

Hong Kong Unison Limited 香港融樂會有限公司  
(Company Limited by Guarantee and not having a Share Capital)

## ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 2013

為  
種族  
平等  
For  
Ethnic  
Equality



The association has engaged in projects and activities which promote equal opportunities in education and employment as well as other civil and political rights for ethnic minorities in Hong Kong, promoted cross-cultural understanding and appreciation in schools and community at large as well as provided careers guidance and scholarships to ethnic minority young people.

## Objectives

For the year of 2012-2013, our objectives are stated below:

1. **To advocate effective Chinese language education for ethnic minority students and desegregation in the public school system**
2. **To monitor the governance of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the implementation of the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO);**
3. **To promote equal opportunities in employment and vocational training;**
4. **To advocate equal enjoyment of civil and political rights of HK citizens;**
5. **To promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation in schools and community at large;**
6. **To empower and build the capacity of ethnic minority children and youth; and**
7. **To provide direct social services to ethnic minority individuals and families.**

## A. Highlights

**Ethnic minority issues are being dealt with by top officials:** the year of 2013 was an exciting as well as fruitful year for Hong Kong Unison (Unison). Our call for establishing a “Chinese as a Second Language” curriculum (CSL) and desegregating ethnic minority children in public schools has drawn the attention of the highest level officials of HKSARG. The issue is being dealt with by the Chief Executive (CE), the Chief Secretary (CS), the Central Policy Unit (CPU) and the Commission on Poverty (COP). We hope the momentum will be kept until concrete and substantive proposals are seen to tackle the inequality and discrimination within the public education system. We are hopeful that there will be some effective and substantive measures announced in the coming Policy Address in Jan 2014.

**Ethnic Minority task force and study:** The CS announced that she is setting up a task group to oversee issues affecting ethnic minorities from education and employment to integration. The government has also decided to conduct an in-depth study on ethnic minorities to better understand their life situation next year so as to formulate better policies and services for their needs.

**Ethnic minorities' voice has been heard in United Nations:** We have successfully made our voice heard in the United Nations. Our ExCo member, Ms Puja Kapai and staff flew to Geneva to express our concerns on Chinese education and racial segregation at the hearing of the treaty bodies of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in March and September respectively. Our complaints had been well heard. Both committees expressed concerns on the rights of Hong Kong ethnic minority children. The treaty body of the ICCPR requested the HKSARG to submit a progress report on the Chinese education for ethnic minorities by March 2014. The CRC committee stated that ethnic minority children in Hong Kong face de facto discrimination in education. It also recommends the government to abolish the system of 'designated schools' urgently.

**Progress on improving the Chinese education policy:** After years of repeated calls and lobbying from stakeholders including Unison, the Education Bureau (EDB) has become more willing to acknowledge that ethnic minority children should learn Chinese as second language rather than claiming that every child's mother tongue is Chinese regardless of his/her ethnicity and cultural and linguistic background. The EDB considered working on a Chinese curriculum for ethnic minority children with reference to the qualification framework. It has been agreed among many scholars, teachers, NGOs etc that second language learners need extra supports, in terms of adequate resources and manpower, as well as corresponding teachers training, curriculum design and teaching material, clear stage learning objectives and appropriate assessment tool.

**Racial segregation in the public school system:** Racial segregation is not only unlawful but also morally wrong and unjust. We are disappointed by the reluctance of the EDB to abolish the 'designated schools' policy, The EDB handles this issue in a very childish and unprofessional way of renaming '*designated schools*' as '*schools provided with recurrent funding by the Bureau to enhance school-based support in servicing the needs of non-Chinese speaking students*'. It extends the funding from 31 to 100 schools, which does not really tackle the problem. The EDB also increases the maximum amount of the grant to 'designated schools' from \$600,000 to \$1,000,000. We are of the view that such measures are ineffective to eliminate the de facto racial segregation in public school system.



**Formal investigation by the EOC:** We are happy to see the Equal Opportunities Commission adopts a more proactive approach in this regard. The new Chair, Dr. York Chow, has put the education for minority children and the children with learning disabilities (SEN) as his top working priority. We had met with Dr. Chow and his Chief Legal Counsel on whether and when to conduct a formal investigation on the institutional racial discrimination in the current education system. Any actions of the EOC are expected after the release of the Policy Address, i.e. in 2014.

**Gender segregation and uniform issues:** In a public school, Pakistani girls were separated from boys and other female students; they had their own timetable with a different recess time and lunchtime in the 2012-2013 school year. The Pakistani girls of that particular school had less learning time than boys and other female students, which amounted to sex discrimination under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance. Pakistani girls were required to wear the Islamic school uniform but not all Pakistani girls were actually willing to do so. In another school, there were boys' and girls' staircases and girls were not allowed to talk with boys. We are happy to see the EOC took immediate actions by visiting the concerned schools as well as promising to issue guidelines on uniform issues to schools. We hope such gender segregation and racial segregation will not be seen in schools in the near future.

**Youth empowerment and development:** Children and youth are the future pillars of society; their future is Hong Kong's future. Empowering and developing the potential of minority youth is always part of our core business. We continued to provide systematic careers guidance programs to secondary students and scholarships to students of post-secondary education, aiming to instill hope and inspiration in our ethnic minority young generation.

**Appreciation of diversity:** People don't discriminate by nature; they learn it. We continued to launch a series of racial harmony events around the city so as to cultivate a more racially and cultural inclusive Hong Kong society. Our photo exhibition 'Life-Minority in HK' has been held in public libraries since September and the 'I Support Racial Harmony' badge campaign in March were well supported by corporate corporations and schools.

**Mainstreaming:** In previous years, ethnic minority residents were invisible in the formulation and implementation of most of the important government policies. We are particularly happy to see that ethnic minorities are included in the formulation of some

government policies, such as the Retirement Policy Study, the Population Policy Consultation and the Poverty Policy. We hope the HKSARG will adopt a racial mainstreaming perspective and take our ethnic minority people into account whenever it formulates policies and services.

Last but not least, on behalf of Unison, the Executive Committee would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our generous funding partners, devoted volunteers and supporters. Without their constant and unfailing support, we would not be able to make any positive change for a better and fairer Hong Kong.

## **B. Activities carried out under the stated objectives**

### **1. To advocate effective Chinese language education for ethnic minority students and desegregation in public school system**

#### **i. Lobbying members of relevant government unit**

Intergeneration poverty and in-work poverty among ethnic minority communities persists. The situation is especially poor within the Pakistani community; more than half of the households are living below the poverty line. We believe education and the mastering of the official languages (Chinese and English) are indispensable for ethnic minorities to lift themselves out of the vicious poverty cycle as well as participate in society fully and meaningfully.

In the past years, we have had intensive dialogue with various government bureaux/units including the COP, the CUP, the EDB and the CS' office. We lobbied and met with Mr Kevin Yeung, Under Secretary for Education; Dr Law Chi-kwong, Dr. Leung Pak-yin, Mr. Chua Hoi Wai and Dr. Stephen Fisher, members of the COP; Prof Wong Chack-kie and Mr. Shiu Sin-por, members of the CPU; and Mr. Patrick Nip, then-official of the CS' office. Fermi wrote two personal letters to Mr. CY Leung, Chief Executive, and an open letter (through the RTHK 'Letter to Hong Kong' program) to Mrs Cherry Tse, Permanent Secretary for Education. Ms Shalini Mahtani, our Executive Committee member, also wrote a personal letter to Mr CY Leung.

We submitted a considerable number of papers explaining the situation and our proposals to corresponding units. Our voice has well been heard by government top officials. The issue is much discussed in different concerned units.

**ii. Lobbying the United Nations**

Getting our voice heard internationally is one of our strategies. Hong Kong has signed a number of international human rights treaties and is therefore obligated to meet the standards set out therein. Unison not only submitted our position papers but also sent our delegations (ExCo member and staff) to Geneva to lobby the treaty bodies of the ICCPR and the CRC during the hearing on the reports of Hong Kong in March 2013 and September 2013 respectively. Problems ethnic minority children faced in education, namely Chinese Language education and de facto segregation, have been well addressed. The treaty bodies have made relevant recommendations in the Concluding Observations. We hope the HKSARG will be serious in responding and implanting the recommendations.

**iii. Establishment of the Children's Commission**

We have pressured the government to adopt the recommendation in the concluding observations of the CRC committee by pitching at the media. The LegCo has passed a non-binding motion on setting up a Children's Commission, which was moved by Hon Fernando Cheung on 20 Nov 2013.

**iv. Hearing on the reports of CEDAW and ICESCR**

We will continue to make our voice heard by the United Nations. We will submit our position papers to the treaty bodies of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), We are planning to send our staff to attend the hearing on the ICESCR Report so as to lobby the committee members to pay attention to minority issues.

**iii. Coordinating and exchanging ideas with teachers and academics**

We organized the 'Conference on Teaching Chinese as a Second Language to Ethnic Minority Students' on 23 March 2013. An EDB representative, scholars, school administrators and frontline teachers were invited as speakers. More than 200 teachers, school principals and academics attended the conference. We are gathering papers to publish a book on the topic so as to arouse discussion and to strengthen the professional discussion on CSL.

On top of maintaining cooperation with the academics we have previously worked with, we also reached out to academics such as Prof Kerry Kennedy and Chou Kee

Lee of HKIEd and Prof Gary Orfield of University of California, US to exchange ideas and views on different topics related to ethnic minorities, and expand the network of academics concerned about ethnic minority education issues. We also spoke at the Education, Ethnicity and Inequality Symposium organized by Baptist University on 12 & 13 July 2013.

#### **iv. Organizing and social actions**

We launched two campaigns to get support from the general public as well as ethnic minorities on Chinese education. The first one was a signature campaign to show the EDB that ethnic minorities are helpless without adequate support from the EDB rather than being unmotivated to learn and lazy to work Chinese. More than a hundred signatures were collected and a group of ethnic minority representatives held a petition outside the Central Government Offices on 29 August 2013. The parents wished to tell the Government that they are serious about education and want to be given a chance for their children to learn Chinese well.

The second was the ‘one-person-one-letter to CY’ campaign, calling for his actions to fulfil his promise in his CE election manifesto to adopt a CSL policy and provide support to kindergarten kids. The campaign was well supported by the public. More than 5000 letters and signatures were collected. A petition to the CE and ExCo members urging the Executive Council to include the issue of education for ethnic minority children to be included in ExCo agenda was held on 12 Nov 2013. Mr. CY Leung and a few ExCo members, namely Ms Anna Wu, Mr WK Lam, Ms Starry Lee and Mrs Regina Ip came to receive our letters. We also sent our petition letter to all members of ExCo.

#### **v. Media campaigns**

The media is one of our core partners in advocating for the voiceless. It is an important tool to draw public attention to difficulties and injustice faced by our ethnic minority residents and to pressure the Government to act. Last year, as usual, we have worked closely with the media through press conferences, press statements, individual stories, social actions, etc. There were more than 200 media reports on minority issues, by agencies including Singapore Channel NewsAsia, RTHK (City Forum (城市論壇) and Hong Kong Connection (鏗鏘集)), Phoenix TV, China Daily, NanFang Metropolis Daily, Cable TV, Now TV, the SCMP, the TVB, the ATV, the CR, the EJ, Ming Pao, Apply Daily, New York Times, Time Out Magazine and Peak Magazine, etc.

**2. To monitor the governance of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the implementation of the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO)**

**i. Partnering with the EOC**

The EOC is the enforcement body for the equal opportunities ordinances, including the RDO. We treasure the partnership with the EOC very much. Dr York Chow, the new chairperson, visited us on 12 April and another informal meeting with him was held on 30 May. We are happy to see Dr. Chow has adopted a more proactive and sympathetic approach to handling education matters concerning ethnic minorities. He openly expressed that he may exercise his power of conducting a formal investigation on the matter. We met with Dr Chow and his legal team in this regard on 19 Nov 2013. If the EOC conducts a formal investigation, they will do it in 2014.

The EOC has invited academics and other interested parties to conduct studies and researches on minority issues. Our suggested research topics have been adopted. We have also lobbied some EOC members, such as Dr. John Tse and Ms Su-mei Thompson to pay more attention to minority issues.

Nonetheless, the EOC is still rather reluctant to issue a code of practice on education under the RDO. It only agrees to issue a general guideline on the uniform issues to the schools. We will continue to monitor the progress.

**3. To promote equal opportunities in employment and vocational training**

**i. Vocational Training**

We continued to have regular meetings with to the VTC to exchange views and to explore possibilities of opening more courses for ethnic minority secondary school leavers. We will continue to work on the possibility of recruiting ethnic minority youths to the Higher Diploma in Child Care and Education because there is a need for teachers with minority background in the pre-education field.

**ii. Opportunity to join the civil service**

We are happy to see the Correctional Services Department (CSD) continues to recruit ethnic minority youths. We organized a workshop on working for the CSD for a group of youths. A Pakistani Officer of the CSD was invited as a speaker on 18



July 2013. Some youths applied, and one of our youths is still participating in the recruitment process.

**4. To advocate equal enjoyment of civil and political rights given to Hong Kong citizens**

**i. Naturalization and HKSAR Passport**

Apart from education and employment difficulties, our ethnic minorities do not enjoy equal opportunities in other fields. Concerning the difficulties and unfair treatment ethnic minorities faced during their naturalization process and application for the HKSAR passport, we met with the Security Bureau and the Immigration Department to discuss the matter on 4 Jan 2013. The government representatives agreed to review their policy and practices.

We organized an action to collective apply for naturalization on 29 April 2013. The action has been reported by the media.

**ii. Unequal access to cemetery services**

We are very upset to see our ethnic minorities in Hong Kong do not have equal access to cemetery services. One of our Indian clients passed away in April and the family could not apply for a niche at the Chinese Permanent Cemetery (CPC) because of her race. Cemetery service is an exempted area under the RDO. We assisted the family by writing to the EOC, and the HAB, but they failed to secure a niche for the family.

We then put the case to the media and subsequently a kind Christian pastor and one of our Executive Committee members helped the family to secure a niche. Nonetheless, we are of the view that all public services shall be opened to all regardless of ethnic and cultural background. We condemn the serious flaws of the RDO and will continue to call for law amendments to the RDO.

**5. To promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation in schools and community at large**

**i. Roving photo exhibition at public libraries**

We collaborated with the Hong Kong Public Libraries to organize a roving photo exhibitions titled 'Life-Minority in HK' in public libraries. The exhibition period is from August 2013 to February 2014.

**ii. Cultural sensitivity talks and harmony month**

We launched the 'I support Racial Harmony Badge' Action Campaign in March to promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. Corporations and schools supported our campaign by wearing the badge on 21<sup>st</sup> March, celebrating the diversity in Hong Kong. We also delivered 11 cultural sensitivity talks to different sectors. We continue to give talks to the general public at our office every two months.

**iii. External commitment**

We were also invited as speakers by different organizations, including the Family Planning Association, the Social Workers' Day, the Social Work Registration Board, the LGBT groups and TEDxWanChai.

We continue to participate in different platforms, such as EM Network under the HKCSS, the EM Forum under the HAD and Human Rights Forum under the CMAB so as to raise issues affecting ethnic minority communities.

We provided a training workshop on CSL through the EM Network to a group of ethnic minority program workers who are working for NGOs.

**6. To empower and build the capacity of ethnic minority children and youth**

**i. Careers guidance project**

Schools are our partners in empowering our ethnic minority youths. We worked with schools closely to build the capacity of secondary students. We continued to provide more than 20 careers guidance talks and activities to the students of the Delia group and IKTMC in the past year. The talks covered different topics according to the needs of students of different grades. They included life-long planning, subject selection, workplace visits and interview skills workshops.

**ii. Scholarship Schemes**

We are very pleased to see that more and more ethnic minority students are receiving tertiary education. For the 2013/2014 year we received more than 60 applications, and awarded 21 students among the applicants with \$7000 to \$25,000 scholarships.



A Facebook page has been created and activities have been organized for the awardees so as to enhance their group cohesiveness and team spirit.

**ii. Speaking for themselves**

A group of ethnic minority child representatives spoke to the Chairlady and the Rapporteur of the CRC treaty body when they visited Hong Kong on 21 August 2013. Ethnic minorities have also taken part in different social actions or events and spoken to the media to express their views and concerns over issues affecting them.

We are very pleased to see our ethnic minority youths and children were able to speak for themselves.

**7. To provide direct social services to ethnic minority individuals and families**

**i. Job-matching services**

We continued to provide job-matching services to ethnic minority job-seekers and employers, sending out job ads to job-seeker email subscribers. We have received 269 job ads from the employers.

**ii. Tutor-matching services**

It was saddening to see that many ethnic minority students are struggling to learn Chinese and have limited school choice. Apart from advocating adequate support in Chinese education to ethnic minority children, we also provide direct support to our ethnic minority families. One-to-one Chinese tutorial support was one of the commonest requests from the parents. We organized volunteers to provide free tutorials for 33 children in the past year.

**iii. Saturday Chinese Class**

Many thanks to volunteers Mr. Lee and Mr and Mrs Tam for their unconditional support by providing free Chinese classes to a group of ethnic minority youths every Saturday night in the past year.

**iv. Casework and other activities**

Individual counselling service and referrals have been offered to more than 20 individuals and families with different needs in the past year. A family activity, Iron Man movie screening, was organized on 19 May.



### **C. Immense thanks to our donors**

We would like to express our sincere and heartfelt thanks to Ng Teng Fong Charitable Foundation, Sino Group; the Bank of New York Mellon; United Way Worldwide; Barclays; Towngas; the Global Fund for Children; Fu Tak Iam Foundation and the Delia Group of Schools for their generous support to Unison. Without their financial support, we would not be able to sustain our operation and certainly would not be able to carry out our mission of promoting racial equality and harmony in Hong Kong. With their support, we have been able to bring some positive changes for the community.

Special thanks to Ms Janet Wai, Hon Abraham Shek Lai-him, the Zonta Club N.T. and Li Po Chun United World College of Hong Kong Class of 1999 for their generous contribution to our scholarship schemes. Their donations have supported more young ethnic minorities to pursue higher education and fulfil their dreams.

We did not organize our annual fund-raising event, namely the Unison Hikathon, last year due to our extremely heavy workload and on the basis of our evaluation of the effectiveness of Hikathon. However, we were so blessed to have kind people organizing small-scaled fund-raising events for us. Many thanks to Mr. Shiva Raichandani of the Bollywood Dancing Group of HKU; Ms Jenny Wu and Po Kok Primary School; and Mr Kenny Lau of the Rotary Club of HK Northeast. We are thankful to them and their groups.

### **D. Human resources**

We are thankful and grateful for the financial support of various foundations and individuals. With their support, we have managed to have a more stable staff team in the past year. Now we have an outstanding and committed staff team with 7 full-time and 1 part-time staff members.

More importantly, we also have new members in our Executive Committee. Ms Puja Kapai and Ms Shalini Mahtani serve as Executive Committee members of Unison, making our Executive Committee even stronger.

Last but not least, we are thankful for our volunteers and supporters for their continuous and unfailing support. They contributed their time, energy and resources selflessly to make our work more efficient and effective.

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