by respondents to encourage better response. Informed consent should be obtained prior to the discussion;
- b) Necessary equipment such as clipboard and pens were provided to enable the respondents to record their opinions when necessary;
- c) Then the moderator proceeded to the list of issues to be raised for discussion. The moderator would try to start with the less threatening and more general ones and then proceed to the more specific, more difficult and controversial ones. The moderator would also try to encourage discussion among the respondents as far as possible;
- d) During the course of the discussion, the moderator ensured that the list of issues required to be discussed were covered in the discussion;
- e) At the end of the discussion, the moderator would try to re-confirm the opinions of different respondents on the various issues raised during the discussion, to ensure that any changes of minds at the course of the discussion would be reflected.

2.13 A trial of the guidelines has also been arranged by inviting colleagues of the research team who are not members of the research team to participate as discussants. The interview and discussion guidelines adopted in the Study is set out in **Appendix 2**.

3. Limitations

3.1 Given the scope and nature of the study, we would like to highlight a number of limitations as follows: -

- (a) Views expressed by stakeholders in this study represented their individual comments and insights. The research team was not in a position to verify the statements/ comments made by the discussants.
- (b) Most EMs whom the research team consulted were not users of public services. In fact, out of the 130 EM participants, only 7 were users for all selected public services, while 22 were non-users for all selected public services. Of those interviewed, less than 50% were users of services of LD, ERB and SWD respectively.

³ Twohig, Peter L and Putnam, Wayne (2002), "Group interview in primary care research: advancing the state of art or ritualized research", in *Family practice*, 19(3): 278 – 284.

⁴ Vaughan, Sharon (1996) and Steward, David et al. (1990), *Focus groups, theory and practice*.

- (c) Given that one respondent may be the user of services of one organisation and not another, it is difficult to make delineation of service users as opposed to non-service users when collecting their views during the course of the focus group discussions. In addition, there were incidents in which some EMs consulted had mistaken views of the services provided by the four organisations.
- (d) Non-EM stakeholders consulted, including academics, operators of EMs' support services and NGOs that are concerned about the well-being of EMs, may have good knowledge of the needs of EMs through their years of research on and contact with EMs. Nevertheless, they are often not first-hand users of EM services.

3.2 As the consultation process progresses to the latter part of the study, the research team saw a "saturation" of the views expressed, with EMs consulted at the later stage of the study repeating most what have been said by those consulted in the earlier stage. The research team also found commonalities in the views expressed by EMs, staff of NGOs (save for those running the EM centres) and academics. In the circumstances, the research team believes that it has canvassed sufficiently diverse views of EMs on matters related to the study.

III. INTEGRATION AND USE OF SERVICES: AN OVERVIEW

4. Characteristics of different ethnic groups

- 4.1 According to stakeholders consulted, in the early days, most local Indians and Pakistanis came to Hong Kong as members of the Hong Kong Police Force. They were all being called Indians by the local Chinese and were not distinguishable from each other until Pakistan became independent from India in 1947. Nowadays, some local Chinese still regard them as one group: “Indian-Pakistani” (印巴), and many cannot distinguish the Indians from the Pakistanis.
- 4.2 Local Pakistanis in general are positive towards Hong Kong, where they encounter less discrimination and their halal food is easily accessible. They are readily integrated into the local Chinese community, in varying degree according to their origins. Those who are businessmen from Southern Pakistan are relatively open-minded, while those from Punjab are more conservative. The most conservative group, Pashtuns, come from the north-west Pakistan close to Iran and from areas occupied by the Taliban. The Pashtuns are very loyal to their religious rituals. This group is less likely to be integrated into the local community.
- 4.3 On the other hand, most local Nepalese were soldiers of the British Army (Gurkhas) who stayed behind after Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997. Previously they have had limited interaction with local Chinese as they had been restricted by army regulations, which tended to distance them from members of the public. They and their families now mainly stay in Yuen Long, Jordan and Tsim Sha Tsui, which are near the former military camps in Shek Kong and Tsim Sha Tsui. Though many of them have stationed here for more than three generations, it is only after 1997 that they have started interaction with local Chinese. Therefore, while the local Nepalese have quite a long history in Hong Kong, their integration has only started recently.
- 4.4 As a whole, the local Nepalese tend to stick to their own communities. They do not like to be rehoused to public housing, which are usually in districts not of their choice and far away from their own communities. Therefore, they prefer renting private housing themselves for greater autonomy in staying with their own communities. However, their residences are usually limited to “low rental” areas because their income is not high.
- 4.5 EMs generally have strong cohesion among themselves and prefer to seek help from EM friends and consider seeking help from the government as against their culture. For instance, local Nepalese are quite organised with around 24 local Nepali communities in Hong Kong. Cohesion within and among these local Nepali communities is very high. Many local Nepalese do not see the need to reach out to outsiders for assistance and, in general, hold negative attitudes towards those members of their communities who are close to outsiders.

5. Use of public services

- 5.1 As mentioned in para. 1.3 above, 85% of poor persons aged 12 or above in South Asian households with children reported that they had never used/ never faced difficulties in their use of various kinds of public services. 52% of Indians, 50% of Pakistanis and 62% of Nepalese were not aware of services provided by EM centres. About 15.5% of poor persons aged 12 or above in South Asian households with children had difficulties accessing government services, and most of them attributed this to the absence of EM language translation services (48.6%) and problems in communicating with government staff (46.5%). In other words, language and communication were the major barriers to their access to public services.⁵ Earlier research studies also show that services earmarked for EMs have not been fully utilized.^{6,7}
- 5.2 Apart from language barriers, low awareness could be another reason for the low utilization by government services by EMs. Many EMs are not aware of their rights to use public services or do not have any idea about using public services as they do not have such practices in their hometown. Discussions with EMs and non-EM stakeholders also revealed that publicity of Government services through established channels could not effectively reach EMs, which could be a reason for EMs' low awareness of public services. This also partly reflects the need on the part of the Government to enhance their sensitivity on the behaviour and needs of EMs.

⁵ Census and Statistics Department (2015). *Survey on Households with School Children of South Asian Ethnicities*.

⁶ Youth I.D.E.A.S. (2016). *Challenges Faced by Ethnic Minorities in Hong Kong*.

⁷ Census and Statistics Department (2015). *Survey on Households with School Children of South Asian Ethnicities*.

IV. HOME AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

6. Services provided by HAD

*Overview*⁸

- 6.1 HAD provides support services for EMs to help them integrate into the community. It commissions NGOs to operate six support service centres and two sub-centres for EMs (EM centres) to provide tailor-made classes, integration programmes, etc. Apart from the EM centres, HAD also implements other programmes, including community support teams, ambassador schemes, district-based integration programmes, Harmony Scholarships Scheme, etc. to help EMs' early integration into the community. To disseminate useful information to EMs, HAD sponsors radio programmes in five EM languages, operates a dedicated website and publishes guidebooks in six EM languages and English, and commissions an NGO to distribute information kits to newly arrived EMs and handle enquiries at the airport. To promote racial harmony, EM and Chinese staff of the Race Relations Unit (RRU) under HAD conduct school talks and roving exhibitions on cultural diversity and racial harmony.

Support service centres for EMs

Services provided

- 6.2 Currently, HAD commissions seven NGOs to operate six support service centres and two sub-centres for EMs⁹. In the 2015-16 project year, the EM centres had provided services to over 95 000 service recipients, of which 57.8% were females. Regarding ethnicity, Pakistanis and Nepalese constituted the majority of service recipients at 46.0% and 23.0% respectively. All EM centres are running smoothly. Feedback from service recipients has been very positive and they think that the services can meet their special needs.¹⁰ There are over 50 EM full-time staff accounting for around half of the work force of the EM centres.
- 6.3 The support services provided in the EM centres are tailor-made to address EMs' integration needs, such as Cantonese and English language classes, after-school tutorials and integration programmes. One of the centres, i.e. the CHEER Centre, also provides general interpretation and translation services in addition to its basic services.

⁸ Home Affairs Department website

<http://www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/programmes/programmes.html>

⁹ The EM centres are CHEER Centre by Hong Kong Christian Service, HOME Centre and Sub-centre by New Home Association, HOPE Centre by International Social Service, LINK Centre by Hong Kong Community Network, SHINE Centre by Christian Action, and YLTH Centre by Yuen Long Town Hall, and TOUCH Sub-centre by Neighbourhood Advice-Action Council.

¹⁰ Home Affairs Department (April 2017), "Support service centres for ethnic minorities", paper presented to the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities for information on 10 April 2017, LC Paper No. CB(2)1119/16-17(03).

- 6.4 As noted in a recent report to the Legislative Council, the Cantonese and English classes for EMs are organized by EM centres to meet EMs' daily social needs and help their early integration into the community. The classes are provided at different levels to serve students with different language proficiency. There are also outside-classroom activities to allow the participants to practise the languages in real life and also enhance their understanding of the local community. In the 2015-16 project year, the EM centres had organised 120 Cantonese classes and 90 English classes in total with 2 153 and 1 650 participants respectively. Feedback from participants is very positive. The language classes are particularly helpful to those South Asian women whose primary social network was limited due to cultural and language differences.¹¹
- 6.5 In addition, programmes to develop EMs' working skills and interests are organized, such as computer class, cooking class and handicraft class. Individual centres collaborate with the training bodies under ERB to organise designated language courses and other skill training courses for EMs in the centres with due regard to the specific employment training needs of EMs.¹² There are tailored-made courses for EM women to equip them with skills to enable them to earn income while staying at home taking care of their families. An EM centre had organized training on preparing resume and attending job interviews for EM job-seekers. Orientation programmes are also organized for newly-arrived families. Activities such as musical jam sessions are organized to facilitate interaction between EMs and local Chinese youths.
- 6.6 Furthermore, one of the EM centres had arranged several EM volunteers to help introduce traditional handicrafts to local Chinese at a pop-up store run by an NGO in a Chinese New Year flower market. This not only facilitated cultural interaction, but also integration. There are also a variety of activities aiming at promoting integration. For example, seminars and exhibitions are held in collaboration with different government departments to introduce to EMs various public services. Training classes in computer, physical fitness, interview skills and leadership are organized for EMs. Interest classes on cooking, handicraft and yoga etc. are also organized to provide a social platform for EMs to establish a mutual help network. Youth units are formed to provide training to youngsters in sports activities, band performance, etc. Other special programmes like multi-cultural carnivals and talent competitions are also very popular among EM families.¹³
- 6.7 According to HAD, the current annual budget is around HK\$40 million for the 8 EM centres, inclusive of staff cost, rental and other expenses. The EM

¹¹ Home Affairs Department (April 2017), "Support service centres for ethnic minorities", paper presented to the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities for information on 10 April 2017, LC Paper No. CB(2)1119/16-17(03). In the 2016-17 project year, the EM centres had organized 121 Cantonese classes and 95 English classes in total, with 2 035 and 1 607 participants respectively.

¹² Home Affairs Department (April 2017), "Support service centres for ethnic minorities", paper presented to the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities for information on 10 April 2017, LC Paper No. CB(2)1119/16-17(03).

¹³ Home Affairs Department (April 2017), "Support service centres for ethnic minorities", paper presented to the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities for information on 10 April 2017, LC Paper No. CB(2)1119/16-17(03).

centres have to submit proposals every 2 years for HAD to review and renew their grant agreements. The EM centres would take the opportunity of this review exercise to adjust their services taking into account the actual demand. HAD has a mechanism to adjust the grants for the centres to cope with variations in staff cost, rental and other expenses. Some EM centres have expressed that the high rental expense has limited the locations and sizes of the centres.

Other services provided by HAD

- 6.8 Apart from EM centres, HAD sponsors two community support teams to provide tailor-made services for Pakistani and Nepalese residents by members of their own ethnic groups. In addition, HAD has commissioned three NGOs to implement ambassador schemes targeting at EM families and EM youths respectively, under which ambassadors with similar background and experience proactively approach EM families and youths in need to introduce services and activities to them and make referrals to relevant departments where necessary.
- 6.9 HAD also sponsors NGOs to develop a cross-cultural learning youth programme. The programme includes Cantonese and English lessons, extra-curricular activities and after-school tutorial classes. To encourage students' participation in activities promoting racial harmony, the Harmony Scholarships Scheme was launched in the 2003-04 school year. In the 2016-17 school year, 332 scholarships have been awarded to students from 41 primary schools and 32 secondary schools.¹⁴
- 6.10 To facilitate the engagement of EMs in the Hong Kong community, HAD has launched five radio programmes in Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Nepali, Thai and Urdu. These programmes provide information on local news, government messages and entertainment, etc. to Hong Kong's EM communities.
- 6.11 To promote racial integration and racial harmony, RRU was established in 2002 under the Home Affairs Bureau, which was subsequently transferred to CMAB in 2007 and to HAD in 2011. EM and Chinese staff of RRU organises school talks and roving exhibitions on cultural diversity and racial harmony. RRU also renders secretarial support to the Committee on Promotion of Racial Harmony and the Ethnic Minorities Forum, members and attendees of which discuss with representatives of relevant government departments on the provision of services and programmes for EMs.¹⁵

¹⁴ Home Affairs Department – Race Relations Unit

<http://www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/programmes/programmes.html>

¹⁵ The Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony is to formulate proposals for promotion of racial harmony, including provision of support services to ethnic minorities and race related public education and publicity. Such proposals should include advice on the budget and its implementation. It also liaises with and assists Government departments and community organizations to promote racial harmony and equality. The Ethnic Minorities Forum was established in 2003 to provide a regular and formal channel of communication between the Government and Hong Kong's minority communities and the organizations dedicated to serving them. It serves to keep the public informed of the concerns and needs of the ethnic communities and provides opportunities to discuss possible ways of addressing them.

7. Feedback from stakeholders

Services provided by EM centres

- 7.1 During discussions with stakeholders, most EMs consulted were of the view that the language courses were pitched at the very basic level necessary for “survival”. The courses could only help speak Cantonese but not read or write Chinese, and may be more suitable to EMs who have newly arrived in Hong Kong. Some EMs expected that a qualified teacher should be deployed to run the courses and that the curriculum should be tailored to meet the learning needs of EMs of different ages.
 - 7.2 A few of them suggested that Putonghua classes should be offered as well. Besides, several EMs consulted pointed out that notices on availability of language courses were often posted at short notice. Staff of EM centres do not inform EMs in advance when a language class will commence. Consequently, it is difficult for many EMs to reschedule their work or family arrangements to attend the language classes. Furthermore, the computer course is a basic one.
 - 7.3 As regards after-school tutorials for children, many EMs consulted said that the demand for this service was great, but the places provided by EM centres were inadequate. Furthermore, the after-school tutorials were not available on a regular basis. For those EMs with children attending schools using Chinese as the medium of instruction (i.e. the CMI schools), their children have to rely on after-school tutorials to catch up with school work, as the EM parents cannot provide any guidance to their children in doing the school work.
 - 7.4 Several EMs consulted felt that many activities organized by EM centres are recreational activities. While it is fun to participate in such recreational activities, it does not help much as far as integration is concerned. This is because usually there are only EM participants and not local Chinese residents. Some EMs who had attended cooking classes on local and EM cuisines were of the view that it would be better if local Chinese residents also participated in the cooking classes. Several other EMs who had attended dancing classes in another EM centre shared similar views. They said that participants of dancing classes were all EMs without any local Chinese participants. They thought that many activities such as dancing classes should better be attended by both EMs and local Chinese residents.
 - 7.5 An NGO consulted suggested that activities tailored to EMs’ interests were effective in motivating their participation. They had the experience of inviting EMs to the Dragon Boat Festival but the drop-out rate was high. On the contrary, EMs are more interested in activities for their cultural festivals such as Eid al-Fitr which is an important day celebrated by Muslims worldwide to mark the end of Ramadan. Such activities usually receive a high response rate. Introducing EM cultural activities to local Chinese will definitely be useful to facilitate cultural inclusiveness.
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- 7.6 Accordingly, a number of EMs consulted opined that the ultimate objectives should be to facilitate the integration of EMs in the local community and to enhance harmony among residents of different ethnicities. Activities organized by EM centres to gather EMs together were only the first step. EM centres should organize more activities to facilitate integration between EMs and local Chinese residents.
- 7.7 Furthermore, very often many activities are organized for and open to EMs in general. These activities do not have specific target group to serve. It should be noted that the needs of EMs are diverse and different. EMs who have recently arrived in Hong Kong have very different needs from those who have been in Hong Kong for quite some time. It was suggested that the EM centres should devote effort to understand the needs of the EMs they were serving, and put more emphasis on those who were more in need (e.g. the newly arrived EMs).
- 7.8 It was pointed out that HAD had commissioned an NGO to operate a team of “information ambassadors” to distribute information kits to EM newcomers at the airport, which contain information that EMs need to adapt to the life and work in Hong Kong. A number of EMs recalled that they may have received the booklets but did not know how to use the booklets. It was suggested that the ambassadors should take the opportunity to explain what information is in the booklets when distributing them to the EMs.
- 7.9 When some EMs tried to contact NGOs listed in the booklets, they found that the addresses of a number of NGOs were out-of-date. In addition, a short summary pamphlet highlighting the more important points would be helpful. Simple translations of Cantonese phrases used in daily life such as how to tell a taxi driver to go to, say, hospital will also be helpful.
- 7.10 Several EMs opined that the Government should make use of the opportunity to collect demographic information of these EM newcomers as well as their correspondence for follow up contact when distributing the booklets. The information can be shared with NGOs serving EMs in different districts to follow up so as to engage these EMs, address their needs and help them integrate into the community.
- 7.11 During discussions with EMs, the research team had the impression that some EMs may have very different views on the target clients whom EM centres are meant to serve. For instance, several EMs consulted indicated that they knew that a centre was promoting their services to EM students in schools. They had the impression that the centre was only providing services to students or newly arrived EMs, and not to those who have been living in Hong Kong for a long time. On the other hand, the research team has come across quite a number of EMs, who have been in Hong Kong for quite some time and are able to speak fluent Cantonese, are frequent users of services of EM centres.

Difficulties faced by service providers

- 7.12 Based on the feedback from EM centres, facilities and services that EM youths would like to have include gym facilities, coaching, football training,

camp sites as well as venue and facilities for playing music, provided free of charge. However, there are few venues available for use by EMs. These venues have to be booked well in advance. Even if such facilities are available for use or booking by EMs, these facilities are located in different parts of Hong Kong and available at different days of the year and time of the day. Consequently, to participate in an event arranged for EMs making use of these facilities, EMs have to travel to different parts of Hong Kong. This would discourage EMs from participating in the event.

- 7.13 Furthermore, rental burden has adversely affected services provided by EM centres. For instance, due to limited budgets, these centres often have to be located in venues that are not easily accessible. The amount of space available in the EM centres is also quite limited. This has restricted the types of activities that can be organized at the EM centres. As some EM centres may not be able to afford rental increases demanded by the landlords, they will have to move to places with a lower rental. After the relocation, the EM centres have to promote their services again to EMs who may not be aware of the relocation, often resulting in a drop in the membership of these centres.
- 7.14 Another problem encountered by EM centres is that they are only awarded two-year grant agreements by HAD. As a result, it is difficult for the EM centres to draw up long-term plans. For instance, if a centre wants to conduct activities in collaboration with schools for their EM students, staff of the centre has to discuss with schools on their proposal well in advance. Schools usually plan their activities one year in advance, and the EM centre can only confirm agreement with schools after its grant agreement has been confirmed by HAD. With a grant agreement subject to renewal once every two years, the EM centre only has a year or less to plan and conduct its activities. This leaves staff at the EM centres very little time to build up its relationship with and engage the EM students, seriously affecting the effectiveness of their programs. It was suggested that consideration should be given to lengthening the period of the grant agreement to, say, three years.

Good practice adopted by EM centres

- 7.15 To address EMs' difficulties in finding jobs, certain EM centres organize recruitment days and job fairs for EM job-seekers, where employers can conduct job interviews and make job offers on the spot. The centres also arrange EM job-seekers to join job fairs and employment-related exhibitions organized by other NGOs and LD. Through efforts by the EM centres, employers are encouraged to offer job positions with less demanding requirements on spoken Cantonese. The employment support is considered quite effective in helping EMs find jobs.

8. Response from HAD

- 8.1 The response from HAD on the feedback from stakeholders is set out in **Appendix 3** to this report.

V. LABOUR DEPARTMENT

9. Services provided by LD

Overview

- 9.1 LD provides a wide range of free employment services to job seekers, including EMs, through a network of 13 job centres, three recruitment centres for the catering, retail and construction industry, a Job Vacancy Processing Centre and a Telephone Employment Service Centre. Job seekers may also obtain the latest vacancy information through the Interactive Employment Service (iES) website, its mobile application as well as the various vacancy search terminals located throughout the territory. In addition, large-scale and district-based job fairs are organized to facilitate job seekers (including EMs) to find jobs more efficiently. Details of LD's employment services, with focus on the dedicated services provided for EM job seekers, are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

Job Centres

- 9.2 In addition to general employment services and facilities, special counters and resource corners have been set up in all job centres to provide EM job seekers with job referral service and employment information. Tailor-made employment briefings are also organized to help EMs understand the local employment market, work culture and improve job search skills.
- 9.3 EM job seekers may also meet the employment officers face-to-face to obtain personalised employment advisory services. Experienced employment officers who are familiar with local employment market and proficient in English communication will provide EM job seekers with job search advice, information on job market, training/ retraining courses (including Chinese language courses), conduct career aptitude assessment, and match them to suitable jobs in accordance with their individual needs and preferences.
- 9.4 Since September 2014, LD has implemented the Employment Services Ambassador (ESA) Programme for Ethnic Minorities to employ trainees of the Youth Employment and Training Programme (YETP)¹⁶ who can communicate in EM languages as ESAs in job centres, industry-based recruitment centres and job fairs for six months. LD also arranges Chinese language courses¹⁷ for these trainees in the course of their on-the-job training to enhance their employability. The programme not only can help LD better serve EM job seekers but also enrich the ESAs' own working experience and resume, benefiting their job search in the open market.
- 9.5 Moreover, since May 2017, LD has engaged two Employment Assistants proficient in EM languages at the Kowloon West Job Centre in Sham Shui

¹⁶ The YETP implemented by LD provides one-stop pre-employment and on-the-job training for young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below.

¹⁷ These Chinese language courses are run by training bodies of ERB.

Po and the Employment in One-stop in Tin Shui Wai on a pilot basis to strengthen employment support for EM job seekers, especially those of South Asian origins. 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.

- 9.6 All job centres provide employment services in both Chinese and English to facilitate EM job seekers to make use of the facilities and obtain the required services. The ESAs working in job centres also assist in handling enquiries on LD's employment services and use of facilities from EM job seekers. LD has also made arrangements with the CHEER Centre to provide interpretation services for EM job seekers who speak neither Chinese nor English. Posters in major EM languages¹⁸ are displayed in conspicuous positions inside job centres and industry-based recruitment centres to promote the interpretation services provided by the CHEER Centre. The above centres have also prepared forms in these EM languages to introduce the interpretation services and each EM visitor is invited to sign on the form to ascertain whether or not such service is required. In 2017, staff of job centres and industry-based recruitment centres introduced interpretation services to 2 844 EM job seekers, and in light of their needs, arranged interpretation services on 20 occasions where the average waiting time was less than 5 minutes.
- 9.7 To raise the multi-cultural sensitivity of its frontline staff, LD invites NGOs serving EMs to deliver talks on different cultural and religious customs as well as skills in communicating with the EMs for its staff from time to time. Moreover, in collaboration with the Equal Opportunities Commission, LD organized eight training sessions on equal opportunities and multi-culture for staff of the job centres and industry-based recruitment centres in 2016-17. The training straddled the situation of EM groups in Hong Kong (including religions, diets, gender roles, attire, etc.), as well as laws and guidelines relevant to anti-racial discrimination. The training also helped raise participants' sensitivity to EM cultures and quality of service through case studies.

On-line platform

- 9.8 LD has also made use of its online employment services platforms to facilitate EM job seekers in finding and applying for jobs. Key information on all job vacancies (e.g. job title, industry, working hours, salary, work district, educational requirements and application procedures) is translated and displayed bilingually on the iES website, its mobile application and vacancy search terminals to facilitate EM job seekers to browse the vacancy information. Job seekers (including EMs) can also register on the iES website to use its tools to build their online resume and submit job applications. Uploaded information of suitable job seekers will be sent to

¹⁸ The seven major EM languages are Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesian, Thai, Hindi, Urdu, Nepali and Punjabi.

the recruiting employers for preliminary screening and selected candidates will then be notified by the staff of job centres.

- 9.9 In particular, LD has set up an exclusive e-platform, a dedicated webpage for EM job seekers on the iES website (www.jobs.gov.hk/EM). The webpage, featuring job vacancies which are posted by employers welcoming EM job seekers and having no or little Chinese language requirements, also publishes successful employment stories of EMs, LD's dedicated employment services for EM job seekers, information on inclusive job fairs as well as other multi-lingual¹⁹ employment information.
- 9.10 To strengthen employment support for persons with higher education (including EMs), LD launched the Higher Education Employment Information e-Platform, which displays vacancies suitable for degree holders, in December 2016. To promote this e-Platform among the EM job seekers, a hyperlink to this website has been established on the dedicated webpage for EM job seekers. In parallel, to enable homemakers (including EM women) to enter or stay in the labour market more readily, LD has set up a dedicated webpage on part-time job vacancies on the iES website to publish vacancies with shorter working hours and more flexible work arrangements.
- 9.11 To facilitate EM job seekers to have access to the job vacancy database of LD, vacancy search terminals have been installed in most of the EM centres funded by HAD. These terminals are also loaded with information available on the dedicated webpage for EM job seekers of the iES website.

Promoting employment services to EMs

- 9.12 To raise EMs' awareness of LD's employment services, promotional leaflets are prepared in English and six EM languages²⁰, and distributed through various channels such as the EM centres funded by HAD, Registration of Persons Offices of the Immigration Department, ERB Service Centres, NGOs serving EMs, religious bodies and the community network of the Police Community Relations Office of the Hong Kong Police Force. The e-versions of these publications have also been uploaded to the Multi-Language Platform of the Gov.HK website and the dedicated webpage for EM job seekers of the iES website to facilitate members of the public to browse the information. Moreover, with the support of the ESAs and Employment Assistants who are also members of the EM communities, LD proactively reaches out to the EMs at their popular gathering spots such as mosques, district-based organisations, grocery stores, food establishments, activities targeted at EMs, etc. and distributes these promotional leaflets.
- 9.13 Besides, on-going dialogue is maintained with NGOs serving EMs through the network of The Hong Kong Council of Social Service. At the district level, job centres have also liaised with EM bodies, NGOs serving EMs, religious bodies, schools, etc. in their locality. Updated employment

¹⁹ The six EM languages involved are Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesian, Thai, Hindi, Urdu and Nepali.

²⁰ The six EM languages are Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesian, Thai, Hindi, Urdu and Nepali.

information (including schedules of tailor-made employment briefings and inclusive job fairs) is disseminated to over 80 relevant organisations (including consulates) or individuals regularly. These organisations are also encouraged to refer EMs with employment needs to LD for services.

Promotion to employers

- 9.14 In tandem with promoting the working abilities of EMs, LD constantly reminds employers to consider the genuine occupational qualifications of the posts when specifying the language requirements and encourages them to provide bilingual job vacancy information. Pre-translated sample duty lists of some more common posts are devised to facilitate employers to provide relevant information in Chinese and English simultaneously when submitting vacancy orders via the iES website. Employers are also required to specify the four aspects of Chinese language requirements (i.e., reading and writing Chinese, speaking Cantonese and Putonghua) individually and encouraged to open up their vacancies to EM job seekers who have little knowledge of written Chinese as far as practicable. Furthermore, experience sharing sessions, in which representatives from NGOs serving EMs are invited to give briefings on EM cultures and the skills to communicate with them, are organized for employers to enhance their understanding in this regard. Success stories on employment of EMs to showcase real-life examples of inclusive workplaces have also been publicized in a promotional leaflet and uploaded to the employers' zone of the iES website.
- 9.15 In addition, LD has been making continuous efforts to canvass vacancies suitable for EM job seekers to enhance their employment opportunities. From 2015 to 2017, LD organized six large-scale inclusive job fairs and 35 district-based inclusive job fairs at which job seekers (including EMs) could submit job applications and attend interviews with employers on the spot. In recruiting employers to join these job fairs, special efforts were made to encourage employers to relax the Chinese language requirements so as to enable more EM job seekers to apply for the vacancies. To facilitate EMs to reinforce their work and integration skills, training bodies and social services organizations were also enlisted to provide information on training courses and support services for EMs at the large-scale inclusive job fairs. Likewise, in the course of shortlisting job seekers for employers participating in the employer-focused recruitment service, staff of job centres will actively encourage employers from different sectors to offer vacancies suitable for EM job seekers.
- 9.16 Since March 2015, LD has added an option of "Ethnic minorities are welcome for the post" in its vacancy order form for employers to choose from so as to facilitate its employment officers to match EM job seekers to suitable jobs and encourage them to apply for the posts. These vacancies are also listed out in the dedicated webpage for EM job seekers on the iES website for easy browsing by EM job seekers.

10. Feedback from stakeholders

Use of LD employment services

- 10.1 Out of the 130 EM participants in this study, about 31% were users of services of LD. Many EMs consulted indicated that they usually obtain information on job availability through family members and friends. They are of the view that jobs offered through LD are mainly manual workers at construction sites or service workers in, say, bars in Lan Kwai Fong. Some of them only seek jobs through LD if the economic situation is really bad and there is practically no job offers through family members and friends. This may partly explain why not all EM participants had used LD's employment services.

Nature of job vacancies

- 10.2 According to both EMs and staff of NGOs providing services to EMs, the job vacancies available through LD which have been translated into English are mainly in the catering (e.g. dish washers and waiters), construction and security services sectors. These jobs are not diverse enough to cater for the employment needs of EMs with different educational levels and skills. It was suggested that LD should make an effort to identify jobs, pitched at different levels of skills, for EMs. In particular, there are many EM job seekers possessing post-secondary or higher educational qualifications and other professional qualifications. Employers should benefit from the expertise these EM job seekers possess, in addition to their usually good English language ability. It was suggested that LD should proactively identify such job positions for EM job seekers.
- 10.3 Furthermore, EMs consulted expressed that the Chinese language requirement of many jobs offered to EMs, including English language teaching, book-keeping and IT jobs, is quite high. They opined that for a number of jobs like driver, ability to read and write Chinese might not be essential. It was suggested that LD should review such job advertisements and discuss with employers concerned to ascertain if the language requirements stated are in fact required for the jobs concerned. Furthermore, even though ability to read and write Chinese is not stated as one of the requirements in the job advertisements prepared in English and intended for EM job seekers, such requirement is verbally conveyed to EM job seekers when they attend job interviews with the employers. It was suggested that LD should proactively follow up such cases. Otherwise, merely translating the job advertisements into English or even EM languages by LD will not serve the intended purposes of helping EMs find jobs.
- 10.4 There are also incidents cited by EMs consulted that for jobs advertised in English, EM job seekers are often rejected by employers, even though the EM job seekers can speak English. Apparently, for job advertisements written in English, employers are not really prepared to employ EMs who can speak English. There is also room for LD to verify these job advertisements before posting them in the job centres.

Comments on quality of LD's services

- 10.5 There are comments from several EMs consulted that LD staff manning the telephone employment service hotline is unable to fully communicate with them in English. This has reduced the effectiveness of the hotline as far as helping EM job seekers is concerned. Some of the job opportunities posted at LD job centres are found to be not up-to-date. In a number of occasions, when EMs approach the employers concerned, they are told that the job vacancies have been filled.
- 10.6 Many stakeholders consulted pointed out that they were aware of the special counters at LD job centres with trainees of the YETP who can communicate in EM languages. These trainees are deployed as ESAs to help EM job seekers to make use of various job search facilities and services at the job centres, recruitment centres and job fairs. However, the role and responsibilities of these ESAs are rather limited. They only help break the language barriers when EM job seekers try to use the facilities and services at the centres or job fairs. They do not have knowledge about local job market. Nevertheless, the stakeholders are glad to note that starting from May 2017, LD has hired two full-time staff proficient in EM languages to partner with experienced employment officers at the Kowloon West Job Centre in Sham Shui Po and the Employment in One-stop in Tin Shui Wai to serve EM job seekers. This was considered as a step in the right direction and suggested that more such full-time staff should be employed.
- 10.7 Several stakeholders consulted indicated that they were also aware that in each job centre, there is also a resources corner to provide EMs with employment information in EM languages. Apart from the leaflets published by the EM centres, the resource corners are also equipped with a wide range of publications and practical guides on job search written in English, such as newspapers providing job vacancy information, books and magazines on job hunting tips, reference books on resume-writing, dictionaries in different EM languages, Chinese-English common vocabularies for job interviews, information on training and retraining (including Chinese language courses), etc. In case EM job seekers prefer to communicate in their own language, LD can arrange interpretation services by phone, which is supported by CHEER Centre. Such service is available from 8 am to 10 pm. However, several stakeholders consulted expressed the view that sometimes it takes a long time to wait for the interpretation service.
- 10.8 In general, most EMs consulted found the LD staff in the job centres, including the special counters providing personalized employment advisory service, friendly and courteous. Nevertheless, as far as finding jobs is concerned, their services are not helpful. Several of them who have made use of LD's employment services commented that they often have to wait for a long time before obtaining any response from LD. This negative experience could probably be one of the reasons why some EMs were reluctant to make use of LD's employment services. In addition, there are other channels like referrals through family members or friends and the availability of more user friendly, albeit profit-making, employment

services. For instance, several EMs pointed out that they can upload their profiles onto the employment agency website so that potential employers may simply review their profiles and contact them if they are suitable. It was suggested by EMs consulted that LD should explore ways and means of improving the effectiveness of their employment services in helping EMs getting employed.

- 10.9 Several EMs admitted that even though LD has provided them assistance in finding and applying for jobs, it depends to a great extent on whether local employers are willing to employ EMs. They pointed out that some employers may not be aware of EM cultures, including their religious rituals such as fasting during Ramadan and religious prayers (e.g. Salah five times a day), and may be reluctant to adjust the work or office arrangement (e.g. a quiet room for prayer). For these employers, they may be more reluctant to employ EMs. It was suggested that LD should take steps to educate and encourage employers to have a culturally inclusive workplace.

Suggestions for LD

- 10.10 To help employers, it was suggested that LD should, in collaboration with NGOs, organize seminars for employers to enhance their cultural sensitivity, by explaining to employers the working habits and religious practices of EMs. This will facilitate the adoption of good practices conducive to better relationship between EMs and their local Chinese counterparts in the workplace, enabling EMs to more effectively use their knowledge and skills to the benefits of employers, EM and local Chinese employees. For instance, consideration could be given by employers to allow more flexibility in working hours for EM women who may have to attend to their household work. The provision of a quiet room for prayer may also be considered. For the catering industry, employers could arrange tasks for EMs who are Muslims that do not require them to touch pork. In short, LD should help employers understand differences in work practices between EM and non-EM employees. Hopefully this would help adjust the views of some employers in the employment of EMs, which will go a long way to helping EMs more actively participate in the labour market. Similarly, talks or seminars should also be organized for EM job seekers on the local labour market conditions, including the usual work habit and expectations of employers.
- 10.11 A number of stakeholders believe that increasingly more employers are prepared to employ EMs. As long as employers do not perceive some of EMs' behaviour in the workplace, due mainly to their cultural or religious practices which may look unfamiliar and somewhat unacceptable, as problems, there should be room for adaptation on the part of both employers and EM employees.
- 10.12 The general feeling among many stakeholders consulted is that the services of LD offered to EM job seekers have improved a lot in recent years. For EMs who have had bad experience using LD's services and are put off from approaching LD anymore for help in finding jobs, it was suggested that LD should mount a publicity drive to promote their employment services to

EMs, quoting where applicable success stories. Hopefully, this will increase willingness of EM job seekers in using LD's services.

Practices of NGOs considered effective

- 10.13 In the course of the study, opportunity was taken to visit NGOs providing services to EMs. One NGO visited provides follow-up services after they have successfully secured employment for EMs. The follow-up services include providing employers with information on EM cultures and assist both employers and EM employees to understand and adapt to each other's work practices and expectations. Several NGOs also shared the view that such follow-up services are very helpful to both employers and EM employees. They find that a list of "do's and don'ts" in the workplace is often very useful to both employers and EM employees.

11. Response from LD

- 11.1 The response from LD on the feedback from stakeholders is set out in **Appendix 3** to this report.

VI. EMPLOYEES RETRAINING BOARD

12. Services provided by ERB

- 12.1 ERB co-ordinates, funds and monitors training courses and services that are market-driven and employment-oriented so as to meet the changing needs of the employment market. It has appointed about 90 training bodies with around 400 training centres across the territory to provide training courses and services. Many of the training bodies are NGOs, such as New Home Association Limited, Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service, Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Lady MacLehose Centre, Caritas - Hong Kong, Yan Oi Tong Limited, Christian Action, Hong Kong Employment Development Service Limited and Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service. Most of these NGOs are active in engaging EMs.
- 12.2 Since 2007, ERB provides dedicated training courses delivered in English to suit EMs' aspirations and training needs. In 2017-18, ERB reserves 800 training places to offer a total of 38 dedicated training courses for EMs, including 12 full-time placement-tied training courses and 26 half-day or evening "Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus" and generic skills training courses. Trainees of "Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus" and generic skills training courses only need to attend half-day or evening classes for 3-4 hours a day in general. In addition, ERB offers training courses targeting non-engaged EM youths aged 15 to 24 under its Youth Training Programme. Since October 2016, ERB also subsidises training bodies to develop supplementary training materials and provide learning support services to facilitate EMs who can speak and comprehend Cantonese to attend some 500 training courses provided to members of the public.
- 12.3 According to ERB's Three-year Strategic Plan for 2017-18 to 2019-20, the goal of "Training for empowerment, employment for self-actualization" is to serve social groups with special needs, including EMs. The placement-tied and non-placement-tied courses dedicated for EMs cover fields such as property management & security, electrical & mechanical services, construction & renovation, beauty therapy, hairdressing, hotel, tourism, business, catering and social services (such as community interpreter training).²¹ The dedicated courses for EMs under the industries of property management & security, construction & renovation and electrical & mechanical services are mainly preparation courses for obtaining relevant recognition or sitting examinations, such as security personnel permit recognised by the Security and Guarding Services Industry Authority, the Intermediate Trade Test-Plumber, the Trade Tests for Electricians I (Trade Knowledge), etc.
- 12.4 Interpretation services in class by teaching assistants who can speak English and EM languages are arranged where necessary to enhance the effectiveness of learning. EMs on completion of placement-tied training courses dedicated for EMs are provided with a six-month placement follow-up service to help them land on jobs, whereas a three-month placement follow-up period is generally provided for other trainees. EMs

²¹ ERB Course prospectus (October 2017 – March 2018) – Training for Ethnic Minorities

were placed to diverse job types, including interpreters, proof-reading assistants, editors, nail technicians, kitchen assistants, barista and beauticians.

- 12.5 To facilitate EMs who cannot commit their time for the full length of a course, the Modular Certificates Accumulation Scheme has been launched in 2016 so that EMs as well as other learners can accumulate certificates obtained through several shorter courses in order to acquire a fully recognized qualification which is only possible previously through attending a course of longer duration.
- 12.6 ERB has been handling on a flexible basis the requirement of class size for training courses dedicated for EMs. In 2013-14 and 2014-15, ERB collaborated with HAD to organise “Taster Programme” in HAD’s EM centres on a pilot basis. Furthermore, ERB has been offering dedicated training courses at these EM centres since 2015-16. Through reaching out to EMs in these EM centres, ERB encourages EMs to enrol in training courses offered by ERB. In 2015-16 and 2016-17, 12 classes were provided at the EM centres.
- 12.7 ERB has put in place a comprehensive monitoring system and established performance indicators for different functional areas. The Key Performance Indicators include capacity utilisation rate, attendance rate, graduation rate and placement rate. The respective benchmarks are 85%, 80%, 80% and 50%. In 2016-17, all the Key Performance Indicators of the courses dedicated for EMs were met.
- 12.8 ERB reviews from time to time the training courses and services for EMs, and seeks the views of stakeholders in the process. On a periodic basis, ERB meets with the Focus Group on Training for Ethnic Minorities to discuss, among other things, the training and employment needs of EMs. The Focus Group comprises representatives of EM groups, social services organisations, training bodies, employers and relevant government bodies. ERB conducts opinion surveys for each class to measure the satisfaction of trainees and collect their opinions. During the period from 2015-16 to 2016-17, about 560 trainees completed the dedicated courses for EMs and 97% of them were satisfied with the training services provided by ERB. In addition, the training consultants of ERB would visit NGOs and district organisations to meet with EMs to understand their training needs.
- 12.9 To promote the understanding of the culture of EMs and enhance the sensitivity of staff in rendering services to EMs, ERB organised workshops in collaboration with different organisations, including Hong Kong Unison Limited, the Centre for Advancement of Chinese Language Education and Research of the University of Hong Kong and Equal Opportunities Commission, on the characteristics of EMs for the staff of ERB and training bodies.

Promoting ERB’s services

- 12.10 To promote the programme to the EM community, pamphlets in English and six ethnic minority languages (including Hindi, Urdu, Nepali,

Indonesian, Tagalog and Thai) are published. The Course Prospectus is prepared in English, and advertisements are placed in newspapers in English, Urdu and Nepali to promote the courses for the EMs.

- 12.11 ERB has been in close contact with the EM centres operated by NGOs and funded by HAD in the dissemination of course and service information to EMs. Promotional leaflets are delivered through home visits or outreaching activities under, say, the “Ambassador Scheme” by HAD and the EM centres operated by NGOs funded by HAD. The information of ERB courses and services is also featured in the “Your Guide to Services in Hong Kong” published by HAD for EMs.
- 12.12 The promotional leaflets and Course Prospectus are distributed through diverse channels, including ERB Service Centres, ERB Service Spots, Practical Skills Training and Assessment Centre, training bodies offering EM courses, Job Centres of LD, Home Affairs Enquiry Centres, EM centres and NGOs under the “Ambassador Scheme” of HAD, NGOs and associations serving EMs such as the Indian Chamber of Commerce, schools with more EM students, temples and mosques including Jamiah Masjid/Shelley Street Mosque, Masjid Ammar & Osman Ramju Sadick Islamic Centre, Kowloon Mosque and Islamic Centre, Sham Shui Po KNM Islamic Education Centre, Hindu Temple - Happy Valley and Khalsa Diwan (Sikh Temple), etc.
- 12.13 Besides, EMs can also make use of an array of training and employment support services, including enquiry and enrolment services for training courses, industry seminars and taster courses, workshops and training consultancy service, at the two ERB Service Centres and the ten ERB Service Spots set up in Kwai Tsing and Tsuen Wan. More “ERB Service Spots” will be launched in Kowloon West covering Yau Tsim Mong, Sham Shui Po and Kowloon City districts in 2018-19.
- 12.14 Furthermore, ERB sponsors training bodies to organise district-based activities, including district guided tours, course and industry exhibitions as well as job fairs to disseminate training and employment information to members of the public, including EMs, to enhance their employment opportunities.
- 12.15 In addition, ERB organizes “Career Talks for School” for upper secondary EM students with a view to assisting them in formulating future learning and career plans. Employer representatives of various industries are invited to share industry prospects, entry requirements and interviewing skills with students.

13. Feedback from stakeholders

- 13.1 Some EMs consulted indicated that they were not aware of the services of ERB. When they were shown ERB promotional leaflets during focus group discussions, they were interested. The low level of awareness among EMs consulted may explain their low participation in training courses offered by ERB. Several EMs consulted indicated that ERB courses for EMs mainly

focus on language training, to the neglect of other skills related training relevant to local labour market, apart from courses on catering and construction. In addition, it was suggested that training on job interview skills should be offered to EMs.

- 13.2 For language courses, adverse comments on the quality of training were given by a number of EMs consulted. For instance, they pointed out that changes of lecturers affected the coherence and effectiveness of some courses.
- 13.3 A number of EMs consulted also commented that applications for ERB courses by some of them or their friends were rejected by ERB on the grounds that their qualifications, some of which were obtained in their home countries, exceeded the highest level accepted for ERB courses. On the other hand, when these EMs applied for jobs, including civil service jobs, their qualifications obtained in their home countries were considered not accepted as equivalent comparable qualifications obtained locally. It was suggested that there should be better coordination between ERB and relevant government departments. Furthermore, it is unfair for EM course applicants to have their qualifications validated by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) which charges a fee most EMs cannot afford. The research team noted that the CoP, in its meeting on 29 May 2017, had agreed to launch a Community Care Fund assistance programme to subsidise non-local qualification holders with financial needs to apply for qualification assessment for general purpose by HKCAAVQ. Starting from September 2017, the three-year programme is expected to benefit 3 000 persons.²²
- 13.4 It was commented by several EMs consulted that there is restriction on the number of ERB courses an applicant can apply. If a course an applicant applied has been cancelled due to insufficient number of applications, the applicant has to cancel his/her application before he/she can apply for another ERB course. It was suggested that ERB should review this arrangement and allow more flexibility for applicants, as the cancellation of courses, especially those for EMs, due to insufficient applicants, is not uncommon.
- 13.5 Several stakeholders consulted, such as professors and NGOs, stressed that the pace of EMs in learning to speak Cantonese is much slower than say newly arrived immigrants from Mainland China. ERB should take this into account in organising such courses for EMs. It would also be useful to provide EM learners with more opportunities to interact with their Chinese counterparts on the use of Cantonese who, in turn, may learn or practise their spoken English.
- 13.6 Several stakeholders expressed that job opportunities, including those referred by LD, are quite limited in terms of nature of work and skill requirements. Many job positions available are security guards and construction site labourers which do not require training certificates from

²² Secretariat of the Commission on Poverty (June 2017), "Poverty situation of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong", paper presented to Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities, on 12 June 2017, LC Paper No. CB(2)1571/16-17(01).

ERB as a requisite. EM trainees found that even after their ERB training, they can still only find the same types of job positions as before training. This may also explain why there is a lack of interest among EMs in attending ERB courses. It was suggested that there should be more coordination between LD and ERB in aligning employers' requirements with training.

- 13.7 It was pointed out that the duration of 6 – 8 hours daily for most of the courses for EMs is not geared to the life practices of many EMs. For EMs who have part-time jobs or who have to take care of their children attending schools, they can only spare 2 – 3 hours to attend classes. This may also be one of the reasons accounting for the low participation in full-time training among EMs. It was suggested that ERB should review this arrangement.
- 13.8 A number of stakeholders consulted pointed out that courses targeting for EMs are mainly provided through NGOs that serve EMs. They were glad to note ERB reviews the training needs of EMs periodically through the focus group discussions with employers, EM representatives, NGOs other than training bodies operating ERB courses, Equal Opportunities Commission, HAD and Hong Kong Unison. However, such focus group discussions are usually held in the afternoon of weekdays, making it difficult for EMs who are employed to attend and voice their opinions. It was suggested that the ERB should try to organize these focus group discussions at time more convenient to EMs who are employed (e.g. during weekends or in the evenings).
- 13.9 According to several stakeholders consulted, interpretation course is popular among EMs. EMs perceive there are employment opportunities for EM interpreters. For those EMs who have attended the course, they find the training very useful. There are videos, explanations about concepts on interpretation and a chance to practice. However, it was commented that the educational qualification required is set at Secondary 5, which is not quite adequate for interpretation work. Furthermore, the vocabulary used in training is a bit outdated. It was suggested that more interpretation training courses should be offered, covering different EM languages such as Hindi, Urdu and Nepali.
- 13.10 On the part of course providers, it was opined that the requirement on the minimum class size has created uncertainty for them, as it is often not possible to fill the class with sufficient number of EM learners. This may explain the reluctance of some course providers in conducting ERB courses for EMs. It was suggested that ERB should lower the minimum class size further in order to encourage more NGOs to organize courses for EMs, to take into account the fact that not many EMs are interested in attending training courses. With more NGOs running courses for EMs, it will inevitably expand the reach of training to more EMs.

14. Response from ERB

- 14.1 The response from ERB on the feedback of stakeholders is set out in **Appendix 3** to this report.

VII. SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT

15. Services provided by SWD

- 15.1 In planning and implementing welfare services, SWD has made reference to the statistics and information on EMs to better understand the social needs of ethnic minorities. There is a designated person in each administrative district to render internal support to district colleagues for providing welfare services to ethnic minorities.²³ To promote racial equality and enhance the equal access to relevant welfare services, key SWD service pamphlets are offered in 6 EM languages.²⁴ They are available at service centres and also online. Besides, an eye-catching icon “Information for EM” has been incorporated into SWD’s Internet homepage to facilitate EMs’ easy access to information. In addition, SWD has employed EMs as Welfare Support and Liaison Assistants in IFSCs to assist EMs who seek for help there.²⁵
- 15.2 To enhance racial and cultural sensitivity, training and workshops on provisions in the Race Discrimination Ordinance and related guidelines, as well as on understanding of service users from EM groups, are given to SWD and staff of NGOs regularly.²⁶ “Points-to-note in providing welfare services for ethnic minorities” (Points-to-Note) are issued to social workers / social security staff of concerned units, so as to provide reference for service units in serving EM groups. It includes cultural practices of various EM groups and ways to arrange suitable interpretation and translation services, etc.²⁷ Besides, SWD has already put in place measures to notify the EMs about their right to access to interpretation and translation services and the channels to access the social welfare services. These measures include posting up notices in multiple EM languages at reception counters and staff will serve all EMs a copy of the said notice in their EM languages when they turn up for enquiries/ services. Moreover, the information is also available on SWD’s homepage to facilitate easy access by EMs, the public, staff of SWD and NGOs. In addition, SWD organizes workshops through HAD’s SHINE Centre to promote the available welfare services, informing EMs as well their rights.
- 15.3 Furthermore, interpretation service is available if needed. Since March 2011, the interpretation service can be delivered through the web cameras linking CHEER Centre and 10 SWD service centres.²⁸ The web-cam facilities in SWD service centres facilitate tripartite video conferencing among service users, social workers (including departmental units and IFSCs/ ISCs operated by NGOs)/ social security staff and interpreters when needed. SWD Hotline has provided callers of EM groups with instant

²³ SWD (September 2017), “Existing and Planned Measures on the Promotion of Equality for Ethnic Minorities: Social Welfare”.

²⁴ The six EM languages are Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai and Urdu.

²⁵ Social Welfare Department (2015). *Existing and Planned Measures on the Promotion of Equality for Ethnic Minorities*.

²⁶ Social Welfare Department (2015). *Existing and Planned Measures on the Promotion of Equality for Ethnic Minorities*.

²⁷ SWD (September 2017), “Existing and Planned Measures on the Promotion of Equality for Ethnic Minorities: Social Welfare”.

²⁸ Social Welfare Department (2015). *Existing and Planned Measures on the Promotion of Equality for Ethnic Minorities*.

access to telephone interpretation service in 7 common EM languages so as to facilitate their welfare service enquiry.²⁹

16. Feedback from stakeholders

- 16.1 Many EMs consulted indicated that they know SWD when they apply for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or Old Age Allowance. However, they do not know other services provided by SWD. It was opined by a number of EMs consulted that while they are aware that SWD has made an effort to promote their services to EMs, through for example information leaflets and service information/ notices written in EM languages available at service centres and also online, the promotional approach has not helped raise EMs' awareness of the availability of such services.
- 16.2 In addition, for activities run by NGOs, information leaflets and notices are written in Chinese. This has reduced considerably the chance of EMs who can speak Cantonese to participate in activities not organized specifically for EMs, thereby further inhibiting integration of EMs in the local community through activities in which both EMs and their local Chinese counterparts participate.
- 16.3 Furthermore, as revealed by EMs, when they approach the service counters of centres operated or subvented by SWD, they are seldom offered interpretation services even though there are noticeable communication gaps between EMs seeking services on the one hand and frontline staff providing the services on the other. It was suggested that frontline staff of SWD should proactively find out if interpretation services are required.
- 16.4 More specifically, several EMs consulted pointed out that services provided by subvented youth centres such as counselling are mainly conducted in Cantonese. This has discouraged EMs from seeking help from youth centres. Some EMs also had the impression that frontline staff at youth centres do not welcome EMs seeking help from them. In cases where such help is sought, interpretation is often not readily available to bridge the communication gaps.
- 16.5 Several EMs also shared their experience seeking help from IFSCs. As many EMs have previous experience or have been told by their friends that interpretation service is not readily available, they have to ask their family members, EM friends or EM social workers to accompany them to IFSCs. As matters like domestic violence is not something EMs would like to share with their family members and EM friends, this has deterred EMs suffering from domestic violence, which is quite common in the EM community, from seeking help from IFSCs. Besides, it is highly undesirable if family members, especially children, of EMs are asked to act as translators for EMs suffering from domestic violence when they are seeking help from IFSCs. EM staff of NGOs consulted also shared their experience of being asked to accompany EMs to SWD to serve as "interpreters". The reasons

²⁹ SWD (September 2017), "Existing and Planned Measures on the Promotion of Equality for Ethnic Minorities: Social Welfare".

are probably that the interpretation services are not provided free of charge, and that there may be resource limitations with the interpretation services of, say, CHEER Centre.

- 16.6 The research team noted that staff of SWD appeared to share a general observation that EMs have a traditional culture of respecting the elderly and prefer to be self-reliant as far as taking care of their elderly family members is concerned. On the other hand, EMs consulted stressed that there is demand for elderly services among EM elderly, but the services currently provided by elderly centres are limited and not meeting their needs. For instance, most activities and communications between social workers and elderly members of elderly centres are conducted in Chinese.

17. Response from SWD

- 17.1 The response from SWD on the views of stakeholders is set out in **Appendix 3** to this report.

VIII. INTERPRETATION SERVICES

18. Interpretation services for EMs

- 18.1 It transpires from the above discussion that one of the factors that has affected the effectiveness of services provided to EMs and the willingness of EMs in using public services is the language barrier that may exist between EMs and service providers.
- 18.2 The Administrative Guidelines provide general guidance to relevant government bureaux, departments and public authorities to ensure equal access by ethnic minorities to public services in key areas concerned, and to take this into account in their formulation, implementation and review of relevant policies and measures. Since the interpretation needs of EMs vary depending on the public services they are accessing to, the concerned bureaux and departments would consider the actual situation and adopt appropriate procedures to provide interpretation services to EMs in need. They may make use of the general interpretation and translation services provided by the CHEER Centre or other service providers that meet their specific needs, especially when interpretation services are in specialized areas or extensive on-site interpretation services are required.
- 18.3 For instance, interpretation services covering 18 EM languages are provided for in public hospitals and clinics under the Hospital Authority (HA) primarily through a service contractor, the HKSKH Lady MacLehose Centre, part-time court interpreters and relevant consulates. At present, the service contractor employs more than 100 interpreters who have all received training in medical-related knowledge as well as communication skills. The HA has put in place guidelines on the arrangement of interpretation services. HA staff will contact the contractor's 24-hour call centre to arrange on-site or telephone interpretation services according to the needs of each case or upon request of patients. For scheduled services (such as medical appointment at the general outpatient and specialist clinics), patients may request the hospital/clinic concerned to arrange interpretation services in advance. For non-scheduled service (such as emergency hospital admission), hospital staff will arrange immediate provision of telephone interpretation services or on-site interpretation services as soon as possible.

Interpretation services provided by the CHEER Centre

Services available

- 18.4 HAD has commissioned the Hong Kong Christian Service to operate the CHEER Centre. Besides basic services such as tailor-made classes and integration programmes, the centre also provides general interpretation and translation services of seven EM languages (Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi, Urdu, Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog and Thai) as its ancillary service. It is one of the translation and interpretation service providers which departments may

choose. Interpretation services are mainly instant telephone interpretation and enquiry services. Depending on the availability of resources, on-site interpretation or simultaneous interpretation services can also be arranged. However, interpretation and translation services involving specialised or professional areas do not fall within the service scope of the centre. In 2015-16, the centre performed over 3 200 telephone interpretation and enquiry services and around 700 on-site interpretation services.

- 18.5 According to the CHEER Centre, interpreters are hired through open recruitments via advertisements, EM consulates and EM groups. All of their interpreters have at least completed secondary education in Hong Kong or overseas and are able to communicate in spoken and written English and at least one EM language. Apart from tests at the time of recruitment, regular assessment and trainings of the interpreters are arranged. Difficulties have been encountered in recruiting interpreters as they have to work on shifts. It is also very difficult to recruit interpreters who are competent in both Chinese and English, apart from EM languages.

Views of stakeholders

- 18.6 Most EMs consulted are not aware of the interpretation services provided by the CHEER Centre. For those who have used the services, they commented that they often had to wait for a long time before the interpretation services were available over the phone. Some EMs considered that the interpreters were not fluent enough in the EM languages they are supposed to interpret and translate.
- 18.7 For EMs who can speak English but not Chinese, frontline staff of government departments appear to have the impression that these EMs do not need interpretation services which are mainly for translation between EM languages and English. However, most EMs consulted considered that many frontline staff of government departments do not speak English well and do not understand what EMs say in English. This has seriously affected the quality and adequacy of service delivery. Furthermore, there is a tendency of frontline staff to try to avoid this communication problem by asking EMs concerned to go to another section of the department, another government department or NGOs offering services to EMs.

IX. PROMOTION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

19. Views of stakeholders

- 19.1 One of the reasons for the low awareness among EMs of public services may be related to the effectiveness of promotional efforts undertaken by government departments and quasi-governmental organizations. Thus, opportunities have been taken to probe further views of stakeholders consulted on matters related to the promotion of public services.

Current inadequacies

- 19.2 As discussed above, the four governmental and quasi-governmental organizations have devoted much efforts and resources in promoting their services through temples, mosques, EM groceries and parks where EMs usually go. However, research findings indicate that the awareness of public services among the EMs consulted is quite low. Though many stakeholders consulted admitted that temples and mosques are venues to reach EMs, it would be more effective if the messages are delivered through their religious leaders or Imam. There are simply too many advertisements displayed at, say, grocery stores such that EMs may not be aware of them. Besides, many EMs have shifted to local supermarkets in buying their daily necessities.
- 19.3 In addition, a number of stakeholders opined that government or NGO staff responsible for promotion may not be familiar with the habits of EMs. The practice of promoting services for EMs through TVs or local radio stations is considered not quite effective as many EMs do not watch local TVs or listen to local radio programmes. Some EM youngsters even are not aware of any local radio stations.
- 19.4 While publicity materials written in EM languages help explain to EMs the availability of public services, the EMs consulted expressed that there are often translation errors in such publicity materials. Parts of the translated contents are sometimes not related to the intended message of the publicity measures, or even misleading as the phrases are expressed in reverse direction. In any case, many EMs do not rely on published materials on information related to public services. They often prefer to consult their EMs friends on the availability of public services.

Suggested measures

- 19.5 Many stakeholders consulted opined that the most effective means of disseminating information on services to EMs is through schools and consulates. Schools in particular should be approached as a matter of priority as most, if not all, parents with children attending schools maintain regular communication with schools directly or indirectly. Employers are also a possible dissemination channel. EMs attending post-secondary education institutions could also act as the “middle-man” in conveying

information about public services to their family members and friends, or through the social media for a much wider dissemination.

- 19.6 It was also suggested that government clinics could also be suitable venues to promote public services. In fact, the research team was given to understand that the CHEER Centre has deployed an outreach team to distribute promotional leaflets at health centres (e.g. maternal and child health centres and elderly health centres). If there are EMs present, the outreach team will try to connect and engage them.
- 19.7 In addition, most EMs consulted suggested that the government should consider promoting services to EMs through EM organizations like temples and mosques. Staff of departments concerned could also participate in EM activities organized by these organizations. In fact, many NGOs have been trying to contact and engage EMs through EM organizations. An EM association advises that they are the best agent to promote and facilitate EM-tied services as they know the EM cultures best.
- 19.8 Besides, advertisements in the Internet could also be considered. A more proactive measure suggested is to develop mobile phone applications on Android or iOS, written in EM languages, to help EMs find public services of their choice near their locations.
- 19.9 It was also suggested by several stakeholders consulted that consideration should be given to disseminating information on public services to EMs through posters or advertisements in MTR. English media channels like South China Morning Post, Hong Kong Standard and TVB Pearl could also be used, preferably in EM languages.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

20. General observations and recommendations

Input/output versus outcomes

- 20.1 Though information on services of HAD, LD, ERB and SWD provided to EMs, as presented above, is based on relevant publications of the government and the four organizations concerned, and Legislative Council papers, similar information has also been gathered by the research team through visits paid to offices of the four organizations and HA (on interpretation services). After views have been obtained from the stakeholders, the research team has also held meetings with representatives of the four organizations to share with them the initial study findings and listen to their views. The research team believes that such two-way communication is conducive to formulating recommendations useful to the four organizations. Needless to say, the study is independently conducted by the research team members who adheres strictly to professional standards expected of any study of this nature.
- 20.2 In the course of discussions with representatives of the HAD, LD, ERB, SWD and HA (on interpretation services), the research team is impressed by the efforts of these organizations, many of which are introduced in recent years, in going extra miles to reach out to EMs, and devise new services or adapt existing services to meet the needs of EMs. Services available to EMs, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, have improved in recent years. The research team was told that some of the new services are provided with no extra resources in the midst of availability of limited resources.
- 20.3 On the other hand, throughout the entire study, feedback from stakeholders is not at all favourable, as discussed in the chapters above. These rather negative comments by some stakeholders consulted reflect the outcomes as perceived by them, which may be contrasted to the efforts made by the government.
- 20.4 As noted in the EM Poverty Report, EMs are more vulnerable to poverty risk³⁰ and hence should have a greater need for public services in their integration into the local community. Accordingly, the research team believes that while efforts should continue to improve public services available to EMs, attention should also be given to evaluate the impact of public services on outcomes, accompanied by a proper assessment of the needs of EMs. Indeed, findings from the EM Poverty Report show that there are views among EMs that some public services were not provided in a way which could fully address the special needs of EMs.³¹

³⁰ According to the EM Poverty Report, the poverty rate of EMs of South Asian ethnicity (after policy intervention) was 23.0%, which was higher than that of the overall population of 14.7%. Within the South Asian EMs, the poverty rate of Pakistanis was the highest, at 48.6%.

³¹ Secretariat of the Commission on Poverty (June 2017), "Poverty situation of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong", paper presented to Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities, on 12 June 2017, LC Paper No. CB(2)1571/16-17(01).

- 20.5 According to the Administrative Guidelines, public authorities “should consider establishing indicators and / or targets as appropriate. Such indicators and targets to be set should aim to achieve one or more of the following objectives: (a) promoting measures to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; (b) stepping up measures to promote racial equality; (c) enhancing access to public services by ethnic minorities; and (d) gauging the effect of measures taken.”

Recommendation 1

- 20.6 *Whilst it is noted that certain indicators have been put in place by departments concerned to facilitate examination of the outcomes of services provided by them to EMs, and to assess if such outcomes are conducive to equal access to public services, it is recommended that HAD, LD, ERB and SWD should consider reviewing and, if applicable, refining their indicators from time to time taking into account the changing needs of EMs, so as to better assess the outcomes of their services for further service improvement.*

Concerted publicity to promote public services

- 20.7 As discussed above, one of the reasons quoted by EMs for not using public services is that they have had bad experience previously using public services, or have heard about bad experience of other EMs in using public services. They may not be aware that public services for EMs have improved a lot in recent years. It is thus necessary to correct such a misconception.
- 20.8 Currently, most publicity measures mounted by individual government departments and quasi-governmental organizations publicizing services are provided by them separately. It may be noted that services provided by different government departments and quasi-governmental organizations are often inter-related. EMs who have completed language classes offered by EM centres may find language courses offered by ERB helpful in further strengthening their Chinese language skills. Those who have completed ERB skills-based training will likely want to find jobs through LD employment services that call for the knowledge and skills they have acquired through ERB training. Through participating in activities organized by EM centres and the referral services, EMs may come to know more about family, youth and elderly services provided by SWD and NGOs funded by SWD. In other words, services provided by HAD, LD, ERB and SWD could be packaged and promoted in a holistic manner, to demonstrate how these services taken together could help EMs integrate into the local community.
- 20.9 Furthermore, success stories should also be widely publicized. Findings of any studies to examine the outcomes of the use of public services, as proposed above, should also be widely disseminated to cast a much more positive image of public services. Indeed, according to the Administrative Guidelines, relevant public authorities “should keep proper records of the

assessments and improvements made as a result. This would be useful for the purpose of monitoring and future reviews. They should also consider appropriate publicity arrangements to facilitate the public to understand their action taken to promote racial equality.”

Recommendation 2

- 20.10 *It is recommended that a concerted effort be made by HAD, LD, ERB and SWD to publicize in a holistic manner their services, especially new measures introduced in recent years to help EMs, highlighting in particular success stories.*

Engaging EMs and building mutual trust

- 20.11 In the course of conducting the study, a number of stakeholders consulted opined that trust and relationship are the key factors to engaging EMs, given that it is the common feeling among many EMs that they are discriminated or marginalised. A number of NGOs usually outreach the EMs (particularly the hidden ones) through home visits and the snowball approach. They try to attract EMs to their centres through activities that EM (particularly women) are interested. Once the attachment is formed, their comfort zone is more likely to be stretched subtly and they are more willing to express/ voice their needs. Through this step-by-step engagement process, NGOs can identify and design corresponding services accordingly. Furthermore, NGOs can spread their message (such as available public services) through EMs’ word of mouth to their families and social network.
- 20.12 Such engagement process requires a sustained effort spanning a number of years. Ad hoc and piece-meal approach will not be effective. NGOs rather than government departments are likely to be more receptive to EMs and are more accustomed to this engagement approach. The success of EM centres in organizing activities for EMs demonstrates that delivery of public services through NGOs, or in partnership with NGOs works.

Recommendation 3

- 20.13 *It is recommended that in delivery of public services, consideration should be given to funding NGOs to provide the services and to delivering the services in partnership with NGOs, with NGOs playing the role of engaging EMs and facilitating the development of mutual trust between EMs and the service providers.*
- 20.14 To help EMs integrate into the workplace, it was suggested that consideration should be given to organizing on-the-job training for EMs, with employers who are supportive. Through such training, EMs have the opportunity of learning Chinese and putting what they have learnt into practice immediately. They can also pick up Chinese terms and vocabulary used in the workplace. This is far more effective than classroom-based language training, as the training can be tailored to the workplace and to a particular trade and occupation. In addition, EMs could learn and adapt to

the work style of their local Chinese counterparts.

Recommendation 4

- 20.15 *It is recommended that in delivery of public services, consideration should be given to organizing on-the-job training for EMs, through the concerted efforts of employers, relevant government departments, and NGOs with funding support from government, with a view to building mutual trust between EMs and employers.*

21. Specific observations and recommendations

Services provided by HAD

Meeting the different and diverse needs of EMs

- 21.1 In the course of conducting the study, the research team has come across EMs who have been in Hong Kong for a number of years and are participating in several activities of an EM centre, or activities of several EM centres as well as those of NGOs. Some of them find the language classes too elementary and computer class too basic. On the other hand, there are also EMs who have newly arrived in Hong Kong and are participating activities of the EM centres, and find the services there helpful. Needless to say, the needs of EMs are different and diverse. It is therefore important to define the target users for services provided in the EM centres, otherwise resources would be spread too thin, the centres would lack focus in their work and fail to make any positive impact.

Recommendation 5

- 21.2 *It is recommended that consideration should be given by EM centres to review the operation of EM centres to see if they are meeting the different and diverse needs of EMs to facilitate their integration into the community.*

Focus on newly arrived EMs

- 21.3 Based on feedback from stakeholders consulted, there are few orientation programmes, if any, provided to EMs who have recently arrived in Hong Kong. These EMs, especially those who do not speak Chinese or English, will have great difficulties adapting to life in Hong Kong. Their needs for public services are likely to be more acute than EMs who have been in Hong Kong for fairly long time.
- 21.4 The research team is given to understand that HAD has commissioned the International Social Service - Hong Kong Branch to implement an ambassador scheme to provide outreach services to disadvantaged groups of EMs. The commissioned organization arranges persons with similar background and experience as ambassadors to proactively contact the EMs in need by means of home visits and visits to their usual gathering places, introducing to them information on public services available and making

referrals to relevant government departments for specific follow-up, where necessary. The commissioned NGO would conduct outreach services in all five regions of Hong Kong as set out in the relevant service agreement, namely Hong Kong Island, Kowloon East, Kowloon West, New Territories East and New Territories West.

Recommendation 6

- 21.5 *It is recommended that HAD should consider devising a mechanism for following up EMs newly arrived in Hong Kong and commission NGOs to proactively contact these EMs and provide them with services including orientation programmes and language classes geared to the needs of newly arrived EMs.*

Integration is the key

- 21.6 Several EMs consulted felt that activities of EM centres are recreational in nature. Activities organized by the EM centres are mainly, if not all, attended by EMs. Activities aimed at integration, with participation from local Chinese, are ad hoc and piece meal, and are not organized on a sustained basis.
- 21.7 The research team has visited NGOs that are providing services for both local Chinese and EMs. The unit that is serving EMs is co-located in the same premises as other services serving local Chinese. EMs come into daily contact with their local counterparts who are receiving the same or similar services from the NGO. Organizing activities involving both EMs and local Chinese by the same NGO in the same venue is obviously more convenient.
- 21.8 The research team has visited a number of NGOs, other than the EM centres, that are actively involved in providing services to EMs. It goes without saying that there is definitely surplus demand, especially in localities where there is no EM centre.

Recommendation 7

- 21.9 *It is recommended that HAD should actively consider funding more NGOs to providing services to EMs, based on a systematic assessment of demand, with emphasis primarily placed on integration through activities involving both EMs and local Chinese.*

Increased support to EM centres

- 21.10 Members of the Legislative Council have expressed concern about the adequacy of the operational funding provided by the Government to EM centres.³² As discussed above, the two-year contract has unnecessarily

³² Legislative Council Secretariat (April 2017), "Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 10 April 2017", paper presented to Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities, LC Paper No. CB(2)1119/16-17(04).

restraint the ability of the centres in planning their services, especially services to EM students through schools.

Recommendation 8

- 21.11 *It is recommended that HAD should review the adequacy of funding to EM centres and consider extending the contract to EM centres to more than two years.*

Services provided by LD

- 21.12 As discussed above, LD provides an impressively wide range of employment services to EM job seekers, with many new initiatives such as implementing the ESA Programme for Ethnic Minorities and the pilot scheme on the deployment of two Employment Assistants proficient in EM languages. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the ultimate objective of these services is to help EM job seekers find employment, as part of government's efforts in promoting integration, racial equality and racial harmony.
- 21.13 As commented by some Legislative Council Members, the "various employment services offered by the Labour Department could not effectively assist EMs to secure jobs on a sustainable basis, as manifested in the low success rate of job matching for EMs".³³ According to the government, the unemployment rate of the poor South Asian households with children was 16.6%, higher than that of the overall poor households with children of 11.1%.³⁴
- 21.14. From discussions with stakeholders, it transpires that follow-up services are helpful in facilitating EM job seekers in integration in the local work place.
- 21.15 The research team has the opportunity of consulting several NGOs on their practice of providing follow-up services after they have successfully secured employment for EMs. The follow-up services provided by one of the NGOs include providing employers with information on EM cultures and assist both employers and EM employees to understand and adapt to each other's work practices and expectations. They find that a list of "do's and don'ts" in the workplace is often very useful to both employers and EM employees. Such approach is however rather ad hoc and piece-meal, subject to the constraints of both resources and employer networking of NGOs concerned.
- 21.16 A number of stakeholders remarked that many EMs come to Hong Kong, bringing in knowledge and expertise that Hong Kong lacks but needs. For example, many EMs have in-depth knowledge about their culture and good networks in their home countries. These are assets that Hong Kong can

³³ Research Office, Legislative Council Secretariat (June 2017), "Fact Sheet: poverty of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong".

³⁴ Secretariat of the Commission on Poverty (June 2017), "Poverty situation of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong", paper presented to Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities, on 12 June 2017, LC Paper No. CB(2)1571/16-17(01).

explore as she rises to the challenges of the “Belt and Road Initiatives”. Many EMs are good athletes. Furthermore, for EMs competent in English language, they could become effective workers in a number of industry sectors like wholesale and retail and catering and hotels.

- 21.17 It will be a win-win situation to engage employers and EM job seekers with the requisite skills. Instead of providing follow-up services on a piece-meal and ad hoc basis, a concerted effort should be mounted to deliver follow-up services for EMs, with support from industry and professional organizations.

Recommendation 9

- 21.18 *It is recommended that enhanced follow-up services be provided for EM job seekers and employers employing EMs. Such follow-up services may include providing employers with information on EM cultures and assist both employers and EM employees to understand and adapt to each other’s work practices and expectations.*

Services provided by ERB

- 21.19 The research team notes that the ERB has already made an effort in providing a variety of courses to EMs. It also subsidises training bodies to translate the Chinese course materials into English. English translation of course notes is also provided on request. The minimum class size for courses for EMs has been suitably reduced to accommodate the special needs of EMs. While there are calls for making the programme more flexible in terms of time, the research team believes much depends on the course contents and the issue should be left to the experts of the subject matters.
- 21.20 The research team notes that there is practice among several training providers in trying to consolidate applications in different centres, each receiving very few applicants, such that one centre can conduct the programme with sufficient number of applicants after the consolidation.

Recommendation 10

- 21.21 *It is recommended that ERB should take step to encourage and facilitate different centres each receiving very few applicants to consolidate their applications such that one centre can commence class with sufficient number of applicants. In addition, ERB should consider offering courses in a more flexible mode, in terms of delivery and class time.*

Services provided by SWD

- 21.22 Services provided by SWD are valuable and essential to help EMs adapt to living in Hong Kong and tackle problems encountered by families, youth and elderly. These services are intertwined closely with daily life. However, the utilization of such services may be relatively low among EMs. For example, EMs have a traditional culture of respecting the elderly and prefer

to be self-reliant as far as taking care of their elderly family members is concerned.

- 21.23 Some EMs consulted complained that they are not getting the services they expect from centres run or funded by SWD. On the other hand, the research team has visited a centre of SWD offering very good services to EMs. The research team is of the view that the aforesaid views of some EMs should be considered against the backdrop that most EMs consulted for this study were not users of public services. The research team also believes that the problems may not be at the policy level, but may be rooted at the service delivery level.
- 21.24 The research team notes that in planning and implementing welfare services, SWD has made reference to the statistics and information on EMs to better understand the social needs of ethnic minorities. There is a designated person in each administrative district to render internal support to district colleagues for providing welfare services to ethnic minorities.³⁵ To facilitate monitoring of service delivery, it will definitely be useful for SWD to compile performance indicators, taking into account the actual usage of services offered by SWD for children, youth, elderly and families. Information such as the demographic profile of EMs and the spatial distribution of different EM groups may serve as references in assessing the potential demand for services offered by SWD. Analysis of the performance indicators will help identify service gaps for continuous service enhancement.

Recommendation 11

- 21.25 *It is recommended that SWD should develop performance indicators on the outcome of its services by EMs, taking into account the actual usage of the services.*

Interpretation services

- 21.26 Interpretation services are important in enabling EMs who cannot understand Chinese to access public services. Recognizing this, organizations reviewed above have taken steps to making interpretation services available to EMs. However, as evidenced from consultation conducted in the study, EMs consider interpretation services not readily available. Indeed, some Members of the Legislative Council are of the view that interpretation services should be strengthened to facilitate EMs' access to essential public services.³⁶
- 21.27 However, it may be of interest to note that some Members of the Legislative Council raised the concern about the low usage of the interpretation service through video conferencing between bureaux/departments and the CHEER

³⁵ SWD (September 2017), "*Existing and Planned Measures on the Promotion of Equality for Ethnic Minorities: Social Welfare*".

³⁶ Legislative Council Secretariat (April 2017), "Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 10 April 2017", paper presented to Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities, LC Paper No. CB(2)1119/16-17(04).

Centre.³⁷ From discussions with representatives of organizations reviewed above, such interpretation services should be available if required. On the other hand, feedbacks from stakeholders indicate that the interpretation services should be provided by bureaux/departments on demand and on time, especially for on-site interpretation services. On the part of the service provider, concern has also been expressed on the difficulties in recruiting interpreters.

- 21.28 HAD has commissioned the Hong Kong Christian Service to operate the CHEER Centre. In addition to key services such as tailor-made classes and integration programmes, the centre also provides general interpretation and translation services as its ancillary service. In fact, relevant bureaux/departments may choose any interpretation and translation service providers which could meet their specific needs, including but not limited to the CHEER Centre, which provide general interpretation and translation services.³⁸ Similarly, the relevant departments may consider the practical need and decide whether to use the interpretation services via video conferencing (the devices of which were installed in 2011 between the CHEER Centre and some offices of departments). Indeed, workers of a number of NGOs visited have accompanied their EM clients to use public services, acting as their interpreters. Apparently, these NGOs are offering interpretation services in response to demand from EMs. It is therefore recommended that the relevant Government departments should consider funding more NGOs in different districts to provide interpretation services to EMs in helping them use government services. With more service providers in different districts, deploying part-time interpreters that cater for EM interpreters who have other family commitments, it may encourage healthy competition and ensure availability of interpretation services, especially on-site services, on-demand and on-time.

Recommendation 12

- 21.29 *In line with the Administrative Guidelines, it is recommended that the relevant Government departments should approach and fund more NGOs, preferably located in different districts, to provide interpretation services to EMs to ensure their equal access to public services.*

Response from service providers on recommendations

22. The response from HAD, LD, ERB and SWD on the recommendations is set out in **Appendix 3** to this report.

³⁷ Legislative Council Secretariat (April 2017), “Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 10 April 2017”, paper presented to Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities, LC Paper No. CB(2)1119/16-17(04).

³⁸ Legislative Council Secretariat (April 2017), “Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 10 April 2017”, paper presented to Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities, LC Paper No. CB(2)1119/16-17(04).

APPENDIX 1 STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED AND PROFILE OF EM RESPONDENTS

Stakeholders consulted

1. Key informants

- The University of Hong Kong
- The Open University of Hong Kong
- The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
- Lingnan University
- Hong Kong Unison
- The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

2. Government departments/agencies

- Home Affairs Department
- Labour Department
- Employees Retraining Board
- Hospital Authority
- Social Welfare Department
- Home Affairs Department (2nd round meeting)
- Social Welfare Department (2nd round meeting)
- Employees Retraining Board (2nd round meeting)
- Labour Department (2nd round meeting)
- Home Affairs Department (3rd round meeting)
- Social Welfare Department - Yuen Long (East) IFSC and Yuen Long (Central) IFSC (3rd round meeting)

3. Services provider

Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities

- International Social Service Hong Kong Branch - HOPE Centre
- New Home Association – HOME Sub-centre (Sham Shui Po)
- Hong Kong Community Network – LINK Centre
- Hong Kong Christian Service – CHEER Centre

NGO

- HKSKH Lady MacLehose Centre - Services for Ethnic Minorities
- Yan Oi Tong Community Centre - Service for Ethnic Minorities
- Hong Kong Family Welfare Society - North Point Integrated Family Service Centre
- Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong Diocesan Pastoral Centre for Workers
- Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service
- Caritas Community Centre – Kowloon

EM community

- The India Association Hong Kong
- Hong Kong Integrated Nepalese Society Limited

4. EM individuals

- Indian / Pakistani / Nepalese

Profile of EM Respondents

Ethnicity

Indian	Pakistani	Nepalese
34	57	39

Gender

Male	Female
45	84

Age

15-24	25-64	>=65
21	92	16

Family Structure

As parents with children aged <18	lives with members age >=65
58	8

Length of residence in Hong Kong

<7 years	7-10 years	10+ years
27	26	73

Education attainment

Primary or below	Secondary	Post-secondary
35	39	48

Occupation

Managers & administrators	Professionals	Associate professionals	Clerical support workers	
7	9	1	1	
Service workers & sales workers	Skilled agricultural & fishery workers	Craft & related workers	Plant & machine operators & assemblers	
10	0	1	8	
Elementary occupations	Not working, not studying	Retired	Homemakers	Students
7	15	7	44	18

Using of selected public services

	Labour Department	Employees Retraining Board	Social Welfare Department	Home Affairs Department
Service users	40	18	57	81
Service non-users	90	112	73	49
User for all selected public services			7	
Non-user for all selected public services			22	

APPENDIX 2 INTERVIEW AND DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Focus of discussion		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Awareness of the selected public services 2. For users: Satisfaction level on the selected public services 3. For non-users: factors discouraging them from using the selected public services 4. General practice in seeking community resources
Area of concern		Discussion questions
General	Implication of community engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How big a role does your own culture play in your daily life? (e.g. do you celebrate different festivals, attend religious gathering, etc). Do you find local HK values to be so different from your own group that they affect your decisions or family relations? 2. How important is social inclusion to you? 3. How do you engage with the local community? 4. How do you find life in Hong Kong? What parts do you enjoy most? What do you find most difficult? 5. Do you interact with local Chinese? 6. How well do you think you know about the Hong Kong society? Do you want to be more involved in the local community? 7. Do you think Hong Kong society has much knowledge about your culture? Does inadequate understanding of your culture affect your interaction with the local community? 8. Do you want your children to look and think like any other Chinese their age, or do you want them to be closely tied to your own culture? 9. Where do you call home?
	EM practices on seeking help	<p>Have you ever got support from your own communities, or where could you get resources in cases such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ recreational/leisure activities, ➤ learning opportunities, ➤ school work/learning Chinese, ➤ rehabilitation for substance abuse, ➤ unplanned pregnancy 2. Employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ recruiting employees, ➤ seeking jobs, ➤ training opportunities for advancing skills, ➤ looking for advice on employment contract/compensation, ➤ getting information about occupational safety and health 3. Household <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ looking for child care services, ➤ conflicts among family members 4. Elderly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ looking for care services,

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ recreational/leisure activities 5. Looking for translation services 6. Looking for counselling services 7. Looking for healthcare services
Users of selected public services only (interviewees might have received one or more of the selected public service)	Selected: Labour Department / Employees Retraining Board / Social Welfare Department / Home Affairs Department	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How much do you know about the selected public services, how did you know that? (refer to the examples) 2. How often do you get service from the selected public services? 3. Other than the needs, why do you use the selected public services? What kinds of service/measure should be made available to encourage EMs to use selected public services? (e.g. Availability of services, mode of communication) 4. With regard to the selected public services that you have used, are you satisfied with them? (e.g. Coverage, operation and procedures, quality, effectiveness) 5. Did the selected public services meet your expectation? (eg. Coverage, network) 6. Have you found any friendly measures that would encourage you to use the selected public services? 7. Have you ever encountered problems in using the selected public services, and how have you overcome them? (e.g. Cultural difference, language) 8. Any suggestions on improvement to the operation of the selected public services? (e.g. Coverage, promotion, language) 9. Any suggestions on decreasing the service gap? (eg. Coverage of ERB courses)
	General public services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Other than the selected public services, are you aware of any public services that are useful? 2. Are there any public services you would want to recommend to your EM counterparts?
Non-Users of selected public services	Selected: Labour Department / Employees Retraining Board / Social Welfare Department / Home Affairs Department	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you aware of the selected public services? How did you get to know those services? 2. Why didn't you use the selected public services? What kinds of service/measure should be made available to encourage you to use the selected public services? 3. Have you ever encountered problems when trying to use the selected public services, and how did you deal with it? (e.g. Cultural difference, language) 4. Any suggestions on improvement to the operation of the selected public services? (e.g. Coverage, promotion, language)
	General public services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you aware of any public services that are useful? 2. Are there any public services you would want to recommend to your EM counterparts?

APPENDIX 3 RESPONSE BY SERVICE PROVIDERS

1. Home Affairs Department

Response on feedback from stakeholders

- 1.1 The aim of the EM centres is to facilitate EMs' integration into the community. The service targets were Hong Kong residents of EM origins who encountered difficulties adapting to life in Hong Kong due to language barrier and cultural differences. The services and activities of the EM centres are tailor-made to meet the needs of EMs, with a view to enhancing their capability and confidence to integrate into the community.
- 1.2 EM centres have been promoting their services to EM service users via different means to reach different target groups of EMs, including outreaching activities, publication of newsletters, display of posters in EM shops, temples and mosques, and updating activities information on the website and Facebook, etc. HAD also commissions an NGO to distribute information kits (including information on the services of EM centres) to newly arrived EMs at the airport.
- 1.3 Feedback from service users of the centres has all along been very positive. In the 2015-16 project year, 87.4% to 100% of the language classes participants from different centres considered that they have improved their Chinese/English proficiency. As for the integration programmes, such as seminars, visits, mutual help network and interest classes, 85.0% to 100% of participants from different centres reflected that they have increased knowledge and confidence to integrate into the local community, while 90.0% to 98.9% of participants from different centres have built up supportive network with other members of EMs and local community. As regards the interpretation services provided by the CHEER Centre, 94.5% of EM users indicated that they were satisfied with the services provided
- 1.4 In response to views on language classes as set out under paragraph 7.1, EM centres explained that their language classes were designed to meet EM's daily social needs and help their early integration into the community. The classes were provided at basic, intermediate and advanced levels for EM participants with different language proficiency. The curriculum, covering mainly listening and speaking skills and supplemented with reading and writing of simple words, was taught by tutors possessing Bachelor's degrees or equivalent. Should EMs consider that the advanced level classes offered by EM centres cannot meet their needs for employment-related or educational purposes and wish to attend more advanced classes, the centres would provide relevant information, such as Cantonese classes organised by the ERB and the Institute of Vocational Education, for their reference.
- 1.5 In response to views as set out under paragraph 7.2, HAD explained that the language classes aim to meet EM's daily social needs and help their early integration into the community and thus only Cantonese and English classes,

but not Putonghua classes, are provided at the EM centres. As regards the ways the EM centres inform their service users of their language courses, the EM centres responded that they had established mechanism to inform service users of the upcoming activities, including language courses, via posters at centres, newsletters, webpage, Facebook, etc. For those who have already registered for an event, staff of the EM centre would remind them to attend via phone calls or messages. As for the computer classes offered at the EM centres, they are aimed at meeting EMs' daily needs in integrating into the community. The classes are provided at different levels. Should EMs consider that the centres' advanced level classes cannot meet their needs for employment-related or educational purposes and wish to attend specialised classes, the centres would provide relevant information, such as classes organised by the ERB and other institutions, for their reference.

- 1.6 In response to views on after-school tutorials for children as set out under paragraph 7.3, HAD explained that such tutorials organised in the EM centres supplemented the efforts made by the EDB in this regard. In the 2015-16 project year, the EM centres organised 163 tutorial classes in total with 2 057 students throughout the year. In the past few years, EDB has provided additional resources to schools and education institutions to provide after-school tutorial classes and other support for EM students, which should allow schools and education institutions to better meet the needs of EM students.
- 1.7 On views expressed on activities organised by EM centres as set out under paragraph 7.4, the EM centres responded that they offered language classes and a comprehensive range of integration programmes including talks, orientation outings and visits to public facilities, exhibitions, training courses and interest classes to enhance EM participants' capability and confidence to integrate into the community. Interest classes provide a social platform allowing EMs to establish mutual help network and share their experiences. As there are quotas on the number of participants in classes, such as cooking and dance classes, EM centres consider that EMs should be accorded priority in the participation in such classes given the objectives of the EM centres and that the resources should be used to benefit EMs. Nevertheless, there were regular activities for both EMs and local Chinese, such as volunteer services, sports activities, carnivals and cultural shows, organised by the centres to facilitate interaction between EMs and local Chinese residents.
- 1.8 In response to views that EM centres should focus on newly arrived EMs under paragraph 7.7, HAD explained that EM centres would provide services for EMs in need of support to integrate into the community (the specific target group for the services), regardless of whether they were newly arrived or had been living in Hong Kong. EM centres added that, having regard to their actual experience in serving EMs, some EM women and elderly faced difficulties in integrating into the community because of cultural differences and language barriers even after living in Hong Kong for many years. Services provided by the EM centres, such as language classes, mutual support groups and orientation talks are useful to them.

- 1.9 In response to views on the work of the “information ambassadors” as set out under paragraph 7.8, HAD explained that it commissioned an NGO to arrange information ambassadors to distribute information kits to newly arrived EMs at the airport. The ambassadors would briefly introduce the content of the information kits, including the guidebook and a card of essential telephone numbers, to newly arrived EMs and answer their enquiries. The guidebook was updated annually with input from relevant departments and a handy list of Cantonese phrases was included in the guidebook. It also contains extensive information on how EMs could obtain assistance (e.g. useful telephone numbers), including on how to use the information in the booklet.
- 1.10 In response to views on collection of demographic and contact information of newly arrived EMs as set out under paragraph 7.10, HAD responded that it may not be an effective use of resources to collect such information from newly arrived EMs as it is difficult to discern who amongst the newly arrived have difficulties in integration. Furthermore, correspondence information (e.g. address and telephone number) may not be available on their first arrival and significant data privacy concerns would need to be addressed.
- 1.11 On views of EMs on interpretation services as set out under paragraph 18.6, the CHEER Centre responded that it had promoted the telephone interpretation service to EMs via different means. Major promotional efforts included outreach visits, exhibitions in public housing estates, and information booths in EM activities. More than 10 000 copies of promotional leaflets and information cards were distributed through these activities in the project year 2015-16. In addition, the telephone interpretation service had been promoted through webpages of HAD and the CHEER Centre, service guidebooks and the radio programmes in EM languages. Most EMs in need of interpretation services should be aware of the hotlines operated by the CHEER Centre. As for the comment on the waiting time for telephone interpretation services, the centre responded that almost all telephone calls were handled instantly. If the lines were busy, the calls would be directed to the voice mail box but there was less than one voice message received per day and such call would be replied to once the interpreter was available. All interpreters must have passed the oral and written tests in at least one EM language and English in recruitment exercise before appointment. To ensure quality services, the performance of interpreters is reviewed quarterly with reference to feedback from service users.

Response on recommendations

- 1.12 The following table sets out the response from HAD on certain recommendations: -

	Recommendation	Response from HAD
1.	<p><u>Recommendation 1</u> <i>Whilst it is noted that certain indicators have been put in place by departments concerned to facilitate examination of the outcomes of services provided by them to EMs, and to assess if such outcomes are conducive to equal access to public services, it is recommended that HAD, LD, ERB and SWD should consider reviewing and, if applicable, refining their indicators from time to time taking into account the changing needs of EMs, so as to better assess the outcomes of their services for further service improvement.</i></p>	<p>HAD has been using outcome indicators to assess the services of the EM centres and has reviewed the indicators with the EM centres when renewing their grant agreements every two years.</p>
2.	<p><u>Recommendation 5</u> <i>It is recommended that consideration should be given by EM centres to review the operation of EM centres to see if they are meeting the different and diverse needs of EMs to facilitate their integration into the community.</i></p>	<p>The support services provided by EM centres are intended to meet EMs' daily social needs and help their early integration into the community. Differentiated services are provided having regard to the needs of EMs to help them integrate into the community. The details of these services are set out in paragraphs 6.3 to 6.6 of this report. For EMs with special employment-related and educational needs that cannot be met by EM centres, the centres would provide relevant information, such as classes organised by the ERB and the Institute of Vocational Education, for their reference.</p>
3.	<p><u>Paragraphs 21.3 - 21.4</u> <i>Focus on newly arrived EMs</i></p>	<p>The EM centres provide support services to those in need of support for integration into the community. Their service targets include but are not limited to newly arrived EMs. The EM centres provided feedback that many EMs, especially women and the elderly, face difficulties in integrating into the community because of cultural differences and language barriers even after living in Hong Kong for many years.</p>

4.	<p><u>Recommendation 6</u> <i>It is recommended that HAD should consider devising a mechanism for following up EMs newly arrived in Hong Kong and commission NGOs to proactively contact these EMs and provide them with services including orientation programmes and language classes geared to the needs of newly arrived EMs.</i></p>	<p>At present, HAD commissions an NGO to arrange information ambassadors to distribute information kits (including a guidebook and a card of essential telephone numbers) to newly arrived EMs and handle their enquiries at the airport. For more complex cases, the information ambassadors would refer newly arrived EMs to relevant department(s) for follow up. Furthermore, the information kits provide contact information of NGOs serving EMs in different districts and EMs could easily get in touch by calling the contact numbers when necessary.</p> <p>It may not be an effective use of resources to collect demographic and contact information of the newly arrived EMs in general, as it is difficult to discern who amongst the newly arrived have difficulties in integration. Furthermore, correspondence information (e.g. address and telephone number) may not be available on their first arrival and significant data privacy concerns would need to be addressed.</p>
5.	<p><u>Recommendation 7</u> <i>It is recommended that HAD should actively consider funding more NGOs to providing services to EMs, based on a systematic assessment of demand, with emphasis primarily placed on integration through activities involving both EMs and local Chinese.</i></p>	<p>The EM centres aimed at facilitating EMs' integration into the community. The service targets are Hong Kong residents of EM origins who encounter difficulties adapting to the life in Hong Kong due to language barriers and cultural differences. Hence, many services and activities of the EM centres are tailor-made to meet the needs of EMs, with a view to enhancing their capability and confidence to integrate into the community. Nevertheless, there are also regular activities for both EMs and local Chinese, such as volunteer services, sports activities, carnivals and cultural shows, organised by the</p>

		<p>centres to facilitate interaction between EMs and local Chinese residents.</p> <p>It is worthwhile to point out that District Councils are funded annually to organise community involvement projects, including community building activities, district sports activities, arts and culture programmes, etc. in which both EMs and local residents are welcome to join. Also, some of these activities are organised for EMs to interact with local Chinese. For example, Chinese calligraphy class, football competition, multicultural show, day camp and cultural exchange lunch were organised by the Yau Tsim Mong District Council for EMs in 2016-17.</p> <p>Furthermore, EMs may take part in activities and programmes organised by the 65 IFSCs of SWD over the territory which are open to all residents, which would enable EMs to have more interactions with local Chinese.</p>
6.	<p><u>Recommendation 8</u> <i>It is recommended that HAD should review the adequacy of funding to EM centres and consider extending the contract to EM centres to more than two years.</i></p>	<p>Currently, EM centres have to submit proposals every two years for HAD to review and renew their grant agreements. The centres would take the opportunity of this review exercise to adjust their services taking into account the actual demand and any change in circumstances. HAD would also adjust the grants for centres to cope with variations in staff cost, rental and other expenses.</p> <p>HAD will consider the pros and cons of extending the grant period to more than two years and how it would affect the above review mechanism.</p>

2. Labour Department

Response on feedback from stakeholders and recommendations

- 2.1 LD would like to thank the SNGTF of CoP for taking forward the present study for assessing EMs' awareness and satisfaction towards selected public services (including the employment services of LD), and Policy 21 Limited and the Centre for Civil Society and Governance of The University of Hong Kong for conducting the study. LD is glad to note that among other feedback, many stakeholders consulted have shown recognition for LD's continuous improvements to the employment services for EM job seekers and were impressed by its friendly and courteous front-line staff. The stakeholders were also aware of most of the dedicated services and measures that LD has put in place, including special counters in job centres, personalised employment advisory service, the employment of ESAs and Employment Assistants who are proficient in EM languages and playing complementary roles in delivering employment services for EM job seekers, etc.
- 2.2 LD has taken note of the wealth of valuable feedback collected in the study and recommendations put up by the research team. LD will continue with its efforts in providing employment services which cater to the needs of EM job seekers and will review its services from time to time, taking into account views of different stakeholders who are concerned and familiar with the employment needs of the EMs and the recommendations in this report. Nonetheless, LD would like to provide in the ensuing paragraphs supplementary information with regard to comments made in the report.
- 2.3 With respect to the comments on the nature and variety of job vacancies advertised with LD as set out in paragraphs 10.1 and 10.2, LD pointed out that it proactively canvassed vacancies suitable for EM job seekers (including homemakers) from different industries and occupations. The launching of the Higher Education Employment Information e-Platform, organisation of inclusive job fairs, highlighting job vacancies posted by employers welcoming EM job seekers on the dedicated webpage, and promotion of part-time employment through district-based job fairs and dedicated webpage, for example, have helped widen the diversity of jobs available in LD's database and facilitated EMs in job search. For more details, please refer to paragraphs 9.10, 9.15 and 9.16.
- 2.4 Regarding the comments on the Chinese language requirements of job vacancies posted through LD as described in paragraph 10.3, LD responded that it constantly reminded employers to consider the genuine occupational qualifications of the posts when specifying the language requirements. Employers are required to spell out the different aspects of the Chinese language requirements (i.e. reading and writing Chinese, speaking Cantonese and Putonghua) separately when submitting job vacancy information to LD and these requirements are set out clearly in the job vacancies displayed through LD's various channels. LD has been encouraging employers using LD's recruitment service to relax the

language requirement so as to enable more EM job seekers to apply for their vacancies. Amongst the private sector vacancies recorded by LD in recent years, about 70 000 vacancies each year had a lower requirement for Chinese language on job seekers and were suitable for EMs to apply.

- 2.5 In connection with the comments on the effectiveness of the employment services provided by LD's employment telephone service hotline and job centres (including interpretation service) as laid out in paragraphs 10.5, 10.7 and 10.8, LD indicated that in the first place, it was very concerned about the training needs of its front-line staff and had arranged them to attend training on English communication skills, use of interpretation service provided by the CHEER Centre and multi-cultural sensitivity with a view to improving the quality of services provided for EM job seekers. EM job seekers registering for LD's employment advisory services are contacted regularly, and offered necessary advice and assistance in their job search. In parallel, LD's iES website provides an array of user-friendly services, which include building of job seekers' on-line resumes and its submission of relevant information to prospective employers offering suitable vacancies. As regards the provision of interpretation service for job seekers in job centres and industry-based recruitment centres, apart from the promotional efforts mentioned in paragraph 9.6, LD endeavors to make prompt arrangements for those who are in need for the service. The above centres have recorded an average waiting time of less than five minutes in 2017.
- 2.6 In respect of the comments on integration of EMs into local workplaces as set out in paragraphs 10.9, 10.10, 10.11, 10.13 and Recommendation 9, LD responded that it had been facilitating both the employers and the EMs to build an inclusive workplace by on one hand, inviting NGOs familiar with the EM cultures to give briefings to employers to raise their multi-cultural awareness and skills to communicate with the EMs, and on the other hand, organising tailor-made employment briefings for EM job seekers to enhance their understanding of local work culture and employers' expectations.
- 2.7 On the promotional front and engagement of the EM communities (paragraph 10.12 and Recommendation 3), LD responded that it had been riding on the networks established via other major public services, NGOs serving EMs, EM bodies, consulates, schools, etc., in its outreach efforts and participation in the events targeted at EMs, coupled with its extensive use of the on-line platforms and other media such as radio programmes and newspapers in EM languages to publicise LD's employment services. Success stories of the EMs in employment are published on the Internet and in a promotional leaflet widely distributed to local employers. LD also maintains close liaison with the relevant NGOs and continually encourages them to refer the EMs in need to approach LD for employment services. For more details about LD's promotional efforts in this regard, please refer to paragraphs 9.9, 9.12, 9.13 and 9.14.

3. Employees Retraining Board

Response on feedback from stakeholders

- 3.1 In response to paragraph 13.1, ERB responded that it reviewed from time to time the training courses and services for EMs, and sought the views of stakeholders in the process. ERB meets with the Focus Group on Training for Ethnic Minorities to discuss, among other things, the training and employment needs of EMs. The Focus Group comprises representatives of EM groups, social services organisations, training bodies, employers and relevant government bodies. In addition, the training consultants of ERB would visit the NGOs and district organisations to meet with the EMs to understand their training needs. ERB offers dedicated courses for EMs not only covering language training, but also vocational training straddling different industry categories (including property management & security, electrical & mechanical services, construction & renovation, beauty therapy, hairdressing, social services, business, catering, hotel and tourism). Besides, dedicated courses on job searching and interviewing skills, local labour market and employment situation are also provided. In 2017-18, the ERB offers 12 placement-tied and 26 “Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus” and generic skills training courses conducted in English and dedicated for ethnic minorities, with 800 training places reserved.
- 3.2 In response to paragraph 13.2, ERB stated that it conducted opinion surveys for each class to gauge the views of trainees. In 2016-17, 98% of the trainees having completed the language courses dedicated for the EMs indicated that they were satisfied with the training services provided by the ERB.
- 3.3 In response to paragraph 13.4, ERB explained that all the trainees including EMs may opt for either of the following arrangements:
- i. to apply for two placement-tied courses with the same Training Body, and more than one evening foundation skills training courses at any one time; or
 - ii. to apply for more than one non-placement-tied course with the same Training Body at any one time.
- Applicants applying for/enrolling in placement-tied course are not allowed to apply for/enroll in courses other than evening founding skills training courses at any one time. If a course is cancelled by the training body, applicants will be offered advice on other choices of course. Technically, applicants will not be required to cancel course(s) previously cancelled by the training body before they apply for the next course.
- 3.4 In response to paragraph 13.5, ERB indicated that it provided Cantonese and Chinese courses dedicated for EMs, which are different from the courses targeted at new arrivals from the Mainland. Currently there are four Chinese reading and writing, and four Cantonese courses dedicated for EMs. The four Cantonese courses are recognised at QF level 1, all of which include field trips guided by trainers to provide trainees with more opportunities to use Cantonese in real life. The ERB plans to submit more language courses dedicated for EMs to the HKCAAVQ for accreditation.

- 3.5 In response to paragraph 13.6, ERB expressed that views of the Labour and Welfare Bureau, LD and key stakeholders were well represented at its Board. In particular, the representative of the Commissioner for Labour is a member of the Course and Service Development Committee of the ERB. The Committee would develop market-oriented training courses and services according to the training and employment needs of the service targets and the demand of the industries. The dedicated courses for EMs under the industries of property management & security, construction & renovation and electrical & mechanical services are mainly preparation courses for obtaining relevant recognition or sitting examinations, such as security personnel permit recognised by the Security and Guarding Services Industry Authority, the Intermediate Trade Test-Plumber, the Trade Tests for Electricians I (Trade Knowledge), etc. Among employers who register job vacancies through the ERB Online Recruitment Platform in the past 12 months (till Oct 2017), some 37% welcomed EM job applicants. Vacancies of different job types were offered, including life guard, waiter, waitress, kitchen assistant, pastry and dim sum chef, etc. EMs who completed dedicated EM courses of ERB were placed to diverse job types, including interpreters, proof-reading assistant, editor, nail technician, kitchen assistant, barista and beauticians.
- 3.6 In response to paragraph 13.7, ERB explained that it offered “Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus” courses and generic skills training courses. These courses are half day or evening courses for EMs to encourage EMs to participate in training. In general, trainees of half day or evening courses only need to attend classes for 3-4 hours a day.
- 3.7 In response to paragraph 13.8, ERB indicated that different access were provided for EMs to contact the ERB including the hotline services as well as other social media e.g. website and Facebook page. The Focus Group on Training for Ethnic Minorities is not the only channel for ERB to seek opinions from EMs. In addition, ERB introduced the outreaching training consultancy service in 2016-17. Since then, training consultants have been visiting different NGOs and district organisations to provide personalised or group-based training consultancy service to EMs and collect their feedback on their training needs. ERB will seek views of members of the Focus Group on Training for Ethnic Minorities on the meeting time.
- 3.8 In response to paragraph 13.9, ERB expressed that it currently offered three courses in community interpretation, covering Urdu, Hindi & Nepali. The entry requirements, course contents, training materials of the courses covering Urdu and Nepali have been validated by the HKCAAVQ and accredited for uploading to the qualification register at QF level 2.
- 3.9 On the view of class size in paragraph 13.10, ERB indicated that it had been handling on a flexible basis the requirement of class size for training courses dedicated for EMs. The recommended class size range of most courses for EMs is 12-20 persons. And there is no minimum requirement

on the class size for training bodies to commence classes. The training bodies could propose the class size to the ERB.

Response on recommendations

- 3.10 ERB has put in place a comprehensive monitoring system and established performance indicators for different functional areas. The Key Performance Indicators include capacity utilisation rate, attendance rate, graduation rate and placement rate.
- 3.11 ERB appoints training bodies to conduct training courses. Many of them are NGOs, such as New Home Association Limited, Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service, Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Lady MacLehose Centre, Caritas - Hong Kong, Yan Oi Tong Limited, Christian Action, Hong Kong Employment Development Service Limited and Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service. Most of these NGOs are active in engaging EMs.
- 3.12 In 2012, the ERB launched the “Enterprise-based Training Scheme”. Training bodies are encouraged to collaborate with employers or trade associations to provide enterprise- or industry-based skills upgrading training for their employees. Under the scheme, participating organisations may flexibly choose the time and venue of training.
- 3.13 ERB has introduced arrangement to facilitate different training centers to consolidate the applications yet the outcome so far has not been satisfactory, as applicants tend to stick to their own choice of training bodies and training centres and refuse to join combined classes.
- 3.14 ERB plans to review existing mode of training and introduce more diverse and flexible modes of training in suiting target groups with different background.

4. Social Welfare Department

Response on feedback from stakeholders

- 4.1 In response to EMs’ views on SWD’s promotional approach as set out under paragraph 16.1, SWD expressed that they had already put in place measures to raise the alertness/ awareness of staff in providing services to EMs. Apart from the notice(s) in EM languages in reception counters, staff are required to serve all EMs a copy of the said notice in their EM languages when they turn up for enquiries/ services. The Points-to-Note will be circulated to staff of service units on an annual basis and be given to every staff newly posted to the service unit. Feedback from staff and service users on our service leaflets and webpage information will be collected annually. The district designated person will also help promote related staff training.

- 4.2 In response to EMs' views as set out under paragraph 16.2, for those EMs who can speak Cantonese, SWD considers that they may approach centre staff to enquire for activities that suit their needs instead of solely depending on information from leaflets and notices. While subvented NGO service units have been by and large covered by various service leaflets produced by SWD, SWD considers that it seems to be impractical for these units to produce promotional materials in EM languages for all individual programmes/ activities.
- 4.3 In response to EMs' views on the offer of interpretation services at service counters or centres of SWD as set out under paragraph 16.3, SWD stated that they had already put in place measures to notify EMs about their right to access to interpretation and translation services and the channels to access social welfare services. These measures include posting up notice(s) in multiple EM languages at reception counters and serving a copy of the said notice to all EMs in their EM languages when they turn up for enquiries/ services. Moreover, the information is also available on SWD's homepage to facilitate easy access by EMs, the public, staff of SWD and NGOs.
- 4.4. In response to EMs' views as stated under paragraph 16.4, SWD has reservation on the validity and reliability of the findings. ICYSCs are all along flexible to formulate work plan and set service priority to address the needs of children and youth in the community, including EMs through cross-sectoral and inter-departmental collaboration. Information from ICYSCs in 2015-16 indicated that with a view to facilitating the EMs to use the supportive services of ICYSCs, 43 EMs had been employed in 2015-16 at the ICYSCs, while there were 18 623 EMs who had received youth services in this year. SWD has the impression that ICYSCs have quite successfully engaged EM youths in their services.
- 4.5 SWD has been well aware of the issue expressed by some EMs under paragraph 16.5 and thus issued the "Points-to-note in providing welfare services for ethnic minorities" to social workers / social security staff of concerned units for the first time in August 2016, which have been mentioned in paragraph 15.2. In gist, for sensitive cases, SWD and NGO colleagues are required to actively discourage EM service users to ask their family members or EM friends to be their "interpreters" when receiving services in IFSCs. Interpretation and translation services will be arranged by SWD and NGO as appropriate.
- 4.6 In response to the views as set out under paragraph 16.6, SWD noted that though most of the activities of elderly centres were conducted in Chinese, there were EM elderly persons joining various groups and programmes of elderly centres, particularly in districts with more EM population, such as Kowloon City and Yau Tsim Mong, Tuen Mun, Eastern and Wanchai districts. Some groups and programmes were tailor-made for EM elderly persons. Further, there were projects under "Opportunities for the Elderly Project" with the theme of social integration with EM elderly persons as target participants. SWD had conducted a survey in 2016 collecting

statistics from 210 elderly centres on activities and programmes provided for EM elderly persons from April to December 2015 which showed that elderly centres have been making effort to provide service for EM elderly persons. SWD would continue to encourage elderly centres to provide more information of social services in EM languages as well as services to meet the needs of EM elderly persons.