



# Promotion of Racial Harmony: What Mainstream Providers Can Do

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# Why do we need a law against **Racial Discrimination?**

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- Racial discrimination is a silent injustice affecting most of the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong.
- The lack of statistics and reported cases does not mean it is not prevalent. The cases are mostly indirect discrimination.
- For the NGOs directly assisting and providing services, incidents of ethnic minorities suffering from harassment, discrimination or simply being ignored is an everyday reality.



# Racial discrimination will be unlawful.

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- Racial discrimination will no longer be treated as simply a matter of educating / sensitizing the community.
- It will not be seen as a social dilemma affecting some sectors of society only.
- Serious vilification and making wrongful statements to get another to commit discriminatory acts are criminal offenses.
- The law will act as a deterrent and preventive measure for those who discriminate.
- The law will hold everyone accountable and responsible to uphold it.



# Fulfilling international obligations and setting moral and ethical standards

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- Hong Kong will fulfill its obligations as a signatory to the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).
- Hong Kong will clearly define its obligations to the establishment of a just, humane and caring society.
- Hong Kong will set a moral and ethical standard on how ethnic minorities ought to be treated.
- A common definition of what is acceptable and unacceptable in the treatment of other races is defined in the law.



# Mainstream Service Providers

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- 2/3 of social welfare services including ethnic minorities are provided by NGOs who are supported (subvented) by the government.
- Very limited resources are available to enable mainstream service providers to respond to the needs of the ethnic minority clients.
- Many have to raise their own funds and provide service using their best effort.
- Direct social service providers will be approached by service clients for information, guidance, practical assistance and once the law is passed to ask for ways to seek redress should they be discriminated on.



# What Can We Do NOW?

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- Support the passing of a law against racial discrimination. Make your position as an agency clear and submit your views to the Legco Race Bill Committee.
- Accept the fact that the race bill will be revised and it will be passed. Hong Kong will have a law against racial discrimination.
- Use this time to reshape your agency's values, practices, policies and goals knowing the law against racial discrimination will be in place.



# Be a Real Equal Opportunity Employer

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- Check your **Equal Opportunity Policies, Values and Practices** in hiring, promotions, opportunities for training, benefits and termination of employees. Redefine, create initiatives as needed.
- Hire ethnic minorities. Capitalize on the diversity.
- Are all your managers and staff knowledgeable of your Equal Opportunity policies, values and practices including the provisions of the race discrimination bill?

Employees' violations make employers guilty of discrimination unless it is proven that employees were properly trained but opted to violate the law. **Ignorance is not an excuse.**



# Build respect, affection, care and equality in a multi-cultural workplace.

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- Create opportunities for staff interaction and appreciation of each other's differences and shared values. Focus on growth rather than the barriers and difficulties.
- Look closely and breakdown the agency, managers and employees' stereotypes, prejudices, assumptions and fears of ethnic minorities.
- Integrate procedures on handling racial discrimination in the agency's internal complaints and grievance policies and procedures



# Translators and Interpreters

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- It is extremely difficult to access interpreters from the ethnic minority population. The highly qualified work in the courts and the volunteers may not be as skilled as required.
- Hire and invest time to train ethnic minority staff or volunteers on the work of the agency. Each translation and interpretation service requires varying degrees of competence and sensitivity.
- The best option is always to have a home-grown, home trained interpreter or translator than to just pull one from somewhere.
- Resources sharing among agencies can be encouraged. If one has an excellent translator to do written work and another agency has an excellent oral word per word translator, agencies in the same area can share time and payments.



# Dealing with Clients

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- Prepare a written service description in English. Ideally, for the most important information it should be provided in their native language.
- Publish your agency services in the clients native language in the Guide to Services in Hong Kong handbook or ethnic newspapers and radio programmes.
- Clients expect all service providers or agencies to be able to communicate in English.
- Some bring their own interpreters/friends when seeking help. Many are brave enough to try to communicate in their limited English or Cantonese.



# Dealing with Clients

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- Attend to clients when they seek your assistance. Staff who refuse to talk to clients even in simple English make them wait for a long time only to tell them they are unable to help.
- **Inform, guide and train the clients on their rights, responsibilities, how to access services and their obligations.** Be extra careful and sensitive to possible negative feelings and extreme discontent which is a result of always being ignored or unattended..



# Dealing with Clients

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- Contact the Race Relations Unit (RRU) Senior Programme Officer Ms. Shirley Chan at 2835-1184 on how to access ethnic minority organizations and the Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony.
- The RRU handles all complaints on racial discrimination to date and all education, publicity and promotions related to race relations.



# GET INVOLVED

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- Share your views to the Legco Race Bill Committee. Write submissions. Contact members of the Race Bill Committee and showcase your agency's work and experiences.
- Get involved with the Equal Opportunities Commission in the preparation of the Code of Practice.
- Use this time to increase partnerships and mobilize networks to share information, resources, common concerns and workable strategies. Access the Race Relations Unit.
- Work with ethnic minority organizations, schools, other NGOs in reshaping your views and your agency's commitments.



# Conclusion

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- The Law on Racial Discrimination is one way to address racial discrimination in Hong Kong. It is not the only way.
- Even with the law in place, the challenge will be adherence to the law and its full implementation.
- With or without the law, Hong Kong should live to its commitment to build a just, humane and caring society which applies to all of its people.



# Conclusion

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- One can no longer turn a deaf ear, or respond with a numb heart and endless rationalizing to the realities faced by ethnic minorities in Hong Kong.
- *For the protection of everyone's rights and the creation of equal opportunities for all, it will be excellent to **be color blind and get the law against racial discrimination in place soonest.***