



The Zubin Foundation

2021 Policy Recommendations to Carrie Lam, Chief Executive of Hong Kong

23 September 2021

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1. Ethnic Minority Representation on Advisory and Statutory Bodies

- 1.1 Since 2016 this administration has onboarded ethnic minorities with the relevant skills and experiences onto Advisory and Statutory Bodies (ASBs). This has been one of the greatest achievements of this administration about inclusion.
- 1.2 This inclusion is critical for Hong Kong for many reasons. It helps to give Hong Kong a competitive advantage by giving us access to a wider and more diverse set of views from different segments of the population. It also allows us to capitalize from our Hong Kong population with global viewpoints which may help Hong Kong differentiate itself from other cities in the Mainland. Also, it will ensure that we have access to some of the deep-rooted issues in the ethnic minority community so that we may address them suitably, such as the high poverty rate in some segments of this population.
- 1.3 We ask that the administration have a target of at least one ethnic minority individual in each of the major committees of the HKSARG. This target setting is in line with being accountable to including best practice. The administration already works towards a target of 35% women and 15% youth on ASBs.
- 1.4 We also ask the government to report on a yearly basis on the numbers of ethnic minorities (people of non-Chinese descent) who are on ASB's. The reporting should include how many ethnic minorities on ASBs, how many ASBs have ethnic minorities and changes since the previous year.

2. Funding for ethnic minority support programme for victims of family violence

- 2.1 In the 2019 Policy Address, the government said it would engage an NGO in to raise ethnic minorities' awareness of domestic violence and sexual violence through community education programmes and encourage victims to seek help. The Zubin Foundation has been providing support to victims of domestic violence since 2019 and we have witnessed an increase in domestic violence victims from the ethnic minority community in the last 12 months. Much more funding and resources are needed in this area as there are many cultural issues to address which take time and a solid strategic view to change mindsets. Funding is also badly needed and should also look at how to provide women with ongoing support in English, Hindu, Urdu, and Nepali. This would include working with women on how to live a life free of fear.

The Zubin Mahtani Gidumal Foundation Limited, known as The Zubin Foundation (registered charity in Hong Kong - IR 91/12344).

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- 2.2 Currently there are Cantonese services but none in English, Hindi, and Urdu. This is not merely a matter of translation into English but fundamentally about communicating the matter in a way that the service receiver can identify with- in line with cultural norms and sensitivities. This requires individuals to deliver such support from similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- 2.3 With the rising numbers of family violence in the community, including forced marriage, we strongly recommend that the government consider setting up an ad hoc group to address emergency cases as they arise. This ad hoc group would include representatives from social welfare, the police, safe homes, and NGO representatives. This is a very difficult subject and collaborations across silos are imperative.

3. **Funding for EM Children in need of mental health counselling**

- 3.1. As a result of Covid-19, children from lower income families have been forced into small spaces for long periods of time with little access to friends and the world outside their home. The Zubin Foundation has a child counselling service in Hindi, Urdu and Hindi and we are seeing rising levels of depression, anxiety, and stress amongst ethnic minority children. Since July 2021, 18 children have undergone/are undergoing psychotherapy in English, Hindi, and Urdu. At the same time, their parents are being actively engaged.
- 3.2. There is no other provider of mental health support for ethnic minority children's mental health and funding is much needed.

4. **An integrated approach for Special Needs for Ethnic Minority Children is needed**

- 4.1 The government has done much to support SEN children in Hong Kong over the past 4 years. The New Service Protocol for ADHD is commended but at present does not cover ethnic minority SEN children. Ethnic minority children are still not able to gain access to much of this because the service provision is in Cantonese.
- 4.2 Most children have mild to moderate SEN, and they do not need medication. Therefore, they can receive a host of interventions immediately and do not need to wait to see a psychiatrist to begin accessing support.
- 4.3 Please note that a simple translation of existing services is not the answer. What is required is the provision of services in a manner that can engage the whole family and win the trust of the ethnic minority parents. This requires cultural relevance as well as linguistic proficiency. Ultimately, parents need to be involved for children to reap the benefits of interventions.
- 4.4 We strongly urge the government to set up and apply this New Service Protocol for ADHD for ethnic minority children so that they can also receive the same interventions as their Chinese speaking counterparts immediately. The administration understands that early intervention is key, and we

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caution that with the rising numbers of ethnic minority SEN children, this will become more difficult to address if the children' golden age of learning is missed.

- 4.5 Anecdotally, we know there is a high prevalence of special needs in some ethnic minority communities, and we have seen this where in-family marriages have taken place over time. Evidence too from the UK suggests this. We encourage the government to undertake research and to better understand the growing trend of ethnic minority SEN children.

5. Anti-Race Discrimination Public Awareness

- 5.1. The Zubin Foundation has seen a steady increase in racial discrimination against ethnic minorities over the last year. This manifests itself in schools, in rental of homes, in public transport and in daily life.
- 5.2. School aged children are seeing our counsellors and are traumatized by the daily abuse at school and race discrimination from teachers and students alike.
- 5.3. In addition, discrimination complaints from ethnic minority teachers and teacher assistants have increased with many complaining that their school has discriminated against them for their dress and their ethnicity.
- 5.4. Furthermore we have seen an increase in discrimination against potential ethnic minority tenants on the grounds of race with rental accommodation being denied to ethnic minorities.
- 5.5. We strongly recommend the government to enhance public awareness of inclusion and acceptance of ethnic minorities as fellow Hong Kong people. The government is urged to take a very strong stance against race discrimination.

6. Mandatory Training for frontline staff DoH, EDB and SWD on unconscious bias

- 6.1. The government is strongly encouraged to begin training frontline staff in the health department, social welfare department and education bureau. This should apply to those who work directly in the community and those who are in public relations.
- 6.2. Whilst unintentional, remarks made by the CHP over the course of Covid has resulted in many in the ethnic minority community feeling targeted for being dirty and irresponsible. We are glad to see the staff at CHP has engaged largely with different ethnicities and religious groups on the promotion of the Covid-19 vaccine. We hope similar actions can be undertaken in other departments and bureau and much earlier in the planning stage.

7. Steering Committee for Ethnic Minorities

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- 7.1. We urge the administration to continue its high level internal Steering Committee for ethnic minorities chaired by the Chief Secretary. It is important for bureau and departments to continue to share knowledge and look at ways of working collaboratively to improve the lives of Hong Kong's ethnic minorities.

8. Statutory Children's Commission

- 8.1. We urge the administration to consider the setting up of an independent statutory commission for children in line with international best practice. It is critical that the lives of children are considered as fundamental to policymaking in Hong Kong and that the needs of children are considered all the time.

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