**Press Release**

Overwhelming majority of the ethnic minorities and asylum-seekers and refugees felt the pinch of discrimination, with over 90% experienced difficulties in looking for accommodation, over half of which cited their ethnicity could be the main issue.

In a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Refugee Ministry Group and Hong Kong Unison, comprising support of different local churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Hong Kong, they have interviewed 140 who are non -Chinese, both HKID and non-HKID holders, and over 90% of the respondents responded that they had faced difficulties when looking for accommodation in Hong Kong.

This survey was designed and carried out to understand the discriminations faced by ethnic minorities and asylum-seekers and refugees while seeking private accommodation rentals. The data was collected between August and November 2018.

Results show that of the 90% respondents responded that they had faced difficulties while looking for accommodation, 61% experienced “unwelcoming attitudes”, while 53% encountered outright refusal to rent, 49% experienced agent/landlord not willing to speak English.

Speculated factors about difficulties in seeking accommodation ranged from “your ethnicity” (64%); followed by “your nationality” (56%), and 39% believed that “financial status” was also an important factor. Over half (67%) of the respondents **rated 4 (very stressful) or above for the frequency** they have felt stressed because of discrimination or unfair treatment in Hong Kong.

Chi-squared tests were carried out and found **no difference in different ethnic groups**, no matter whether the respondents are female or male; whether they are more proficient in English or Cantonese; whether they have lived in Hong Kong for a longer time; or whether they are HKID holders. All the above-mentioned factors did not make a difference in their accommodation experience.

However, there were some differences between HKID holders and non-HKID holders in terms of the duration of getting a home. 77% respondents who took less than one month to rent the current accommodation are HKID holders and 23% are non-HKID holders. 40% who took 4 to 6 months to rent are HKID holders and 60% of them are non-HKID holders.

Regarding the views on legal support and protection, over half (59%) of the respondents had not heard of the Race Discrimination Ordinance. And only 22% of the respondents had sought help from the Equal Opportunities Committee (EOC) and Estate Agents Authority (EAA)

The findings suggest that there is entrenched discrimination against the ethnic minorities and asylum-seekers and refugees based on their ethnicities and nationalities in general. As respondents suggested that their ethnicity, nationality as the two primary indicators of discrimination, it shows that racism exists, and it is a critical factor that stops them from receiving equal treatment in their daily lives.

The existing statutory bodies like EAA and EOC’s effectiveness in supporting either the ethnic minorities or the asylum-seekers and refugees is considered to be **marginally effective.** Out of the 22% respondents (30 respondents) who have sought help from the EOC/EAA, only 54% (16) of the respondents find EOC/EAA helpful. The data suggested that ethnic minorities and especially asylum-seekers and refugees have not been well-informed about their rights and the EOC has not been doing a great job in informing the ethnic minorities and asylum-seekers and refugees of their rights in Hong Kong.

In general, the Refugee Ministry Group and Hong Kong Unison believe that government should take on a pro-active role in eradicating discrimination in the day-to-day lives of the ethnic minorities and the Asylum-seekers and refugees. For example, Schools should take actions to eliminate discrimination and segregation on campus. Schools should educate students to value multiculturalism and to embrace different ethnicities and cultures, be an example for students to not judge an individual by his/her skin color, nationality, ethnicity, or class. Schools should consider implementing some multicultural exchange workshops and events to expose students to different ethnicities and cultures.

Others include granting right to work to the asylum-seekers and refugees to avoid putting the groups in precarity financially when they are looking for accommodation or increase rental subsidies to asylum-seekers and refugees. Also, incentives could be given to the landlords for renting houses or flats to the racial minorities and the Asylum-seekers and refugees such as waiving property tax. Government should consider rent control in Hong Kong to stop the uncontrollable inflation of rent.

Hon. Fernando Cheung, in response to the survey findings, says “Despite the enactment of the Race Discrimination Ordinance in 2008, racism continues to be rampant in all aspects of our daily lives. Housing is an essential human need and it’s deplorable to see the majority of ethnic minorities in HK experience difficulties in meeting this basic need. Both the EOC and the government have the responsibilities of looking into the problem and finding solutions to it.”

The spokesperson of the Refugee Ministry Group Hans Lutz says, “There is a need to change the legislation so that it can ensure racial minorities would receive fair treatment in the process of house-hunting. There is currently no protection from discrimination under the RDO on grounds of nationality. The EOC in its 2016 Report on Discrimination Law Review noted that this is a significant gap in protection with ample evidence where different racial groups face discrimination on grounds of nationality. The lack of such protection is not compliant with international human rights obligations, and multiple United Nations bodies have made recommendations to the Government to extend such a protection. The RDO should be amended without delay to introduce protection from discrimination on grounds of nationality. ”

Phyllis Cheung, Executive Director of Hong Kong Unison, believes rigourous public education on racial equality should be in place; no one should be treated less favourably because of his or her skin color. “Ethnic minorities face tremendous difficulties in house rentals and they have no choice but to live in subdivided units. According to the 2016 Census Report “Persons Living in Subdivided Units”, more than 10% of the total ethnic minority population (excluding foreign domestic helpers) live in subdivided housing (versus 2.7% of the total Chinese population). South Asians (6.5%) and Filipinos (2.1%) are amongst the largest ethnic groups in such units.”

**For further information, please contact:**

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**Organizations profile:**

**The Refugee Ministry Group Hong Kong is an alliance formed by different local churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Hong Kong who are serving the asylum-seekers and refugees.**

**Hong Kong Unison is a non-governmental organization founded in March 2001. Hong Kong Unison aims to promote racial equality to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination in Hong Kong and effect policy change so that all ethnic minority residents of Hong Kong have equal opportunities and equal access to public services and information.**