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Jockey Club Lab for  
**Cultural Diversity Study**  
賽馬會多元文化研究計劃

# Youth in Transition

Growing up experiences of the ethnic  
minority youth in Hong Kong





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The ethnic minority population in Hong Kong is changing. There is now a growing proportion of locally born and raised non-ethnic Chinese young people studying, working and striving to bring up a family in Hong Kong. Yet we know very little about their lives, aspirations and frustrations, their relationships with family and friends, and how they see themselves as citizens of Hong Kong. What are their experiences of growing up in local neighbourhoods, coping with the language and cultural divides in school, finding a job, seeking independence, cultivating friendships, and constructing a sense of identity and belonging? What challenges do they face, and how do they overcome them? Compared to the older generations of immigrants, do these non-ethnic Chinese young people experience greater isolation and constraints or social inclusion and better prospects in life?

This booklet tells the stories of 23 youth and young adults between the ages of 18 and 33 with family heritage in South or Southeast Asia. It draws on the results of in-depth interviews with 20 non-ethnic Chinese young men and women in a longitudinal study about their changing perspectives and experiences over a period of 12 months and a series of oral history interviews with 50 non-ethnic Chinese young adults in Hong Kong. The team recruited the participants through research and personal contacts and through various organisations, clubs and universities. Their background broadly reflects the diverse profile of ethnic minority young people evident in the local census.

Through their personal accounts and photo diaries, the booklet offers important insights into the everyday lives of young people under five inter-related themes - education, work, family, leisure and identity. We have been careful not to impose our perspectives on their accounts; instead, we have cited direct quotes extensively with minor edits for better readability to enable the young people's voices to be heard. Taken together, the stories illustrate not only the impact of individual decisions, actions and resilience but how they negotiate cultural and religious traditions and how their private experiences are shaped by wider patterns and conditions of social life. Ultimately, we hope the stories will promote a better understanding of youth transitions to adulthood and challenge some of the existing stereotypes of ethnic minority communities in Hong Kong today.

This project is part of the Jockey Club Lab for Cultural Diversity Study of the "C-for-Chinese@JC" Project undertaken by a multidisciplinary team of researchers in the Faculty of Social Sciences, The University of Hong Kong. Launched by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust in 2016, the Jockey Club Lab for Cultural Diversity Study set out to support ethnic minority groups in 5 major domains: (1) diagnostic assessment; (2) school-based support; (3) community support; (4) professional networking and wisdom sharing; and (5) public education. The overall aim is to lay the foundation for longer-term viability of youth development, social integration and civil participation of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong.

**Maggy Lee**

Professor  
Department of Sociology  
The University of Hong Kong



# MEET THE YOUTH

We asked our 23 participants to introduce themselves by sharing with us their talents, personality traits, their dreams or motto, and their favourite things in life.







### **Kaur Jaswinder Pal, Anna**

I am a multi-tasker. I am both handed (ambidextrous) and I can draw with both my hands. That's my secret talent!

If I am sad or happy. I will find my friends and tell them. And family, they are the ones who accompany me most of the time. When I am tired and hungry, my mother cooks for me. She even prepares lunch for me because there aren't many choices near my school, so she wakes up early to cook for me. So friends and family are my favourite things.



### **Suskihanha Gurung**

I think the most unexpected thing about me is that I am a pretty good rapper. My go-to songs to rap are by J. Cole, Kendrick Lamar and Nicky Minaj, and Eminem sometimes. Rap music feels more real as opposed to the pop songs I grew up with. It always felt more relatable and reflected life more than the lovey pop songs. I just like how they keep it real and the rhythm!

My craziest dream is to be the female version of Casey Neistat and own 10 floors of Studio in the Big Apple, AKA New York city. He is a crazy YouTuber who uses boosted board to go to his work and owns his own studio. He is very good at story-telling, he is authentic and real. I envy how carefree he is but also how much routine he has in his life.



### **Namchok Yookhong**

I would say home is like a feeling, seeing your parents, your relatives, objects, listening to music, that makes you feel home. It's what you feel. I see my school, I feel home. I see my teachers, I feel home. Baptist U, I'm trying to find my way to make it home.

In Thai there's a saying, "You can live in a tight house but you can't live even in a luxurious place if your mind is tight". Being able to connect and have a deep bond is important, and that's what makes a house a home. Doesn't matter where I stay, I just want to feel at home.



### **Faizdan Ali**

Only my close friends know about my secret talent. I sing quite well. I used to sing in some functions. It's the classical Islamic music or what's known as Ghazal. My favorite artist is the late Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. I love his song 'Tumein Dillagi Bhool Jani Paregi'. But I don't aspire to be a singer. It's just a hobby and I don't think I'm in THAT level.

My dream is to help all the poor people in the world but I think that's a bit crazy because that's not possible. But nowadays I see the news of some war-torn countries, Syria, Libya, Palestine, I feel very bad for them, so I wish I can help them one day.





### **Adnan Riaz**

A motto I think we should live by is, "It's not what happens that determines your life or future, it's what you do about what happens". If you want to be something you have to do something about it.

I have a bucket list. I want to go to Dubai and do skydiving or paragliding. Something like that, to see the whole Dubai from sky because it's really beautiful or even bungee jumping from Burj Khalifa. Dubai seems like a nice place. It's very developed and has tall buildings. It's all man-made. There are a lot of opportunities there like another New York.



### **Patricia Jover**

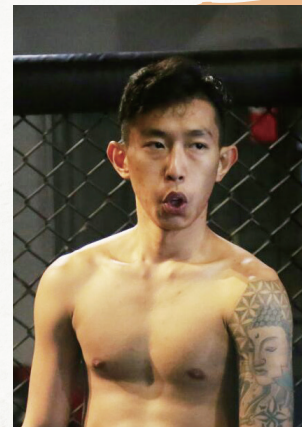
I grew up in Hong Kong as a third-culture kid, with the privilege of being exposed to a wide range of cultures and opportunities, while still maintaining my roots in the Philippines. I would say that this has definitely added a 'twist' to my story - from growing up amongst a multicultural group of peers, to working closely with local Hongkongers in university, to being fully integrated in the Hong Kong workforce. My story continues and despite it all, my ultimate goal is to be happy and grateful for every opportunity and experience that will come my way.



### **Marrium Bibi**

My favorite thing to do is travel. I believe if you have the chance to travel, you must as it makes you a better person. When you go to a place where no one knows you or the language you speak, it makes you feel insignificant. This is a very important lesson to learn, the feeling of being insignificant makes you a humbler person. You accept the fact that there are other things in the world which are more important other than yourself.

People, I mean the local Chinese, are always amazed when they meet me for the first time because they can't believe I am able to speak fluent Cantonese with them.



### **Limbu TENCHHohang**

My phone is the most important thing in my life right now because I get everything done by my phone and most of my knowledge is from what I watch on my phone.

I'm surprised when people say I look mean because to me I look innocent and friendly. I would say I'm more decisive because I want things to be more effective.





## Gursangeet Singh Brar, Sunny

Freedom is something I highly value. Not everyone has the luxury of having their freedom. Some people spend their lives pleasing others, never putting themselves first. I'm extremely grateful for being able to make my own life choices.

One of my favorite quotes is, "The only time success comes before work is in the dictionary" quoted by Harvey Spencer, a fictional character from the TV show Suits. It reminds me to keep putting in the work to create a future that I can happily say I worked hard for. People believe that success means a six-figure salary. I believe that success is seeing what you worked for becoming real.



## Sadib Paudel, Zack

Music is my favorite thing. That's how I grew up. Without music I wouldn't have learnt a lot in life. Without music I wouldn't have been able to experience my college life and I wouldn't be working now. I would have done something else and end up with something I don't like.

I want to be a millionaire, not billionaire, I don't know if I can. Then it will be like there is nothing to worry about so I can just focus on my music. I would be really happy.



## Vitto Jamie Carmelle DC

My craziest dream is to be a doctor, a GP or heart surgeon but I feel like it's too far off and I can't achieve it. It's nice to have that dream in a way, it gives me the thoughts of what ifs. I'm a person who overthinks and I worry about a lot of things even the smallest thing. But I remember this verse:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9

This just inspires me and it gives me a reassurance that everything will be okay because I have a god and he has a plan for me. I just need to trust. It gives me hope.



## Karli Lo

I started a thing in 2017, like I create a motto, it's not something I live by but reflect on by the end of the year like a resolution. In 2017, the first time I started this, it was to 'look forward'. That was when I graduated secondary school. Many things happened that I didn't intend, some disappointing. So the motto was to have something in front of me and not hold me back.

Last year was to 'live life' because that was the time I started university and I had more time, so I wanted to do as much, enjoy the time I have.

This year I want to 'put meaning' in what I do. Don't just do things because you can but rather save my energy for things that are more meaningful to me.





## Gurpreet Singh

One thing a stranger will never guess about me is that I can speak Cantonese. It is funny to see how 10 out of 10 people would be so surprised and shocked when they hear me speak fluent Cantonese when they first meet me.

One quote I try to live by is: "I will do today what other people are not willing to, so I can do tomorrow when other people can't."



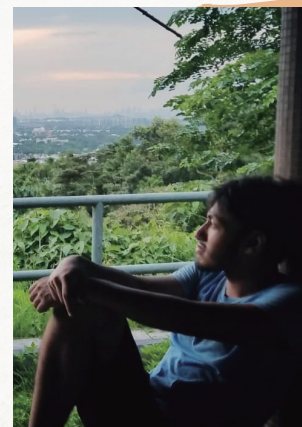
## Simran

I change my mind a lot, so people find it hard to understand me. Even my friends, they don't understand. They say one minute you are something another minute something else. Like, I want to adopt a puppy now, as a friend. But I never liked puppies because one hurt me when I was small but now that I met more, I want to adopt one. I didn't like durian before because of the smell but I tried it and I liked it. So, I'm breaking my own assumptions and until now I am not really sure about my personality but now I am trying out things and re-discovering myself.



## Afia

The motto I'm living by is 'don't give a f\*\*\* about what other people are saying or thinking about you'. "Logkya kahenge?" (What will people say?). I don't care about what they will say. Because the more you listen to them the more you are not able to do something. Say for instance, you want to wear a dress because it's hot outside. People look at you and they think, 'look at her, she has no shame, being a Muslim, being a Pakistani, wearing something like that'. If I listen to them I will go back and change to be fully clothed, but will that make me happy? No. I will be like, 'it's so hot, I'm dying in this.' So, I'm not listening to them!



## Khan Ahmad Rizwan

Despite my physique which might make me seem cold-blooded, I tend to get emotional quite a lot of the time.

'先苦後甜', meaning I'd try to finish things earlier so that I can relax more later. Same goes for life goals. I tend to join a lot of activities, try to achieve more at an early age and hope those will be useful later down the line.

I would say being an inventor is a big goal of mine. I'd like to use my engineering knowledge that I'll learn in university and apply it to make some products or gadgets that makes people's lives more convenient.





### Brar Iqbal Singh

Many of my close friends know that I'm enthusiastic about hiking. But, my personal goal is to hike in every country I travel to, which I've been consistent about and been able to keep up with. It's always mesmerizing to see different terrains or how the hiking trails are managed in different countries.

Most memorable moment in life, it was my graduation trip in the summer of 2016. We went to a remote area called Ladakh, Kashmir. These are disputed areas between Pakistan, China and India. It was crazy because it was freezing cold at night, maybe minus 5 degrees, and none of us were prepared. But it was just beautiful. It was only you alone in the snowy mountains.



### Tariq Husnain

One of my biggest dreams is to make as many people happy as possible. Many people are living stressfully, I hope to meet different people, find interesting stories and motivate people to live happily.

Smile is the best thing in the world. No matter what your age is, what your religion, race or gender is, smile is always the most beautiful thing. A simple smile can make someone happy. Smile is something very powerful.



### Tauqir Ahmad

My spirit animal is a rabbit. I used to have them as pets back in my home town in Pakistan. Rabbits are really creative and clever animals. They know how to use their energy in creative and clever ways.

I am ambitious for a greater success and confident that I would make my dream come true. One motto I live by: "Seek knowledge from cradle to grave".



### Sharma Akshay

I like this quote: "Treat others the way you want to be treated". This is the most fundamental moral code that everyone practices but at the same time neglects it for their selfishness.

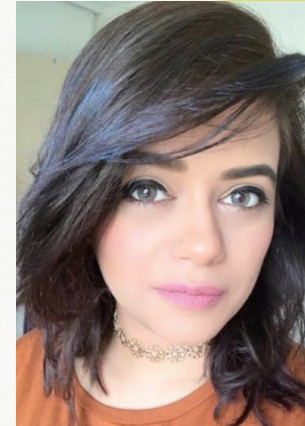
My pet peeve is when there are passengers on a public transport playing loud music with no headphones, I will always go up to them and request them to turn the volume down. Haha!





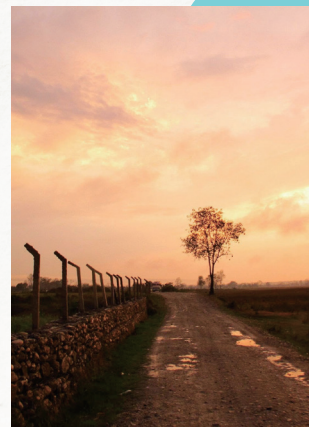
**Ishitaa Gidwani**

I really believe in the quote, "Trying and failing is better than not trying at all". And, starting something and not finishing it is my biggest pet peeve.



**Ansah M. Malik**

I'm a Dreamer. You see things and say "Why?", I see things that never were and say "Why not?" You can't tell my nationality from my facial feature-- I am a Hongkonger. I want to see a mainstream society for non-Chinese residents in Hong Kong. A normal scene to view is for non-Chinese and Chinese residents working together in all fields for the betterment of our Hong Kong.



**Anu**

I love, love, love sunsets! This is the sunset at Chitwan when I travelled there for the first time in 2011 and took this wonderful picture. My biggest dream is to travel around the world.



# EDUCATION

Researchers and practitioners have highlighted the long-standing challenges that non-ethnic Chinese students face in Hong Kong, including the lack of choices and opportunities in education, limited support especially in learning Chinese, difficulty in obtaining information about school placement, lack of meaningful interaction with Chinese students and teachers, and so on. Although efforts have been made to reform the system (for example, the formal abolition of 'designated schools' for non-Chinese speaking students), the quality of primary and secondary school education received by non-ethnic Chinese students still varies. Problems persist, including negative stereotypes of non-ethnic Chinese students and the lack of opportunities for parents to make informed decisions and to be fully involved in their children's education. Many young people face an uphill struggle to fulfil their potential, to make friends in school (or in university), and to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to access higher education and to compete in the job market. How and how far the young people in our study are able to overcome these constraints is a powerful testimony to individual resilience as well as family sacrifice among non-ethnic Chinese communities in Hong Kong.







**"My English was so bad...  
At first, I couldn't talk at all."**

Female, 20, Filipino Chinese  
University undergraduate between 2017-2021  
Majoring in Asian Studies in Social Sciences

# KARLI

It is often taken for granted that ethnic minorities are good at English language by default. But, to many, English language is also part of the challenge adjusting in school and at university.

Karli was born in Hong Kong to her Filipino mom and Chinese dad. When she was 4, she moved back to the Philippines with her mom. She spent the rest of her childhood in a small province tucked away from the city – San Andres, Quezon. It's a day away from the city airport by bus. Life there, as Karli recalls, was very different and simple.

*"I don't know how to explain the difference... It's just very different! Like in Hong Kong you sleep at 3 am and it's alright. Back there, latest by 7 pm – lights off! There is only one elementary school and one secondary school, no colleges in my province. So, those who want to further study would have to go to the city which is really far away. I'm lucky I used to live 5 minutes away from my school, but most of my friends lived in the deep mountains and they would wake up 3 am, 4 am, cook their food and start walking to school to arrive at 7 am. When I moved here to Hong Kong, huge, MAJOR culture shock!"*

Karli had the opportunity to continue her education in Hong Kong, which is why she moved back to Hong Kong alone at 14 years of age to live with her dad. The experience wasn't at all easy having to adjust to a completely different city where the environment and the language was very different.

*"I would say I live alone, because my mom is in the Philippines and my dad works in construction sites. So, he sleeps there. He normally comes in the morning. It was really hard because in the Philippines, when I woke up, the food would be ready... Here it was so hard to find food because I can't speak Chinese or English properly. In Philippines, we have English lessons, but it's only reading and writing. We don't do listening and speaking exams like in Hong Kong. So I know English, I can read and write, I can say it, but I have to translate it from Filipino to English in my head. Yeah, so it was really a pressure like, 'What am I gonna do? Too much city vibe. Mom, take me home!'"*

Adjusting became easier for Karli once she joined secondary school. She started F.3 with English as the medium of instruction (EMI). Once her school routine was established, she found a clearer sense of direction. But after a year, because of her good performance in studies, her teacher suggested she switched to a better ranked EMI school with a different curriculum. So, Karli changed school in F.4 where all of a sudden, she was amidst very well-performing students which made her even more conscious about her language ability.

*"Everyone in my class I felt...they were good, as in excellent good, as in top-notch good... They answered teachers' questions and I could have never even think of that answer and they got it correct and I'm like, 'Okay, cool.'... Whenever they answer, it's so polished... It was so overwhelming seeing how they were so confident of themselves."*





Karli had to put in extra effort in every subject for English writing and speaking. She never stopped working hard to perform better. For her, it was important to be fluent in English in front of others so as to avoid being judged negatively and to be accepted as a capable Filipino.

*"I just really didn't want to mess up, I guess, and my idea of messing up before was very, I don't know, the stereotypical racist remarks. I didn't really want to be seen as, not be a Filipino but as someone who didn't know anything... So whenever I spoke, I needed to prepare everything in my head first. That way I would be able to speak out... There's already this view that when you are a Filipino in Hong Kong, that means you come from a family of domestic helpers... I want to be those people who went out of that restriction towards that image. I don't want them to view me as someone uneducated not just because of the stereotype. I wanted to be proud as a Filipino, that's why I wanted to do better."*

In the beginning, Karli struggled but gradually started improving. She joined many extracurricular activities like community service group, prefect, clubs and public speaking that would help her further improve her English language and her confidence to speak, even in front of an audience.

*"I was really shy. Especially my English was so bad, my accent sounds like English that people wouldn't understand... At first I couldn't talk at all because I was shaking so much! I couldn't stand up in front of people because there were so many thoughts like, 'uhh, they will think that I'm bad, they will think my*

*English is not good, they will think why didn't they just get another person...'. Yeah, but then, I think through those things I have overcome it. Now I even found the courage to say yes to this interview invitation!"*

After another year, Karli completed her A-Levels and entered university. The transition for her has been less stressful than her previous one but there are still challenges. The majority of the students are Chinese, and Chinese is the dominant language even though English is the official medium of instruction. This calls for another tiring adjustment for Karli to fit into an environment where language makes her stand out instantly.

*"In uni, everyone is closed up, people barely speak. Sometimes I really, really want to say something because no one is saying anything. But I don't want to be the goody good girl answering all the questions... I remember this one time... the first lecture actually, the teacher asked who doesn't speak Chinese and I raised my hands. She smirked at me like, 'Hmph, because of you I won't be speaking Chinese in class.' I was like, 'Okay, but you were already speaking in English this whole time...' That was another reason I didn't want to talk in class because I just didn't want any attention."*

In university, Karli mostly maintains a low profile within class but she still remains driven by her goals to excel in her studies. Outside the classroom, she continues to take on challenges that allow her to practice her public speaking skills which took her years of perseverance to master.

**May 2018:**

One of the most unimaginable moments in my life. I've always dreamed of watching a TED stage live, but never did I even thought of giving one myself!



**Karli's first year in university**

**February 2018:**

This was during my school's Speech Festival entitled 'Sense? Sensibility?'



**November 2018:**

My only goal in my studies is to attain a good grade. When I received the news of becoming a Dean's Lister, I was beyond everything, in cloud nine. It was a recognition that reminded me that I'm on the right track and that I'm doing fine.





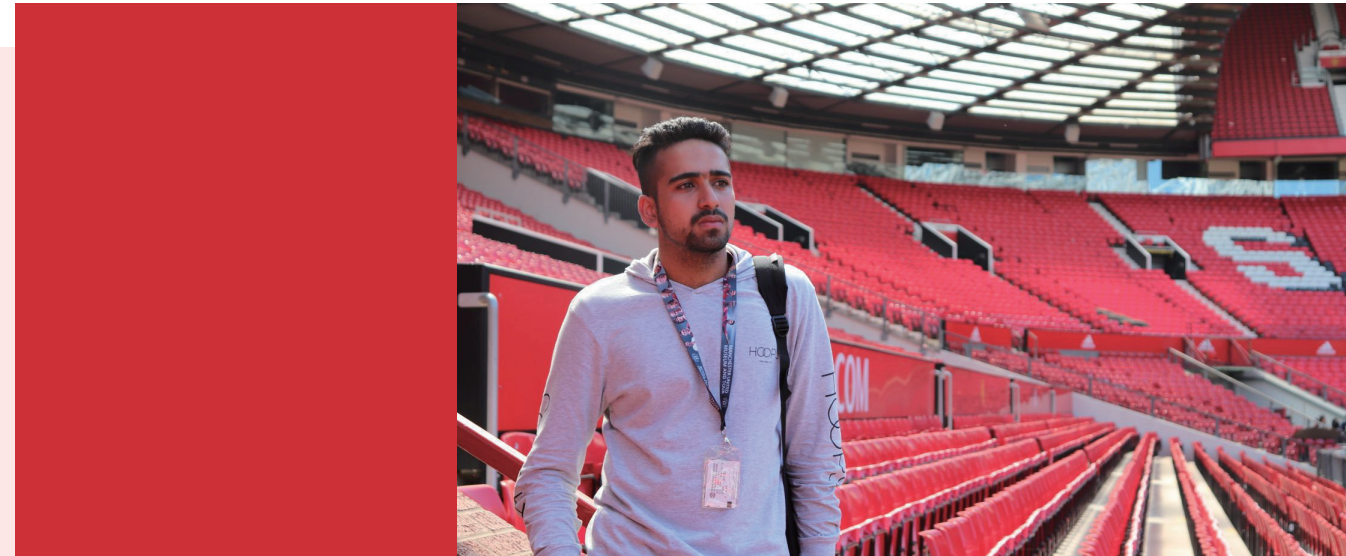
# SUNNY

"I don't want to begin all over again. "

Male, 18, Indian

University undergraduate between 2018-2021

Majoring in Physical Education



For many migrant children, one difficulty is the constant need to adapt to a different environment. Having to move between places locally and internationally so often, they would love to be settled in a school where they feel they belong and feel accepted.

Born in India, Sunny came to Hong Kong at the age of 6 and recalls having changed school at least 4 times in Hong Kong and in India. Sunny's father came to Hong Kong with a working visa. After working for 7 years he got his permanent residency and brought his wife whom he married in India and later their children, Sunny and his twin sister, to live in Hong Kong.

When Sunny and his sister were sent to Hong Kong, he found the transition very difficult.

"...moving house is already a big deal but moving country was a big issue for me because I wasn't used to living with my parents... It was traumatizing; I would say no one should go through that unless there is no other choice. The people you are with your entire life and suddenly they are taken away... It was very hard to adjust without [my grandparents] in Hong Kong... I couldn't even talk to them on the phone because I couldn't tell my parents I missed my grandparents and I wanted to talk to them."

Sunny didn't share his unhappiness of missing his grandparents with his parents because at that time they were almost like strangers to him. Instead he decided to 'suck it up'. Being prepared for school in Hong Kong also seemed to work as a distraction. Since they couldn't join school right away, their mother put in extra effort to prepare Sunny and his sister to adapt well in school.

"...my mom would make us work really hard. After we came to HK we couldn't speak English, nor was our education level very good. She made us study at home for a month or 2 with her, so when we went to school we were like doing really good compared to everyone in the class. At 6 or 7 kids didn't do times and divide, but our mom already taught us that. Me and my sister studied 8-10 hours a day, for weeks or months, I can't remember. That wasn't a fun time, but it really paid off I'd say."

When Sunny started his school in Primary 1, he was finally able to make friends and his mind was mostly occupied with school work. Slowly, he adjusted to the life in Hong Kong and felt less homesick. But, just as he was settling in, he had to change school in Primary 2 and again the following year. His family moved out from the apartment they

were sharing with Sunny's uncle and his family, and they had to move around until they found the ideal place where they currently live.

Constantly changing school was a headache for Sunny's parents as well, having to find new schools mostly based on friends' or relatives' recommendation, getting admission, buying new books and uniforms. But they did it for the sake of what they thought was best for their children's education. For Sunny it became almost like a habit.

"I am glad I was a kid back then because when you are a kid you can get over it easily, and I was already used to getting separated from people, so I guess everywhere I went I just made friends. I guess it is easier as a kid you forget faster and make new friends faster."

Sunny and his sister remained in the English primary school in Tsing Yi for 3 years, after which his parents decided to send them to a boarding school in India based on their relatives' recommendation. Sunny's cousins who used to live in Hong Kong were also studying there.





"My parents thought it would be good to put us there. They also wanted to rest and go to India for a while. I was excited because I was close to my cousins, so [I thought,] sure, I'll go to that school. But eventually, I didn't like the school because it's not easy living away in dorms where every minute of your life is planned for you... In school, we only have timetable from 8 am to 4 pm, but there we had a 24-hour timetable like we don't get to choose even a minute of our life."

Sunny and his sister returned to Hong Kong 2 years later and joined a secondary school from F.1 where he remained until graduation. Sunny recalls those years to be the happiest time of his life.

"In other schools, there are 800-1000 students. In ours, we had around 200. This gives us an easier chance to know each other. Every time I go out of the room, I see people, and I know who they are. Each and every one. We say hi to each other, and no one ignores each other. We are like a small happy family... I'm glad I could stay in my secondary school for the whole 6 years. That was a good time. I was happy to be there... People usually have 2-3 best friends, I had a big group of 7 guys. Throughout the 6 years, it was really fun...we would eat lunch together every day in the canteen. It was the best thing, we talk and laugh... I only have good memories with my friends. So, I'm thankful for that."

He actively participated in many school events and took up new responsibilities. He was in the basketball team. He was president of students' union, vice house captain and vice head prefect. More importantly, he was able to forge stronger bonds with the people around him and develop a sense of belonging.

After graduation, Sunny was again faced with the choice of staying in Hong Kong or moving abroad. With his uncle in the Canada willing to take care of him, Sunny had applied for higher education there. But having received a local offer for a Bachelor's degree in Physical Education, Sunny gave it a lot of thought and finally decided not to leave. There were too many adjustments he would have to make, which he wasn't keen about.

"In Canada, first I will have to get used to the weather. It will be really cold. And secondly, making new friends in the school. And, because it's a different country, the culture will be different. So, I'll need to get used to that. Moreover, finding a part-time job. Like of course, it won't be easier than this because now in Hong Kong I teach. I don't think I can find that job over there, and like it's a well-paying job that I can support myself. So, everything is comfortable for me at the moment. When I go there it won't be the same, maybe it will be, but I will have a hard time first... I don't want to begin all over. Like everything here, I don't want it to go to waste."

After all the years of constant changes and having to adjust to a new environment, Sunny finally feels settled and happy with the life he has established in Hong Kong and sees no need to move again.

## Sunny's secondary school life





"I was afraid they wouldn't like me, but many, many Chinese friends came to me."



Female, 18, Indian  
Higher Diploma in Early Childhood Education between 2018-2020

In Hong Kong many ethnic minorities have to choose between the English medium schools or the mainstream Chinese schools. Many choose to go to English medium schools where most of their peers are ethnic minorities to avoid feeling isolated. Anna had the same consideration when it was time for her to select her secondary school. But because of the suggestion of her class teacher, she ended up attending a mainstream Chinese school. She wasn't very certain of this decision at first.

"...when I applied for secondary school I actually wrote Delia Broadway for the first choice because my brother went to that school and my mom wanted me to go to that school as well. And then my primary school teacher wrote this school as the first one...I got a lot of awards for basketball and this school was good for basketball. She said I could go to that school and continue developing my skills in there... I was like okay because I really like basketball, but I also wanted to go to Delia because they are international school, so I felt like I should go there, learn more English."

Anna was enrolled in the local Chinese secondary school, where she was the only non-Chinese student apart from 1 other student who was graduating. She was nervous as she started this new chapter.

"The first day I was so scared. The teacher called me and told me I was in B class then said I was in the D class. I go to the D class and it was the worst class in the whole form. I go in and then I was so scared because they are naughty, so loud, and so noisy. But still, so many people come to me and ask me, 'I thought you were Pakistani but you're not! How to find that you are Indian but not Pakistani?' They learnt so much from me. They said you are so good and sometimes they have questions and they ask me."

Slowly, Anna started fitting in and making friends in her new school but she remained very quiet during her first year. She didn't always like the class environment especially during one occasion when one of Anna's classmates made a rude, racist remark towards her.

"He called me 'Ah cha' when I entered the classroom. I felt very awkward. I didn't know why he said that. I was feeling so angry, I just picked up my water bottle, and I was going to hit him, but I didn't because my friends stopped me. Then the teacher came in, and the classmates told the teacher that that guy said something bad to Anna... Maybe he didn't mean to offend me, but when I heard that, I didn't like it. I was in F.1 and my parents, and other people always told me it's a bad word. So I was thinking, 'Why is he saying that to me? Is he discriminating against me?' I was so angry."

The teacher talked to both Anna and the misbehaving student, along with the classmates who were in the room. The misbehaving student was then sent to the discipline room and given detention.

"I felt really good because I felt the teacher wasn't discriminating me. She judged the case based on who's right and who's wrong. She supported the right one and sent the wrong one to the discipline room. And that I thought was good...He got what he deserved."

Such event didn't occur in Anna's school life again, and she didn't let this instance impact her negatively. In the next year, she was happy to move to another class where she grew from being quiet to a chatty person as she was able to get along with her classmates much better.

"...all of them were so nice, and I changed so much after I went to B class. And till now, most of my classmates love me so much because I don't like to fight, and I give my heart to talk to you guys. I treat you guys as a friend. I am funny sometimes, and I like to tell jokes and use ugly and some funny faces to talk with them. So, they just love being with me. And yeah, I can fluently communicate with them, so they just talk with me. I was glad I didn't go to some international school. I stayed in this school and now I know Chinese, English and [have] all these best friends who are so good. I'm so happy."

Despite her initial uncertainty and instinct to stick to people with a similar ethnic background, Anna managed to get along pretty well with many of her Chinese classmates over the years. On reflection, she felt the whole experience has been worthwhile.

"When I went to this secondary school I was so quiet because I was afraid they wouldn't like me or something but many, many Chinese friends come to me and asked me which country I am from, and they are just so friendly and slowly, slowly I fit in. Also in primary school most of them come to me and we just connected. They think that I am no different from them, (laughs) just covering my face because I look Indian..."





## "I've given up on studies."

Male, 21, Nepalese  
Graduated from secondary  
school in Nepal in 2016

# TENCHHO

Tenchho was born in Hong Kong but only completed half of his education here. He recalls while he was in secondary school, he was constantly getting into trouble. Fighting frequently, plenty of absence, arriving late to school, smoking, and when it came to studies, he lacked motivation.

*"I don't know if I'm naughty or I just can't study. When I was in Primary 1, from what my parents tell me, I was in 1C. I wasn't really good, but there was this teacher who actually took care of me and made me better, and they changed me to 2B. That class was very carefree, and they wouldn't really do anything about it. After that, I got so bad in Primary 2, I went to 3D. Since then, I don't know why I just can't, like if I have to study, I'll just read it all, but I won't understand it properly. And even if I ask someone, no matter how many different styles they teach, I still can't get it. So, I just gave up in Secondary 1, I think."*

Tenchho suffered from bullying during his last 2 years in primary school that went unchecked. The experience left a significant impact on him. In primary school he was very shy and quiet, and then

in secondary school he described himself as a "loud mouth who went around bullying other people".

*"I was quiet, umm, easy target when you don't talk much, when you look like a, I don't know what you call it, maybe those days a nerd. I was wearing glasses and all that... I remember I used to get bullied on the school bus. Like someone used to hit me for no reason and tease me... I have some faded memory of me telling my auntie and my grandma about it. I don't know what they did about it, but I guess they didn't do anything. So, that's why they still bullied me."*

Tenchho took matters to his own hands when the bullying didn't stop. He asked his parents to enroll him in a Taekwondo class, which was convenient given his uncle was a Taekwondo coach. So, after a few classes, he retaliated against his bullies. This led to a change in his behavior, especially when it came to fighting.

*"It was my first time using a kick inside the school... After I kicked him, he started bringing out more friends, and I had a few guys with me who were also on my side,*

*and we fought. After that, I used to think, 'Oh, I'm strong now!' (laughs) I was thinking I could beat up anyone, but that was just because I was young back then."*

Tenchho's conduct worsened because of the influence of older peers in his neighborhood whom he started hanging out with more frequently. He followed them loyally so he could be a part of their group. This diverted him further from studies.

*"I was most of the time with my friends and did lots of things with them. When they had fights, I went with them... I used to hang out with people who were older than me, who's, you know, not studying anymore, smoking, hanging around the parks with a lot of people. In that Jordan basketball court, before, there was a whole lot of Nepali people. So, I used to hang out with them, and then, that's the time I started feeling all gangster. So, that changed me."*

At that time, apart from his older peers from the neighborhood, Tenchho didn't have other figures in life to guide him. Both his parents were occupied with work and weren't aware of the situation until the teachers notified them after which they tried to come up with a solution.

*"...I just remember my class teacher, she had a meeting with my parents and then they planned to make me a better student. We used to have locker in our school behind right, I used to keep my books in there and I never did homework. So from that day, they asked me to take out all my books, bring it home and come back again to school without putting it in the locker. So, they tried that. They tried to give me extra classes but my extra classes were mostly detention already..."*

The plan didn't work, and Tenchho was eventually suspended from school after being caught smoking. He moved to another school in F.2 but his conduct and academic performance remained the same. As a last resort, like many Nepalese parents, his parents decided to send him back to Nepal to distance him from the bad influence.

*"...I know my parents sent me to Nepal because I was being trouble here, but I was still mad about it. I don't know why but I got mad... for people I heard when they are young they don't understand things and they get angry. For me it was quite different. I did understand a lot of things... we are living in Hong Kong which is not*

*our own country, so we have to work, we have to do that. My parents had to work, they couldn't babysit me all the time because we need food, we need rent and all that... But, I used to get mad at everything, things that I understand or things that I didn't understand, somehow I got mad about it..."*

Tenchho had mixed feelings about going to Nepal. On the one hand, he was sad to be leaving Hong Kong which he was very used to. On the other, he would have a chance for a fresh start.

For his first year, he was quite neutral about his feelings moving to Nepal, but at the start of the second year, Tenchho had serious reflection about his education, especially seeing his friends in Hong Kong who were pursuing university degrees. In comparison, he felt the quality of education he was getting was much poorer and had the sense of wanting something better for himself.

*"I'm sorry to say, but Nepal's education isn't as good as Hong Kong's... I tried asking my parents to convince them to bring me back, but there were some reasons why they didn't want me to come back. I remember talking to my dad like, 'I really want to come back. Can't you help me look for a school?' I'm not sure if he really did go look for schools (laughs) but he told me later, 'Yeah, I went to those schools and they said they didn't want to take you back again because you did this and did that.'... And, the school I was studying at I didn't really like it. So, both ways were the end for me... So, that's why I gave up on studies."*

It was a continuous, downward spiral for Tenchho, one experience adding up with another that continued to impact him and his decisions negatively. When he did finally want to turn his life around, things just didn't work out as he would have liked. The downward streak continued after Tenchho returned to Hong Kong after finishing his secondary education, as he began experimenting with drugs.

Now, having left all of his past behind him, although he has no plans of pursuing education, he has other goals. As an aspiring Muay Thai fighter and a Muay Thai coach, he wishes to gain fame and wealth through martial arts.



## JAMIE

Female, 21, Filipino  
University undergraduate  
between 2015-2019  
Majoring in Psychology

## "I didn't feel like I belonged there at first..."

One thing was very clear to Jamie when she started university – university life was going to be very different from her primary and secondary school experience. Attending an EMI school with a high concentration of ethnic minority students, Jamie's classmates then were of diverse ethnicities and English was the main mode of communication. Now in university, she's the only non-Chinese in her batch.

*"I didn't feel like I belonged there at first because it was the first time I really felt, 'Okay, I am an ethnic minority now.'...It really just happened in my first few weeks. Sometimes the teacher would translate in Cantonese, and she would make these remarks, and suddenly everyone would be laughing, and I wouldn't understand like, 'What's going on?' Quite shy still to ask them to translate it for me. I wasn't sure what was going on. And at the same time, whenever we had to make groups, I felt like I would be the last choice, because if you group with me, you would be forced to speak in English. I think maybe it's just in my mind, but that's what kind of overwhelmed me."*

Graduating from secondary school, Jamie was only equipped with GCSE level of Chinese which is equivalent to primary 3 level of Chinese. But, that was insufficient for conversing in Cantonese comfortably, which made it more difficult for Jamie to befriend her new classmates.

*"It felt like they were reluctant to talk to me. They would say, 'Uhh, no English, no English.' Sometimes, they would be like, 'Do you speak Chinese?' And, I say no in the beginning because I'm really not confident and they would be like, 'Oh, okay.' And, that's it. No more conversation. That kinda brushed me back but at the same time I was like, 'Okay, try again later!'"*

While Jamie wasn't confident with her Cantonese, her peers weren't confident with their English. But, Jamie didn't give up.

*"I couldn't just be on my own box or else I'll be the loner of the group or the whole batch. So I thought, yeah, I'm awkward in the beginning but, I need to at least try. If they don't like me, they don't like me. But I need to try."*



Jamie's Chinese Dance Group in secondary school.

As a minority, Jamie was nervous about approaching her classmates whose reaction she was uncertain about. But, she persisted until she succeeded in making friends.

*"The very first friend I made, she was sitting next to me during the orientation briefing session. So, I talked to her like which school she was from. She was from our sister school, so I felt like I could talk to her. But when the school started, I didn't know how to approach her again, because she already had her own friends. But later when we had to make groups for discussions during class, I would just go to her and be like, 'Hey, do you remember me?' And then that's when we really started talking, and until now she is my closest friend. She introduced me to her group of friends as well."*

With a group to learn and work together with, university life became much easier for Jamie. From her experience, they worked very well together too. But, she was still well aware of the difficulties among non-Chinese students integrating in university. And, from her own

observations, there was still a lack of social inclusion within campus.

*"The international office they would organize these events but just purposely for exchange students. I think they should be aware that the number of EM students in the campus is growing so I felt like we should really highlight or make the students aware that yes, this school is not just local Chinese, mainland Chinese, and the exchange students. There are ethnic minorities and we have cultures too. We exist! It was all about highlighting there are international students in our school and we are promoting global perspectives in our school but, before the international students came, there are already international students but local at the same time. So my group of friends felt like we should do something."*

During her second year, her group of ethnic minority friends and herself organized a society called Intercultural society with aims to bridge the local Chinese with the non-Chinese and other international students alike. They even took their concerns to the International Office staff who were very receptive of their ideas and got their own



booth for the cultural showcase that is carried out in campus every year. Besides that, the society organized many activities that gave students the taste of cultures of the minority youth, but more importantly, it gave a platform for local Chinese and ethnic minorities as well as other international students to come in contact and bond.

"... I've been working in group projects, having classes with Chinese students. And, I feel like sometimes there is still like barrier there in terms of communication, bonding. So, when I was talking to the chairperson then for the society, he really felt the same, like, we had to break the barrier. Because you work with them and encounter them everyday, but why is there a barrier? So, we really wanted to bring us together. We are all local students, but there are Chinese students and non-Chinese students. So, we want to bring us together and learn more about each other."

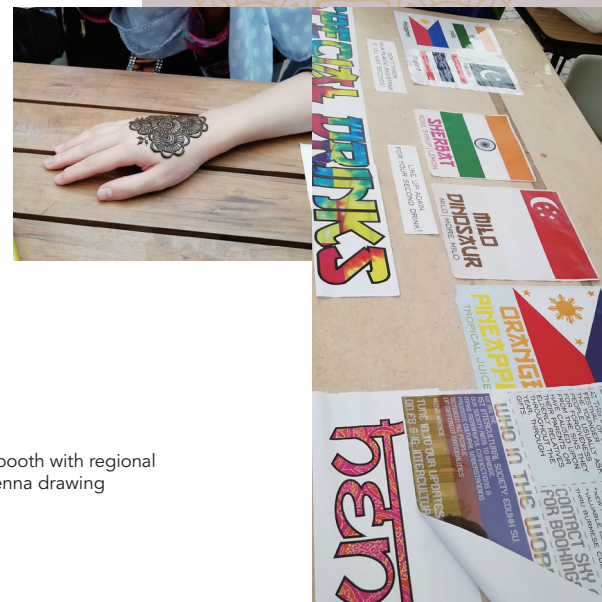
Jamie dedicated much of her time in not only her studies but overseeing the work of this society she and her friends created in matter of months. The process of which has been very rewarding.

"It was actually very successful, we had events where more Chinese members participating students attended more than ethnic minority and we heard from them it was a fun experience, different experience. It was very rewarding at the same time, around May we applied for president's commendation award and thankfully we got that."

Now in her final year, Jamie is no longer part of the society's committee. She has handed the baton to the younger cohorts to keep the society going. Looking back to when she first started her university years, she has come far from feeling alone and helpless. She takes pride in her proactive initiative and her commitment to forge a sense of belonging for herself and the other ethnic minorities who will join the university in the years to come.



First cultural booth with regional drinks and henna drawing



Junk boat party

## Activities offered by Jamie's Intercultural Society



Burmese candle-making workshop

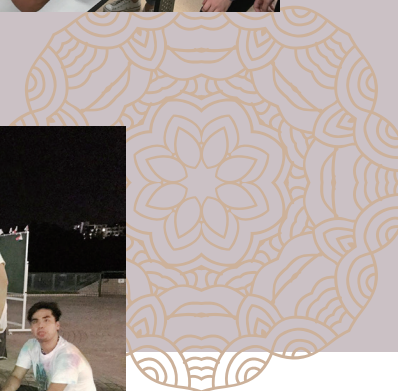


### March 2018:

This was a proud moment for me. It is because the society that I am committee member of received an appreciation award from our University President.



The committee in Orientation night, after Holi celebration!





# ANONYMOUS

**"Some teachers didn't have any hope for us."**

X was in the final year of his undergraduate studies when we first met him, and he recalled his rough journey in education before entering university.

After moving to Hong Kong as a child, X went to local schools for ethnic minorities that provided tailored curriculums. Initially, X's parents had intended for X to join a local Chinese school but all the schools he applied to rejected him.

*"My parents believed language was very important, but every school I applied to rejected me. I think there were 2 reasons. One is probably, 'He is non-Chinese and the entire school is Chinese. How will he fit in?' And, secondly, I'm coming to Hong Kong at the age of 7, so how can I catch up with the language? Also, how could they offer me Chinese language support? Because my parents were looking at public schools that didn't have a lot of extra funding."*

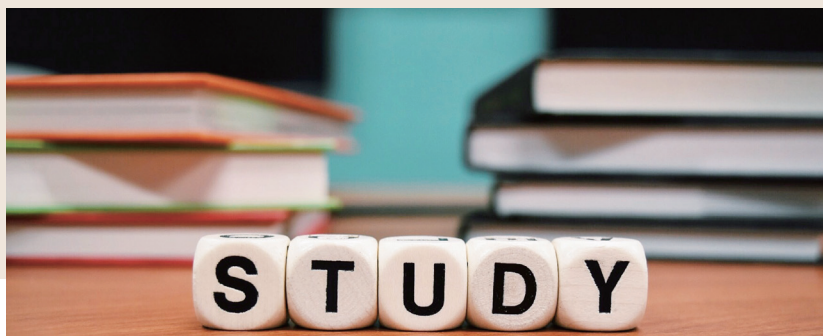
These former designated schools were subject to much controversy, raising concerns about segregation of students, inadequate cultural training for teachers, non-standardized curriculum for Chinese language and the hurdles it posed for ethnic minority students to excel. Like many other ethnic minority youth, X didn't have many options in schools because of language restriction and financial limitation. So he attended a designated school from primary to secondary, where he felt the environment wasn't always conducive to learning.

*"I don't think we were getting a very good education... There would always be some kind of chaos that would break out during class. Some people would start fighting or hitting each other, and the class would get interrupted... So, the teachers had to focus on disciplining us more rather than teaching us. Some teachers didn't know how to discipline, so the whole learning speed was very slow."*

X was dissatisfied not just with the environment but how some curriculums were inadequately planned.

*"I feel like 6 years of my school years in terms of Chinese studies was wasted. We watched Chinese movies every Chinese class, so we didn't really properly learn anything from it. The little Chinese we were taught would be repeated every year like locations, greetings, and directions, etc... I felt like the Chinese curriculum wasn't very well-planned. It felt like no teacher would actually have received training on how to teach Chinese as a second language because we are not that big of a population. So, the problem was teachers were underprepared to teach us Cantonese as second language because they always learnt it as their first language."*

X found the learning environment and lessons very demotivating. It didn't help that he felt his teachers to be very discouraging and inadequately trained in cultural sensitivity especially when he was approaching his HKDSE.



*"Some teachers didn't have any hopes for us. They would demotivate us and say when we are having our local exams, 'Don't have hope of going to university,' 'you're so bad at this.' Always getting blamed because of our ethnicity, like, 'You will never be good enough like Chinese students because of your culture; you are lazy; bla bla bla'. Maybe it's the person who is just not good at the subject, but the teacher always linked it to ethnicity as if we were inferior to local Chinese students. Some teachers would even fall asleep during lesson time. I used to think, 'Are we that meaningless that we don't even deserve an opportunity of learning properly?'"*

X didn't have many channels to vent his frustrations. He tried to tell his parents about his struggles in school but he didn't receive much help from them. Seeing them brush his frustrations off made him feel even worse.

*"My parents have this immigrant mindset, they were just like, 'you are in another country, you have to prove them wrong'. For them, it's like don't complain, just work hard and just bear with it! I believe my parents must have faced more racism than myself because they are like...they do primary occupations and they can't even speak English very well, so I think it's much harder for them."*

X had no intention or hope of attending a university. He was neither confident nor interested. But, miraculously, during S.4, a new teacher came to his school who took notice of him and changed his mind on pursuing further studies. Although she taught only for a year, she left a positive impact on X to work hard in his studies.

*"She was also new and didn't have teaching qualification, but she tried really hard and always prepared for lessons. And, she was very easy to talk to and she didn't have the degrading mentality as the other teachers... Maybe she wasn't the one to motivate me, but she was the one to get me interested in economics because that's what she taught. I think maybe because I had good interpersonal teacher-student relationship with her, so I wanted to do well in the subject... She would praise me personally during chats like, 'oh, you speak very well', after presentations. Very tiny, tiny things that made me feel better and encouraged."*

With years of dedication, revising alone in the public libraries doing self-study, X went on to excel in his public exam surprising many of his teachers and entered university.

He has since graduated from university and has embarked on a new journey as a practitioner in the field of education. Drawing from his own experience, he knows the kind of practitioner he wants to be.

*"Kids are going to make a lot of mistakes, but that doesn't mean that we can just brand them as being bad forever. Because when you're 13, 14, of course some kids are going to lie or gonna make mistakes. But, I think if you're strict with them but still show them some form of like, 'I have higher expectations for you and I'm disappointed,' they could definitely change."*





"I need to get that Diploma and get out from there."

# ZACK

Male, 21, Nepalese  
Graduated with Higher Diploma  
in Digital Music and Media in 2018

Zack is relieved he is finally done with his higher diploma course. He was initially very optimistic about the study but it failed to live up to his expectations. While the first year was relatively smooth and enjoyable, he had a tough time progressing to the second year.

*"It was basically just the language, to be honest. I mean like we applied because it said they will teach in English but they just mostly focused on Chinese... I mean the teachers weren't really that good at explaining, I guess... they speak like 5 mins of Chinese and then he gives us one sentence in English like, 'So, I was talking about dadada.' Finish. So, we used to ditch class a lot after that."*

Although born in Hong Kong, Zack attended schools with GCSE curriculum for non-Chinese speakers. As a non-Chinese speaker, Zack felt he was excluded from many of the opportunities provided by the school because of the language barrier.

*"...the culture was so different when I was in high school, everything was non-Chinese and then our culture was different. Everyone would like have their opportunity of standing out. But here, if you don't have language and if you don't communicate with the teacher well, you won't get anywhere... teacher won't actually tell all of us like, 'oh I have an event here, event there'. If it goes well then they would just privately message them. Sometimes they would put it in the group chat, like Facebook group chat but it's all written in Chinese. And then we will just be like alright (laughs), try to google translate."*

In the beginning Zack was very frustrated because he was not making progress and he didn't know what to do. Some of the non-Chinese students from other classes had even dropped out. From what Zack gathered, it was because of the language, the pressure of school work, and the completely different atmosphere they were used to in secondary school where the majority are non-Chinese students and English was the common language.

Zack found studying to be a big challenge as well, but he and his close friends were determined to get their diploma.

*"I didn't want to waste my money. I need to get that diploma and get out from there, because I paid for it, and I don't want it to go to waste because it's my parents' money. Oh, also I wanted to struggle. I think struggle is a lesson in life so... It's like, okay, I'd rather fail than dropout."*

Zack rose to the challenge of completing his diploma and started learning by himself through YouTube, doing research, and self-study to catch up with his class.

*"I learnt a lot of things. I learnt about things like promotion and marketing. I learnt about how to make your music sound better and how to record by myself... that was like really good times, because I found out that, I know I don't understand what's happening in class and stuff, but when I learn from YouTube, wow, it's like communication turned really easy stuff. Sometimes it takes an hour of videos and I loved it... one, it's in English, and second, if I don't understand, I can go back again."*

Zack also had some wonderful experiences in college. He joined and won a HK\$5,000 scholarship in a music composing competition. He received much praise from the judge of the competition who was an acclaimed pianist from Japan.

*"I was basically shocked because I never expected that I would be some kind of top guy, never. All I wanted to do was just learn... The thing he told me he liked about my music was because I was putting some like, you know the traffic light sound and then scanning Wellcome sound. I just put some of that and I mixed it up. And then he told me that's what he likes, what I put is creativity more than just composing music. I was pretty glad, sometimes I feel like, 'Am I just lucky?' Because if I didn't come up with that idea, then it would just have been a plain song."*

Despite all the difficulties, Zack and his friends all successfully completed their diploma. Looking back, Zack is not bitter. He sees the difficult phase as an important lesson in life.

*"I knew like I wouldn't regret it, because if I had not face this difficulty, I think I would be stuck like, 'Oh, what am I gonna do next?' I would not rely on myself. It made me understand that you should do something you want to by yourself and not just depend on other people, and that's what I have done for 2 years in that college and I loved it after that."*





"...do I really have to go through this path alone?"

Male, 18, Pakistani  
University undergraduate between 2018-2022  
Majoring in Psychology

When Adnan was approaching his public examination, he was under great stress preparing for it. On the one hand, he wanted to meet his family's expectations by excelling academically and pursuing higher education. On the other hand, he wanted to enjoy his time with his carefree friends who were not as concerned about their HKDSE.

Among his four elder sisters, two have already completed their university degree in education while two are still completing their degree in law and biomedical sciences. His eldest sister is doing her Master's in education. As the youngest, he felt the pressure to do well.

"When this year's result came out, my sister got in. So all the pressure from family is on me now, because I'm the last one... My family, like my mom, will say, 'that kid went to university, that kid went to university.' And, I didn't care before. But now I thought it's also like an image. When people look at me, they think, 'Oh, he actually studies.' They will think, 'He is a good boy.' My dad actually told me like, 'Look at them. If you don't study, you could be like them. You will have to start from construction work.'"

With his fourth elder sister having gone through the HKDSE just recently, Adnan felt he had the support and practical advice that he needed.

"My sister always told me, 'It's not that hard, you are definitely getting level 4 or level 5, so don't worry

about that. And, you are definitely gonna pass LS'. But my grades were not so good in math and biology, so she told me I just had to push my math and biology. So, I was like, okay, I can try put more effort in biology and math. If I have time, I will study other subjects too. But at least someone is assuring me that I can pass and believes in me and someone suggests that I can try."

His sister made sure he went to the library for revision and recommended a tutorial centre where he met his tutor, who was also a great inspiration for him. However, catching up with his studies was not easy and it didn't help having to revise alone especially since his classmates didn't have the same level of commitment to their public exams because many of them weren't set on furthering their education.

"I did get influenced by my friends like in the beginning, I thought DSE wasn't important. But when I did research and went to Open Days of universities, I was amazed. And also, I actually wanted to continue my studies, continue learning more. Some friends thought you could just start working and earn a lot in the future with experience, but I didn't think the same... I've seen a lot of cousins and people who just start working after F.6. They usually do logistics, truck driving, usually moving stuff, and some work in restaurant and bars. For part-time it's completely fine but not for long-term job."

Friends can play a role in shaping one's decisions. Adnan saw this from the example of his own cousin.



"He changed to that school because it was nearer to home. He went in F.4, and he realized the seniors and their scores and what they did. Some of them didn't even go to the exams, and nobody went to university, not even Associate degree. He would say he wanted to study, but in that environment he couldn't because everyone in the school had the mentality of not studying, so if he wanted to study then everyone would judge him, and he thought he would be excluded from his circle."

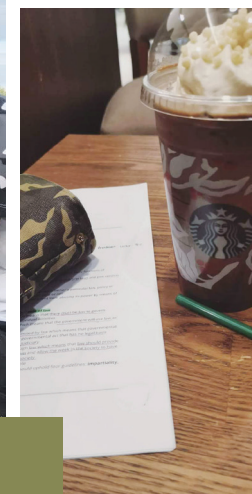
Although certain about his decision, Adnan struggled with stress and social life during the revision period. At one point he even gave up on it to enjoy his holiday like all of his classmates. But, he eventually picked up revising again when he failed his DSE mock exam. He put more effort into his revisions this time around because he recognized the support he had from his friends even though they didn't share the same ambitions.

"Looking back at it now, they tried their best to support me... some friends took care of me. They came to the library and took me for hangouts several times to ease my mind and relax...I was relieved because they were kind of there for me. And they did make me laugh and, overall I had a better mood after that so, in that sense, I felt like I was still studying and I was in a good mood when I was studying."

Adnan made through the long and rough HKDSE period. He passed all subjects which even some of his teachers couldn't believe. He received and accepted an offer from the Open University studying psychology, an achievement both his parents and his friends are very proud of!



**In between HKDSE preparations and hanging out with friends**



Rooftop breaks



Simran feels that she hasn't performed as well academically as the other peers in her community, yet she is determined to improve herself.

Simran spent part of her childhood in India. Although she was born in Hong Kong, she was sent back to India to be raised by her grandparents. She returned to Hong Kong at the age of 7 when she joined an EMI school. She remembers that her school performances weren't up to par.

*"... most of the [young people from my community] were born here and went to local Chinese primary and secondary school, so they have strong Chinese language... They are good in studies, and I am left behind, weak at studies..."*

Aware of her shortcomings, Simran tried her best to overcome them. But it was a struggle for her to maintain her grades because of a health condition that made it difficult for her to focus. And it didn't help that as the eldest daughter in the family, she has to take care of most of the household duties.

*"I was the earliest one to wake up at 6 am. I would help my father cook something. If he is making tea, we make tea together, and after I take a shower, my sister wakes up. Until that we do little housework, maybe I pack lunch for them...I think in F.4, it got harder because we had after-school tutorials as well. After school, school ends at 3:30 so, from 3:30 to 5:30 pm we have after school tutorials, and after 5:30 we have to go home and start preparing for dinner and housework. We also have homework from school and we can't do that during tutorial so, at 6 pm we have to do housework and homework."*

Although Simran's academic performance wasn't particularly good, she has always been serious about doing further studies. Criminology was one of her interests as she was inspired by a friend who took the course and works in the law

related field. So when she was in her study break for preparation for the HKDSE, she knew what her priorities were.

*"I had to be in school at 7 am and then until 5 or 6 pm, we have tutorials after school, and after 7, I went to the library to study until 8 or so, and went home, ate dinner, and studied till midnight again...Although I was getting scolded every day, 'You are not doing any housework. You are putting too much focus on your studies!' I was ignoring all of them because in my mind it was just about one month [until the exam]. All I have is one month."*

While Simran was set on her preparations for HKDSE, her parents weren't very pleased that she neglected her household duties. Simran's parents are both immigrants from India who came to Hong Kong 30 years ago. Her father is a construction worker and her mother is a chef in a restaurant. Both of them work full-time, and because of their long working hours they depend on Simran to take care of her two siblings who are 16 and 10 years of age.

*"They were not supporting me at all...my father was like, 'You don't need to study, if you fail you can just do housework and stay at home. It's okay, you don't have to emphasize too much on studies, it's just a mental burden.' But for me, it's my responsibility to build my future."*

When her HKDSE results came out, Simran scored a total of 13 marks in her examination. Although she failed in Chemistry and Math, she performed better than she had expected. But she couldn't continue with her studies as her parents couldn't afford the tuition fee.

*"I got an offer from City U, but my parents said they could not pay for me...I also applied for VTC, but they were also very expensive. I went to Poly U for interview as well, and I got the letter too, but I couldn't go because my parents were like it was also too expensive...I heard from my teachers and friends as well*

"It's my responsibility to build my future."

# SIMRAN

Female, 18, Indian

University undergraduate between 2018-2022

Majoring in Psychology

*that we can apply for student loan, and it's helpful, and you can just pay after getting a job...But, my parents were not agreeing, they were like it's a loan, we can't afford a loan."*

Simran missed the round of JUPAS application to get admitted to the tertiary program while trying to negotiate with her parents. Convinced that her parents don't want the same kind of future that she aspired for, Simran took a huge step of moving out from her parents' home. For her, education is a prerequisite for less hardship in life.

*"I want to work in a job where I am happy. So, to get that job I need a degree or a certificate... in McDonald's it's completely opposite, you have to be fast, be here and there and it's quite a rush, and I don't have time to give myself rest. I want a job where I am comfortable, yeah, just an office job because I think that's a job where you can be comfortable."*

After moving out, Simran applied and was admitted to a Psychology program with a conditional offer for which she has to retake her HKDSE examination in the 2 subjects she failed. While preparing to re-sit the examination, she worked as a full-time clerk at a law firm and attended introductory classes in the college. She is hopeful that she will be able to get back on track with the career goal of becoming a criminal investigator.



"The roles I take up, I wanna be good at them!"

# GURPREET

Male, 21, Indian  
University undergraduate between 2016-2021  
Majoring in Speech and Hearing Science



Gurpreet doesn't consider himself a star student but he is far from being just an average one. As a HKU student in his 2nd year and fluent in both English and Chinese, he often appears in magazines especially the ones associated with the university. He was formerly the president of the Sports Association, University Student Union and the Sports Captain of his university hall committee. None of this would have been possible if it weren't for his parents and their guidance towards his education.

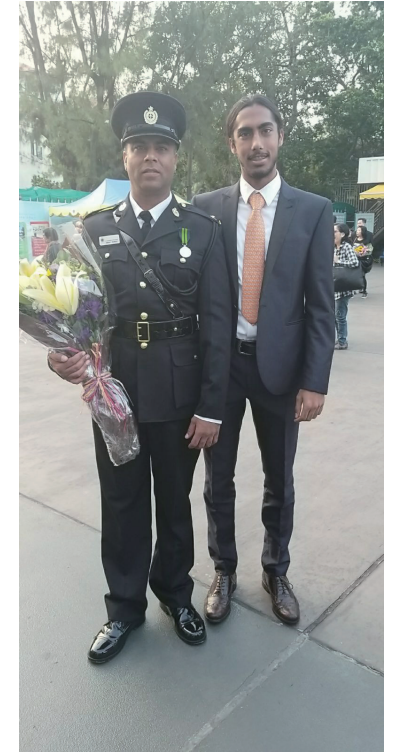
Although Gurpreet's father was also born and raised in Hong Kong, his educational experience was very different to the one Gurpreet had. Living in a large family with his 3 siblings, uncles and their family, his father's priorities were very different.

*"My dad told me the schooling environment at that time was like you finish F.5 you should go find a job, provide for your family because of the socio-economic status of the Indian families, at least the ones we know wasn't so high so, they had to work as soon as they could... he would say, 'oh I didn't have anyone to teach me and guide me on what to do but for you, we know education is the best, so we are trying to provide as much as we can for you.'"*

Gurpreet's father, who is now a civil servant, was bullied by his classmates for his 'dastar' (turban to neatly hold and cover long uncut hair) which had religious significance. He learnt to speak Cantonese but never learnt reading or writing as Chinese was not mandatory during the colonial period. And because all of the experiences he went through, he made sure Gurpreet was able to lead a different path.

*"My mom was thinking about putting me in international school so it would be easier for me when I was young. But my dad was like, 'no, if we are going to stay in Hong Kong, he has to go to local school. He must go to local school and learn Cantonese with locals to be successful in the society'."*

Gurpreet's parents didn't fully understand the education system or which school to send their children to. Gurpreet's mom who came to Hong Kong after marriage wasn't equipped with the Chinese language so she couldn't join in the conversations with other children's mothers. Eventually, through the recommendation of his father's colleagues, they selected a local Chinese school for him.



**December, 2017:**

My dad was promoted and our whole family was very happy... He was also featured in the media as he is an ethnic minority and has served in the department for more than 20 years. I personally also am very proud of my father...



"Once, for an art exercise, the teacher asked us to bring Yakult bottle and the Pringles container to school, but I thought that we had to do the artwork at home and then bring the finished work to school. So, I finished the art piece in hurry at home. When I arrived at school, I realized that we need to bring just the materials. Also, as my parents did not know how to read Chinese on the notice and reply slip, I usually wore the wrong clothes on the picnic day and forgot to bring a lot of things... But it wasn't a big problem, just kinda funny."

Gurpreet slowly adjusted in the local school and avoided similar problems as he became more fluent in Chinese. During the secondary school years, his parents put a lot of emphasis on quality education by providing him all the opportunities they could afford. When Gurpreet's classmates moved to senior secondary schools in the UK, he managed to convince his parents to send him as well. After completing his A-levels in the UK, he was accepted into a university in Hong Kong which is why he returned to Hong Kong.

Now as a university student, he cherishes all the opportunities to learn and grow. As a sports captain of his hall committee, he has taken up four sports in the coming academic year – hockey, lacrosse, football, and athletics, which means sports practice everyday early in the morning and late at night. But no matter how busy and demanding his schedule gets, Gurpreet continues to take on every opportunity he comes across and he strives to do his best.

"[My father] always says just try and do your best, if you do it, you do it, if not then don't. But, for himself he sets really high standard, so I kind of look up to him as my role model. Sometimes, it's what people do that influences you instead of what they say."

## Gurpreet's university life



**September 2018:**

Master of Ceremonies for the 5th International Conference on Chinese as a Second Language Research. I was responsible for speaking in Mandarin... The roles that I take up I wanna be good at them! I want people to say, 'Oh yeah, he is speaking in Mandarin, and it's really good, and he is an Indian!'"



**August 2018:**

It is the end of the orientation camp of the students' union which was a 3 days, 2 nights' camp.



In the past, apart from a few wealthy merchants, most immigrants from South Asia were largely confined to low-skilled manual labour jobs in Hong Kong. This is because of language barriers, a lack of appropriate qualifications or a lack of recognition of qualifications obtained in their countries of origin, and other inequalities in society. The picture today is more mixed. Locally born ethnic minority youth in our study still experience obstacles to a smooth transition from school to work. However, they have diverse aspirations and are more resourceful than the earlier generations in identifying opportunities for self-development and in crafting their career path in Hong Kong and beyond. They actively seek to overcome social prejudices and personal setbacks and to advance their qualifications and skill set in order to improve their own or their family's lives. Ethnic minorities now work in a wide range of occupations and contribute to the development of Hong Kong.





"It's really about priorities and how much you are willing to sacrifice."



# SUSKIHANNA

Female, 22, Nepalese

University graduate in 2018

Majored in English Literature and minored in Journalism

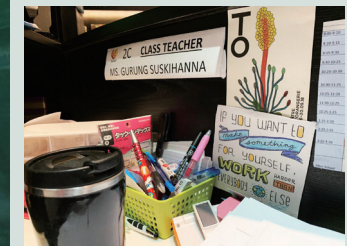
Teacher

Community Director & Content Strategist for *The Wandering Voice*

Young people often come at a crossroads deciding between a career with stable income or a dream job. Suski came across a similar situation recently. She has just started her full-time career as a teacher at a secondary school with a majority of ethnic minority students even though that wasn't always her main career goal.

Ever since high school, Suski had set her mind on becoming a writer and film-maker who would address social issues and promote equality. It was the one job she was passionate about. Consequently, she chose to study English literature and journalism in university even though it was against her parents' wishes.

"My dad really wanted me to go for engineering or business and there was a huge disagreement for a long time... when JUPAS came, my parents had no idea about Hong Kong education, I used that to my advantage and chose what I wanted to study because I couldn't picture myself studying engineering or business... I do a lot of writing and, for Journalism I do a lot of filming about different social issues and they are not really big fan of that because they're just like it's one of the job that will just make you starve in the end."



Like most parents, Suski's parents wanted her to pursue a career that promised a better chance of employment and a stable income. They disapproved of her subject choice, but were eventually convinced when Suski reassured them that she would become a teacher after graduation. And it was the truth as she had received a full scholarship in university to pursue teaching after graduation. Aware of her responsibility to support her parents and grandparents financially after graduation, Suski was prepared to choose a job that provided stability and financial security. Besides, she found it meaningful having the chance to inspire or make a difference in her students' lives.

However, it didn't mean Suski was ready to give up her passion. She took every opportunity available during university to hone her skills. She continued writing scripts and fictions, produced her own short documentaries and even won in competitions she joined. And after becoming

a teacher, she came up with a brilliant idea of merging her passion with teaching. She founded the video-making club at her school.

"Although it was a club about radios, we made it more of a video making club. I remember in the beginning, a lot of students would call it the YouTuber's Club... I realized the kids had a lot of ideas in mind but they were missing the tools and the skills to really make it happen. A lot of the kids, they have a lot of opinions about different issues. They want to do a lot of things - they wanna make movies, they wanna make documentaries, they wanna introduce their schools and things like that. So, for the first time we've been doing things like covering the sports day... learning to interview people, how to introduce yourself, how to edit videos. They've been learning that a lot and I think most kids really enjoy doing it I would say."



The club has quickly become very popular especially with the students' interest in YouTube and similar digital platforms. Having access to the skills and tools, the students get the chance to create content themselves and develop in the field.

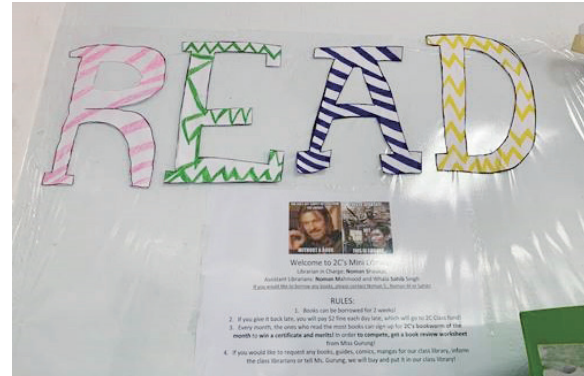
"... every school will have their YouTubers, future filmmaker who really want to pursue this, so I wanted to give this option to the interested kids. And I think they are very happy because you know, creativity doesn't happen with just pen and paper and your body. Especially in this digital age, a lot of kids would love to utilize the digital media to have their voices heard."

Suski also simultaneously works for a social enterprise 'The Wandering Voice' founded by her 2 friends, which aims to promote a socially inclusive society by bridging the minorities (ethnic minorities, domestic helpers, refugees) through cultural programs. Suski sees this media platform as an opportunity to share ideas and stories to inspire one another. As such, she is able to continue pursuing her dream job that she is so passionate about.

Suski admits it isn't easy to manage it all.

"It might seem like I manage everything and seem to do a lot, but in return for doing so much I've sacrificed my social life a lot I would say. I spend very little time with my friends and usually I cannot make time for anyone. So, I would say that it's really about your priorities and how much you are willing to sacrifice..."

Suski prioritizes both her passion and career. Who says you have to pick only one? Even though it means extra work and effort, Suski is happy to invest her time in things she finds meaningful.



I started a multicultural corner in the library to represent our students in literature and also promote their mother tongue.



Artworks done by students



Fellow at Resolve

## Teacher Suski's classroom!





**"My goal has always been the same - to do music."**

Male, 21, Nepalese

Graduated with Higher Diploma in Digital Music and Media in 2018

Full-time security guard and part-time bodyguard

# ZACK



Zack has dreamed of becoming a musician ever since he listened to his first rock music on his older brother's iPod. He was set on the path ever since high school where he formed a band with his childhood friends and school mates. The friends who once shared the same passion eventually parted for practical careers, while Zack is still determined to pursue music and to further his education in music.

After graduating from his higher diploma, Zack wanted to continue his music career but has a slightly different approach to achieving his goal. He has started a new full-time job as a security guard in a popular shopping mall. While this may seem unrelated to his goal, he is paving the way towards his music career.

*"For now, what I thought was like if I do full-time in music, I will probably only get like 10K, and that's just gonna be like slowing me down because for me if I save up more money then I can like compose more. I can invest more in [music producing] team."*

Zack isn't keen about working in the commercial music industry. As a performing artist, he would not have the full liberty to his music. More importantly, he knows he is at a disadvantage in the local mainstream music scene because of the language.

*"Once I had this Chinese record label company come to me. They said that I could sing and play guitar, but they asked me if I was Chinese. I said, 'No, I'm Nepalese'. They got shocked, and then they didn't want to approach me after. I asked them, 'is there any reason you guys don't want to approach*

*me?' They said, 'because we expect you to be Chinese so you can also sing Chinese songs, that's how business works for us.' So that was like the major part of where some kind of discrimination happened but, it also had to happen or their business would go down."*

Nevertheless, Zack still continues to push through and create his music in order to change the music industry. That is why he is more invested in earning money in order to produce his original works. At the same time, he is networking with people, both Chinese and non-Chinese, who can help him not only in music but also videography, photography and business, etc. It has been working out pretty well for him as he has just released his first MV.

Having been a security guard for a few months now, Zack finds the work itself to be demanding since he has to memorize the location of 300 plus shops and offices and respond to the queries of customers speaking different languages. Mostly, he finds it boring to stand for 12 hours at the same spot, pointing directions to shop-goers. But with his creative mind, Zack still finds ways to keep himself entertained and remain productive.

*"I tried to make it fun. I start thinking about music and start writing lyrics. I would think it in my head, try to memorize it and then next line... if I can't remember a word, I just grab my notebook that we Securities have and just write stuff, keywords. If I'm starting from the bottom, it's like making a mind map. I would do that first, what type, what do you wanna put, kind of instruments and it goes on. So 12 hours is like nothing... that's how I came up with the music I am producing right now."*





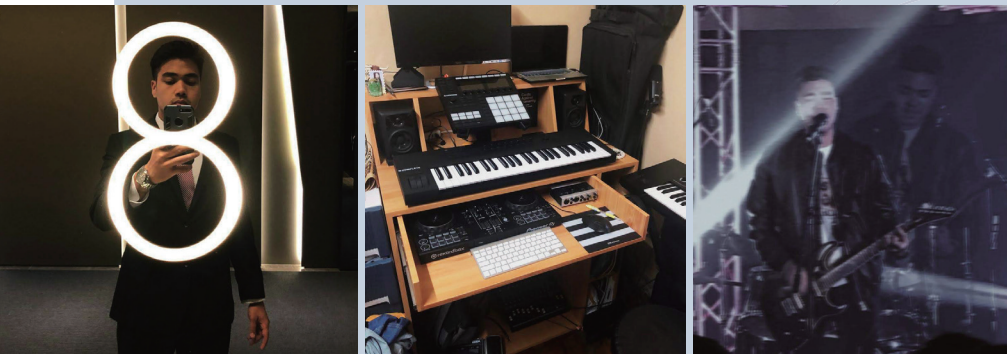
Although Zack is the youngest at work, he has the advantage of knowing multiple languages including English, basic Cantonese and Nepali, which allows him to bridge between his middle-aged Nepalese coworkers who can't communicate in Chinese and Chinese coworkers who can't communicate in English. Zack plays an important role in his workplace in translating and minimizing miscommunications between colleagues.

*"I worked for one month, and they straight up gave me the promotion to be the person-in-charge. And, when I became in charge, I got a bit of raise in salary, so I keep doing it till now. But the problem of that is that I won't have day-offs whenever I want, because I need to be there to take care. So, even like phone calls come during my day-offs. It's really hectic."*

Zack doesn't fret too much about the stress because he is clear about his goal. Although only 21, Zack has already planned out his 20s. He plans to buy an apartment in Hong Kong with his family so he can have a bigger space for a better home studio compared to his current one. He also plans on saving

enough for making his own business investments so he can still generate income while having more time for music. To accomplish these goals Zack works very hard, working 6 days a week sometimes overtime, and having another part-time job as a body guard during his day-offs on top of creating his own music in the little spare time that he has.

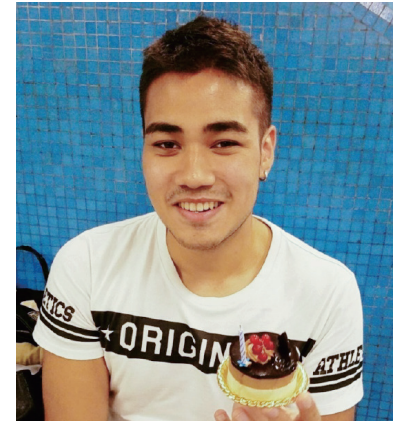
*"My goal's always been the same - to do music, make music, grow my fan base. Maybe do a world tour... with music I don't want to be famous, I just want my music to spread. If someone tells me you won't be famous making music, I'd still do it... Why spend your pocket money on drinks and stuff when you can spend it on music and just be happy? And everyone has their money they wanna spend on, I want to spend it on music."*



Zack's day job as a security guard, financing his home studio and making music and performing in the spare time.



## Zack's music journey



### October 2017:

The exact day 4th Oct, when the love of my life decided to surprise me when I was going home from work. I think it's a blessing to have her as she cares for me a lot. Maybe she's the reason why I never gave up on my dreams cus I am going to change my dreams into reality...



### March 2018:

This is the new project, that I am working for this year with a new band. I and Sky have decided to release an EP this year. Therefore, we are collaborating with musicians who wanted to help us with our EP.



### April 2018:

Photoshoot day 2: It's not edited or done anything yet. This is the raw shot. But anyway, since we don't have a decent band photo, we thought maybe we could take some. Unfortunately, it rained in the middle, so we might have to take it again in the future.





# PATRICIA

Female, 22, Filipino  
 Graduated in 2017  
 Majored in English Studies for the Professions  
 Digital and Sales Assistant

"I felt confident even if I don't know what I'm gonna be doing next."

When Patricia was completing her studies in the Polytechnic University, she was going through the same worries as many youths do regarding employment prospects. Graduating from English studies, she was unsure of the path she would take and whether she would be able to secure any jobs.

*"In university, I was sort of choosing and deciding between whether to go into teaching or something more media related, but I have friends who did internships, management training programs and they seem to have their career sorted. But, for me I felt like I was bit unsure of what I wanted to do... And I was nervous about what was out there... Just the working dynamic in Hong Kong, it's very intense all the time. People here need or have lots of languages and I don't..."*

There were a number of uncertainties that added to Patricia's nervousness like the language disadvantage that she would face. From what she had gathered, a high level of language ability was important in the field she wanted to work in. As she had attended an international school with a different curriculum, Patricia wasn't equipped with Chinese language proficiency. Consequently, she



decided it would be easier to take up the offer as a full-time staff in the magazine company she had been interning at as an undergraduate.

The magazine company where she had worked for was a community based magazine that featured community events and news with 10 staff members. Patricia's colleagues were also non-Chinese speakers who came from different parts of the world, so getting along and relating with each other was fairly easy. This brought her a sense of security. But, just like many parents who wish their children to do better, Patricia's parents, especially her mom, who is the main breadwinner of the family, wanted her to achieve more.

*"My parents asked me, 'Why don't you find a different job? Why are you staying in the same company?' Because it's quite a small magazine [company], so they say, 'why don't you look for something bigger?'...my mom and her friends and their kids, my family friends and maybe a lot of them had you know, a real job in the city, things like that but, I felt like my job was a small community job. Obviously, as parents they sort of have that dream where they want me to be in the city working and all of that."*



## Patricia's working experience

Her mother also suggested that she try abroad, but going abroad didn't seem feasible to Patricia as it meant adjusting to a whole new environment and getting a sponsorship.

*"... we need visa sponsorships and things like that, and the qualifications I have, I don't think it's enough. I need more experience to stand out and be hired overseas. Right now, that's why I am thinking that staying in Hong Kong is okay. I have no idea what will happen if I quit this job. I think it will be tough to find another job here in Hong Kong."*

Patricia stuck to her guts and continued working for the magazine company and enjoyed her workplace. She has gotten to experience working and coordinating different departments like sales, digital social media, and editorials. This has helped to build her confidence and understanding of her workplace.

*"I told myself I am comfortable there, I enjoy the people I work with, I enjoy the job. It's near home, so I told myself I want to work there for at least one year so my CV has a proper job title, and I don't have to go through the process of finding a job or maybe not finding a job."*

We met Patricia a year later. We saw the same bright, cheerful smile. Only this time, it radiated with more confidence. Just as she had planned, after working full-time for a year, she left her job in search of a new one. She was ready for a bigger challenge.

*"Even if I wasn't sure where I am going next, I still felt it was time, like I felt confident and I don't, as of now, (laughs) I don't regret that it was bad decision even if I don't know what I'm gonna be doing next. I actually want to get out of Discovery Bay, maybe somewhere in Hong Kong side... something bigger and something new... I wanna try new role but I'm not really sure, I don't have a set goal. I still wanna try what's out there and explore different opportunities."*

With a year's experience, Patricia is more certain that she wants to work in marketing and has ideas of the type of work environment she would prefer. First, she hopes it will be in the city center or the commercial hubs. Second, she would like an international working environment so she can communicate with people and have a social life. Lastly, she does not want to work overtime to ensure she can spend more time with her family. She knows her last requirement will be difficult to fulfill!



### October 2017:

This image was taken at The Peninsula during Afternoon Tea. My colleagues and I were all treated to tea by our boss. It was a lovely afternoon out of the office where we got to spend time with each other and get to know each other better.



### December 2017:

This is usually an exciting time of month for us at work as we get to see the previous month's finished product. We were particularly excited about our December issues because of the holiday season, so it was a fantastic start to the month!



### February 2018:

This photo was taken during The Lantau Island Paddle kick-off, a community event in Discovery Bay. It was nice to become involved with the community through the event - although I myself don't live in Discovery Bay, working there and many of my colleagues living there, has integrated me into the community one way or another.



"Even after becoming a manager,  
my father would ask if I was still  
doing dishes there."

# AFIA

Female, 27, Pakistani  
Graduated in 2016  
Majored in Business and Management Studies  
Works in restaurant



Afia took a big leap of faith quitting her stable job as a restaurant manager in Hong Kong in order to explore career opportunities in the UK. Having to support herself, Afia's first job in the UK was as a waitress in a restaurant which was also how she started her career back in Hong Kong.

Afia had been working in restaurants for almost a decade in Hong Kong. First as a waitress then as a manager. She knows regardless of what people may say, restaurant work itself is not a 'no brainer' job.

"... you need to use lot more brain working as a manager but working as a waiter/waitress, normal staff, you still need to know how to use computers... For managers, you have to mostly work on computers because at the end of the day, you have to make a report for the whole day, how many sales you made, what you've done, how much wastage there has been in the kitchen, how much food you've wasted, how much coffee you've wasted...you need to always keep looking at the marketing options, how can you broaden the business,

how can you, uh, maybe changing the menus, organizing events, emails from customers for bookings..."

Afia didn't always intend to work in F&B, but once she started working as a manager, she became attracted to the field.

"I realized managers get more freedom but they do have a bigger responsibility of taking care of everything. But then, mostly you are there to take care of your staff and you are there to make your staff and customers happy. So that's what I like, like talking to people, making sure they are having a good time, [getting to know] where are they from, what are they doing here, how did they end up here... When you are at work, you don't really feel that you are at work because of the kind of the environment you create with your customer."

Although her experience working in F&B was positive, she realizes that not everyone perceives restaurant work in a positive light, especially those within her Pakistani community.

"... in their eyes, being a waiter, waitresses or even working in a restaurant is not even the last option...our people look down on a restaurant job so bad... They don't mind working as a construction worker. They don't think that's a bad job, but then if someone's working as a waiter, it's very bad because it's like a servant to them..."

As Afia explains, working at a restaurant and dealing with dishes gives her the social status comparable to the servants. This stigma was made clear to Afia as she observed her family's reaction to her job. Unfortunately, this also affected how she perceived her work.





"I keep hearing things from others how they look down on it, so that's why I didn't like it. I didn't want anyone to know I was working as a waitress...my family themselves when they hear that I'm working in a restaurant, they will be like, 'Why are you working in a restaurant? What are you doing there?' The only thing that comes up in their mind is you are cleaning dirty plates of other people... My father used to ask my brother in the UK whenever he used to talk to him, what is Afia doing in the restaurant? Even after becoming a manager, he was like, 'Is she still doing dishes there? Why does she have to do dishes when I am here to earn for her?'"

Her father would have preferred that his daughters didn't work at all, but Afia wanted to work. Growing up in a family with 6 children, she saw the financial struggles her family faced as they depended solely on her father's income from construction work. She wants to be financially self-dependent and be able to support her mother who is a housewife.

Because of the stigma and her lack of interest in waitressing, Afia knew she would need to find a new career path. So, she enrolled for

university studying business in the hope of better job opportunities. At the same time, she searched for a 9-6 office job that would be considered more respectable to finance her studies. But Afia was disappointed to find that ethnic minorities only had limited job opportunities.

"It was either cleaner or waiter or dishwashing, those were the kind of jobs available. I keep checking in the internet to see if I could find better office jobs... but none of them had anything good available... I also tried applying for government jobs and when I go and see it's mostly restaurant jobs. They don't think we are capable of anything more than that?"

Eventually through friends and family, she found an office job in a non-Chinese company but she figured the pay and flexibility of working as a part-time waitress was far better suited for her university schedule, so she went back to waitressing again. Although she may not have liked the work a lot, she found her experience of working in a restaurant very useful during lessons.

"For my Degree, we had one of the marketing subjects there. It was very easy for me to pass that subject because it was more or less related to restaurants like what a restaurant need to do if Valentine's is coming up soon. Obviously, working in a restaurant I knew ok, what do they usually do – they make a Valentine's day special menu, they dim the lights at night to make it a more romantic environment, and they put romantic music and all that stuff."

Right after she completed her Degree, she started working as a full-time waitress and shortly afterwards, she was promoted as a manager thanks to her bold move of approaching the boss directly for the position. Although she loved her work, Afia wanted to explore more opportunities outside Hong Kong. So, she got herself a working holiday visa for the UK.

"After coming here I've realized how good the life is here, and how I was working like a robot back in Hong Kong. How fast, how do I say, it's just like too much stress in Hong Kong. Okay, as a restaurant manager, I was earning like 20K per month. Here as a waitress, I'm earning 1.8K pounds. That's like 18-18.5K Hong Kong dollars... Even though you are working fewer hours, the

minimum wage is a lot higher than in Hong Kong, and it's not a must for you to do 6 days of work... It's just that the comparison I have done between Hong Kong and here. I think I'm better off here..."

Afia has grown to like the environment and the pace of life in the UK. Though she has had no luck securing a managerial position in F&B as she had hoped, with her experience in restaurant work, it was easy enough to find a waitressing job. It's a temporary solution until she can find something substantial and suitable for the long run that will allow her to remain in the country on a working visa.

"It's the easiest option you can go for when you can't find a job. You can go to a restaurant, start doing part-time work, and at the same time, you can start looking for whatever it is that you are looking to do...I still don't like the job... Maybe it's because of the way my family look at it, but I like working as a manager... So, I'm gonna look for restaurant supervisor or restaurant manager or even office jobs..."





"I set my goal higher,  
and I tried until I reach  
my goal."

Male, 32, Pakistani  
F.5 graduate in 2004  
Higher Diploma in Social Work in 2015  
Social Worker

# TAUQIR

Persistence and perseverance are considered the key to success in many cultures. This also applies to some non-ethnic Chinese young people in Hong Kong. Tauqir's story is an example of persistence and success.

Tauqir was born in Pakistan. He came to Hong Kong in 1996 as a Primary 6 student. From 1998 to 2004, he studied in one of the designated schools which he described as a 'bad learning environment' for students. He attended the HKCEE in 2004 and failed all subjects.

At that time, some NGOs started to provide services for South Asian residents. South Asian young people with a secondary level education were recruited to work as temporary programme workers or Youth Ambassadors. They act as a bridge between the South Asian service users and the local Chinese social workers. Tauqir worked as a Youth Ambassadors in an NGO for 6 months. This working experience made him realize that he had an interest in social work. One year later, he found the opportunity to work in another NGO for a programme called SASA (South Asian Support Alliance).

*"I helped to promote the project, we organized different kinds of events to facilitate social integration for the ethnic minorities and to make them familiarize with the local culture. This project has stimulated my ambitions further to find a career in the social work field."*

Through this job, Tauqir confirmed his genuine interest in social work. Nevertheless he quit the job, partly to join his brother's wedding in Pakistan and partly to find channels to improve his education.

*"After the wedding, I didn't choose to come back to Hong Kong because I knew that if I stayed there, I would remain in the same job. Even though I like the nature of the job, the level is too low. It did not match my ambition with social work. I was thinking that maybe I can study a social work course in Pakistan or even get a degree there. But I found that my academic level in Hong Kong, when it was converted to the Pakistani system, was regarded as too low."*

Tauqir regretted that he quit the job at SASA. He also wished that he had worked harder to achieve better academic results when he was in the designated school. He was too much influenced by the inadequate learning environment there. In Pakistan, he studied Information Technology for one year and hung around doing nothing for another year. He was lost between Hong Kong and Pakistan until he got engaged in 2008 under his father's arrangement. He returned to Hong Kong, found a job as a shipping clerk, had his wedding in Pakistan, and returned to the shipping job again in order to be eligible to apply for a dependent visa for his wife. Once the application was successful, he looked for jobs in the social work field again. Because of his previous experience in SASA, he was employed as an Assistant Organizing Officer to serve the South Asian communities in the first NGO he had worked for.

*"In 2011, I already have one kid. When you have a family, you need to think about your future, whether you want to stay at the same level or you want to take the chance to upgrade yourself. But this is a critical situation for me to pursue this."*

One year earlier, Tauqir knew that a few other South Asian young people were admitted into the Caritas Institute of Higher Education for

an Associate Degree in Social Work. While it was good news, Tauqir was hesitant in pursuing the degree. On the one hand, he was excited by this new opportunity to pursue social work qualification. On the other hand, he was confronted with a lot of problems.

*"The main problem is finance. Where do I find the money for the tuition fee? Secondly, I knew that my education level is very low. I don't know whether I would be accepted. I discussed with my wife even though I was not sure if I would be accepted. We said that, 'Let's give it a try. Let's think about the financial problem later.' Finally I was admitted as an adult student. Because of my experiences in different NGOs, I passed the admission test on social skills and capabilities. Once we received the acceptance letter, my wife talked to my brother. I never told any of my brothers about my study plan. She told my brother and my brother gave me the \$10,000 to pay the first instalment."*

Tauqir was thankful for his supportive wife. As he did not pass the HKCEE, he had to study an extra year in Foundation Diploma and then 3 years in the Higher Diploma in Social Work. Over those 4 years, Tauqir had gone through very tough times.

*"I studied part-time and I worked full-time. I didn't have enough time for work, family and education. Oftentimes I woke up in the middle of the night to do my assignments. Sometimes my daughter found me working in the night, she would say, 'Papa, what are you doing?' The toughest moment was in the third year, I had to do placements on top of my full time job. At that time, I left home in Tuen Mun, went to work in Kwai Chung and went to class in Tseng Kwan O, and then I went back home in Tuen Mun. It was so tiring."*

In 2015, Tauqir completed the higher diploma and in 2017 he was employed as a registered social worker. Right now, he is an Organizing Officer (RSW). He organizes sports groups for the South Asian youths in Kwai Chung to enhance their development in self-esteem and self-confidence, to enable them to find their life goals, and to lead them to serve the neighbourhood community.

*"Many non-Chinese people think that if they want to work in NGOs, they can only work as a programme worker or as a mediator for the community. I have always wanted to become a social worker since I graduated from secondary school. I set my goal higher, and I tried until I reach my goal."*



"You have a daughter now, you have to think for long term."

# ANU

Female, late 20s, Nepalese  
F.5 graduate in 2007  
Works in Human Resource Management



There is sometimes a misconception that those with low-end jobs are lazy and have little aspiration. However, this is not true. Anu told us her real life experiences.

Anu finished F.5 in 2007. Since then she has worked in food and beverage (F&B) for almost 10 years. What was her goal for the future when she was in secondary school?

*"I couldn't wait to finish school and then just start working. I finished my Form 5 in April, I started working on April 11 when I became 17 years old. I found a job in an NGO as a youth ambassador, I worked there from April, May, June, July, for I think 3-4 months. After that I worked two-part time jobs. Have you heard of 'Food by Web'? You order food by the phone, by the web. I worked part time as a telephone operator during weekdays and on weekends I worked in a club bar in Lan Kwai Fong."*

It was Anu's sister who introduced her to work in Lan Kwai Fong. Anu's sister had worked there for a couple of years. If Anu could start as a part timer, she would learn the skills and gain some experience to join F&B. The sisters' situation is common among many Nepalese young people who work as bartenders or waiters at café, bars and restaurants.

*"Back then, all of the Nepalese, their thinking is finish school, go to bar restaurant to work. It was because you get the job easy, you don't need certain experience. So everybody works in either construction or food and beverage. Unlike nowadays, you would see the youngsters, they really want to study and some have become somebody. But back in my time, most of them would just go to work. They are all in food and beverage because in F&B you don't need like education background, you don't need anything."*

Anu was serious about her career in F&B. In 2008, she found a full time job in Tung Chung. She quit after a few months because she found herself not learning much as a bar waitress. She changed to another bar restaurant in Tsim Sha Tsui where she enjoyed learning at the job. After 2 years, she switched to work in a hotel. Anu's ability was recognised by her manager who invited Anu to join her when she left for a new job. Anu explained why she really loved working in F&B.

*"I enjoy meeting people. I like to talk all the time, ha ha ha. As a waitress, you serve all kinds of people, you know, you meet people from Australia, the U.S., sometimes Turkey, sometimes New Zealand, all kinds of people, you know. I always like to know about them. Sometimes if it's not busy, I talk to the customers, 'oh, how's life back there?' We always have conversations. If I did not have a daughter, I think I would still pursue my career in F&B."*

Anu's career took a big turn when she became a working mother. She found a daytime job so as to spare time for her daughter. Initially, she worked as a recruitment manager in a recruitment agency. Her duty was to recruit people to fill in vacancies in F&B. Recently, she worked at an NGO in the employment support service department. Her job was to match employers with non-ethnic Chinese job applicants. Because of this, she has new thoughts about her own future in career.

*"I've realized that for people with good working experience but not education, they cannot easily get the job. It is a big challenge to them. But some people who have studied a lot but they don't have the experience, they are still being considered. That's how Hong Kong works. So I am trying to prepare myself in this direction. I will start studying soon because I only graduated from Form 5 and it's actually not very good. Especially now, you know, everybody has university level. With that education, I'm lucky so far, from my working experience I found good jobs. But then I cannot always depend on that, you know, it's in the past, I had to think about the future."*

Anu plans to study for a professional diploma in human resource management. It is not easy for a working mother to plan for further education while working full-time and having a baby daughter to take care of at the same time. Fortunately, she found encouragement from her family and friends.

*"I told my brother first, 'I want to further my study because I realize that Form 5 education will not do much in here.' He said, 'Oh, of course, it's good because you have a daughter, you have to think for long term.' When my mom knew about this idea, first she is like, 'of course not, you need money to study.' And then my brother explained to her, 'No, she needs to think about her daughter now. She cannot just stay in one kind of job and then just depend on it, right, you need to have some education background as well.' So later she understands it, now she supports me as well. My sister also supports me. Even when I tell my friends, they said, 'That's good, you know, you should have done this a long time ago.'"*

So right now, Anu's plan as a working mother is to improve her own education, look for job opportunities for a better income and then support her daughter so she can receive the best education she can afford.





**"My goal is to make Hong Kong a diverse place."**

Male, 21, Indian

University Undergraduate between 2016-2021

Majoring in Speech and Hearing Science



# GURPREET

A third-year Speech and Hearing Science student, Gurpreet's career path seems more straightforward than some. But, with his increasing involvement in voluntary work with the young ethnic minority students, he contemplates if he can do more for the society as a whole.

*"... I will probably end up becoming a speech therapist ... I kind of gave my degree a purpose like I can help the ethnic minority kids with language problems. My assistant warden told me 'yeah, you can be speech therapist and teach a number of EM kids but it would be better if you can treat the whole society'..."*

Gurpreet doesn't have any concrete plans on what he can do but he is certain he wants to promote social inclusion. Being born and having lived most of his life in Hong Kong, he sees a number of areas that needs improvement in Hong Kong.

Last year, Gurpreet attended a number of schools with ethnic minority students as a voluntary service. One of the events was organized by HKU's Chinese Education Faculty and Gurpreet and his dad were invited to give a talk to the ethnic minority children and parents. What he observed during these visits left him with a huge impact.

*"I attended 2 talks and my father also joined me in one of these. We went to an ethnic minority school, and I shared my experience as a university student and my father expressed his opinions on how parents can raise their children. In another school, I taught the children a little bit of Cantonese and shared university life*

*with them. At that school, I was shocked to see that at such a young age, just primary 1, I could already see the segregating of different races like Hong Kong students, Mainland students, and also Pakistani and Indian students. They were already grouped. I thought this kind of segregation would start maybe in upper primary."*

Despite being the only Indian student in the local mainstream school which he attended as a kid, Gurpreet doesn't recall having difficulties getting along with other students even when he couldn't speak the language.

*"When I was in K.1, I did not study in Hong Kong, I went to India with my mom to learn my language. After one year in India, I came back to study in Hong Kong but I did not know any Cantonese when I was in K.2. But later, I started to get along with others and made friends because when you are kids you just get along with other kids just by playing. You don't even have to talk, just run around, playing, catching each other, you will be friends... All the things that I played and watched when I was little, even the friends that I met in the primary and secondary school and kindergarten were all local Chinese."*

Gurpreet lived in the UK for 2 years where he completed his senior secondary education before joining HKU. He noticed this was a common trend among his classmates and it was the reason why he decided to go. Even in the UK, all his classmates were of different ethnicities but he never observed such segregation in school. Gurpreet feels that compared to the UK, there are more instances of passive racism in everyday life in Hong Kong.

*"They won't say it to your face, but they will still think in their head that you are different or not one of them, and I don't like that feeling... especially in public transportation. Even in the MTR if you are sitting in the seat, some people sitting next to you will just walk away. It's not even their station because you don't see them leaving the train but, they just go away... It affected me more when I was younger. I used to ask why? I didn't even do anything wrong. But now when that happens, I'm like OK good, more space for me!"*

He points out that such attitude usually comes from strangers rather than people he knows. His local Chinese friends neither see him nor treat him differently. He wishes the same for all ethnic minorities – to be treated as equals. From his own experience, Gurpreet feels that such problems exist because of a lack of familiarity of others' cultures, and education could be the key to help promote change.

*"The main issue is of education both for local Chinese and non-Chinese people. Because even in liberal or religious studies, when they teach the kids they don't teach much about the religions or the culture. In the UK GCSE, there is a subject on religious studies, and they teach about different religions and their history, but for religious study in Hong Kong, like in my school, it was all about Christianity only. After all, for many ethnic minorities, religion is kind of a core identity of their culture like Muslim people who practice Islam, but people don't know anything about it at all. They would think the things they do are weird because they don't understand. So, in these areas, there could be an improvement. But then on the other side for ethnic minority students, they should have better education, be more fluent in Cantonese and learn the culture of Hong Kong people, not just the other way around."*

There are numerous misconceptions and general stereotypes affecting the minorities of Hong Kong. Gurpreet feels that the group is normally generalized based on a few negative actions shown on the Internet.

*"...lots of the time they would just think that [ethnic minority] are the ones who break the law, that is what some of them think, I think. Because even during like Facebook posts some of them say, maybe if there is an instance an Indian or Pakistani guy who stole something and then all the comments will be like, 'Oh, yeah, all of them are like this, we shouldn't let them in', something like that."*

Gurpreet doubts that education alone will be enough to get rid of these generalizations and stereotypes, especially among the older generations. But, with more professional and successful examples from the ethnic minority, they too will be regarded as citizens in society. While Gurpreet still wonders how he can make Hong Kong more socially inclusive, he hopes that at least he can make a difference.

*"... one of my goals is to make Hong Kong a more diverse place that ethnic minorities can come up and interact with people, and actually change the whole society to think that we are not very different from them. I'm thinking a lot on this kind of things. Not much, but at least for my kids and grandkids, I want them to feel like they belong here, to Hong Kong."*

Gurpreet's group artwork from secondary school in display at the South Horizon MTR station.





For many non-ethnic Chinese youngsters, the family is both a source of support and care as well as a source of stresses and strains. Migrant parents often have high aspirations for their sons and daughters, and they make many sacrifices in order to improve their children's life chances. Young people find comfort and encouragement from their parents and siblings and through transnational connections with grandparents, cousins, uncles and aunts. However, family relationships can also be beset with disruptions, difficulties and dilemmas. It takes a great deal of effort and resilience from young people to negotiate different values across generations, to overcome family setbacks, to balance between individual pursuits and family obligations, and to nurture familial well-being.

# FAMILY





## "This is a reality check by family."

Male, 26, Indian  
 Living in Hong Kong for 23 years  
 Mother a housewife  
 Father a businessman  
 1 younger sibling

# AKSHAY

Who do you regard as your family? Parents and siblings? What about uncles in another country? Or neighbours and friends in the local community? Akshay finds that all of them count as family giving him support as well as pressure.

Akshay's father came from Mumbai, India, while his mother was from New Delhi. Akshay identifies more with New Delhi than with Mumbai because that's where his mother's extended family members are. When he visited India for vacation, he used to go to the big house where his mother was born and brought up and where his maternal grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins were still living.

"I used to go there every year, so I'm very familiar with them. I know my cousins, we are always comfortable with each other. Whenever I go to India, I would go on the basis of just for a vacation, just for fun, for exploring the place, going to malls, spending time. But this was a whole different objective. With my objective there to study, which I have never dreamt of, I was quite nervous."

Akshay did HKCEE in 2009 and scored just below the minimum requirement to go to Form 6 at his school. So how can he continue with his education? It was not only a question for himself but also for his parents and his large "family".

"It's like everybody was thinking how to get through this hurdle, how to get to Form 6, how would he continue his education. Amongst our family members, it's like they have to make sure that every child is going through a smooth process. Usually Indians are like that, especially my family, from my mom's side where my mom's sister lives, she is surrounded with other neighbours where they will also know about what I am doing even though I don't know them. If I live in India and I do not get good grades or things like that, they would have talks within their own family, they will remember this for the rest of their lives."

Akshay cheekily called these "reality checks". The family around him, the families far away in India and even the neighbours around them, keep an eye on the progress of every child. This can be experienced as a display of concern or as a source of social pressure.

"I lived in Mei Foo Sun Chuen. There were more than 10 Indian families around Mei Foo. We all know each other, we used to celebrate with each other especially. We used to go to the park every weekend and you know we have gatherings for festivals. Parents like to share family information. I don't know about Hong Kong, but for Indian families or people in India, they usually would like to see what their friend's son is doing or what their family's son is doing, they usually compare. Like my mom, she would say, 'Oh, you see my friend's son, he's in Singapore now. He's there, he's doing this, he's doing good'. 'I know you're doing well, but try to do better,' something like that."

When Akshay was looking for school places in Form 6, his mother offered him a proposal from his uncle in India.

"I actually tried a few schools in Hong Kong, like in Wanchai, there's one school still accepting students for Form 6. We were about to pay the fees and get the school uniform and everything, but I don't know what came to my dad's mind, or my mom's mind that, 'just wait for a while, let's see what happens.' And then after a few days, I think my mom had spoken to her brother living in New Delhi. He is a person who helps our family a lot in many ways. He proposed, 'okay, maybe you can come over to India, and you can study here. What do you think about it? I know there will be some problems here and there, but don't worry, I will take care of you.'"

Akshay accepted the proposal and studied in India for 2 years. He had a hard time there as the living standard, the weather, the semester and the language were all different from the life he was used to in Hong Kong. Akshay accepted the proposal because he trusted his mother and his uncle that they were doing what was best for him. He also felt it was a challenge he had to go through.

Having gone through many tough times in life, Akshay has a more positive view of what family means.

"Family is there to support you through your tough times if you just give them a chance and have conversation with them. It's very important to have dialogue with your family members about your shortcomings and your difficulties, so that we don't feel left out or have no one to talk to. Solutions will come about only by conversing with your close ones."



"...as long as I have a family to go back to."

Marrium cares about her family so much that she feels quite stressed out in recent years. She is the second eldest but she acts like the second parent of the family.

Marrium has always been her father's pride as she is the most educated in the family, someone who is getting close to attaining a Bachelor's degree. She understands this would not be possible without her father's tremendous support. Her father works multiple jobs as a security guard and single-handedly provides for the family. Even with limited financial resources, her father always encourages her to pursue as much education as she wishes. In Form 2, he took Marrium to the UK to complete her secondary education so that she will find more opportunities abroad. Marrium has always been grateful for her father's commitment to the family.

Recently Marrium's family has been going through some financial difficulties but her father refuses to let her contribute financially as she is still a student. So Marrium offers her help in other ways.

*"My dad is the most stressed right now. I am the one who is helping him out sometimes like you know, going out to play squash with him. Helping him out with documents because I am the person responsible for administration of the house whether it's my own school application or changing housing..."*

Though her mother is a full-time housewife, Marrium has to look after much of the needs of the family members including her mother. Just recently, the house was troubled with insect infestation, which drove her mother to the edge.

Female, 20, Pakistani  
Born and raised in Hong Kong  
Mother a housewife  
Father a security guard  
1 elder sibling, 2 younger siblings



# MARRIUM

*"My mom is cleaning each and every day with bleach, still nothing is working so that is stressing my mom. She can't sleep at night and she is taking depression pills as well because she is seeing the psychiatrist... [My mother] speaks Hindko, that's our mother tongue, it's not Urdu. It's similar but different that's why sometimes the interpreter doesn't 100% understand what my mom just mentioned that's why she tells me next time you have to come with me, but I have lectures on Monday, mostly the psychiatrist appointments are on Mondays and I can't go with her... when I find that my mom is really in a bad state then I really have to go."*

Marrium takes over the responsibility for all sorts of communication and application required for relocation to another public housing estate. By constantly going to the department, submitting letters and requests, she giving hope to her parents that they will soon find another flat. Besides looking after her parents, Marrium also makes plans for her youngest sister.

*"Aysha is the closest to me. I spend a lot of my time with her going through her homework and going for outings. Dad thinks Aysha is too small to go to private tuition. I insisted that she joined because I want her to be good in Cantonese and Mandarin because in future if she wants to lead a financially stable life in Hong Kong, these languages are important. That's why I put her in Kumon. I am paying for that every month."*





Marrium admits that sometimes she is overwhelmed by the pressure of juggling between 2 part-time jobs, studies and family responsibilities. At one point when she was in the first year of her Associate Degree, Marrium fell into depression. Her psychiatrist advised her to let go of some of the family commitments, but Marrium refused to do so.

*"How can I leave my mom and go for a walk? She can't be home alone sometimes because of her depression, like once she was ironing and burned her hands. This kind of things happen to her, so I have to stay with her sometimes. The psychiatrist said, 'why don't you go for a walk? You think all that is going to happen but it's only your thoughts, it won't actually happen.' I don't know what the hell she was saying! I can't agree with that psychiatrist. I had to stay with my mom!"*

Marrium chooses to believe in her family and friends rather than the psychiatrist. That's why she chose to return to Hong Kong from the UK. She considers her recovery is easier in Hong Kong with her family and friends around to give her advice and cheer her up. Marrium understands that it can be quite tough managing so many responsibilities, but while she is the pillar of the family, her family is also a major support system to her.

*"When it gets really tough, I just look at Aisha and I give her a hug. I feel better... when you live alone, you know the importance of family and all those kind of stuffs... Its ok whether they shout or not as long as I have family to go back to..."*

## Marrium's source of happiness



Marrium with her friends



This picture shows how my dad loves spending time with his family and kids! He took mom and Aysha to Lamma Island to BBQ with the BGCA center while I was revising for my final exams at home!



This is my sister, Aysha! I love her very much! She is the only person who can make me laugh when I am upset about anything! She is a very jolly and intelligent person! However, when it comes to studies, I always need to bribe her with things like ice-cream, allowing her to play at the park!





## "My dad and I don't speak since primary 6."

Female, 27, Pakistani  
Lived in Hong Kong for 24 years  
Mother a housewife  
Father a construction worker  
2 elder siblings, 3 younger siblings

It's not uncommon that many parents and children face generational gap leading to family conflicts and misunderstandings. Afia also faces the same problem.

Afia's whole family moved to Hong Kong in the 1990s from what she described as a small, distant village in Pakistan. When she came to Hong Kong she was only 3. Growing up in Hong Kong, Afia is more open to the lifestyle and norms in the local society but her parents are more accustomed to the traditions and beliefs from Pakistan. As a result, Afia and her father can't see eye to eye.

*"My dad and I don't talk since Primary 6 or F.1. And, since I started playing cricket and working, it stopped completely... My dad is still living in the 1950s where he comes from a village back in Pakistan... Even though my father has been in Hong Kong for more than 20 years...still, his thinking is the same, narrow-minded. He doesn't want to change it. He still wants his daughters to get married to a random guy he chooses and birth the husband kids and lead a housewife's life. Even though he lets his daughters study, but then in the end, he hopes that the girls will not go out and work."*

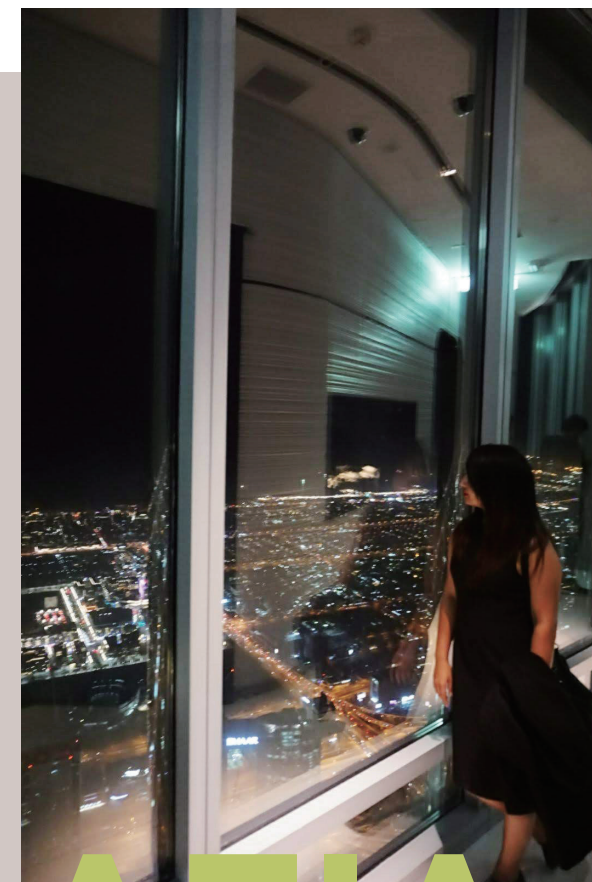
Growing up in an international environment, Afia felt that the restrictions imposed by her father were unreasonable. So, it didn't take long until she started making her own choices that echoed with the majority of Hong Kong. She dressed mostly in western clothing, played cricket representing the Hong Kong's national team

and worked in a restaurant, all of which her father disapproved of. This caused their relationship to worsen.

*"I've been in Hong Kong my whole life. I've been in-between Chinese and white people, and seen how they dress. For me, it's not like I don't consider myself Pakistani. But, if you have friends who are Chinese and English, why they can wear skirts, I can't? Why they can go out, I can't?... When I was younger, my father used to stop me from doing stuff, and I would listen to him because I was young and didn't know what else to do. But as I get older and see how the world is running and why my father is stopping me, the more he stops me, the more I want to do that thing."*

Afia's father isn't the only one who imposes restrictions on his daughters based on the beliefs and traditions as it's common among many ethnic minority families. Those who go against these traditions can also come under intense scrutiny within the community as Afia has experienced.

*"I have Instagram. I am very active in social media, and I have a lot of photos and videos. My younger sister, she sometimes tells me, 'This family member took your photo and is gossiping about you, what are you doing?' She gets worried, but I don't. I tell her to leave them. They just want to gossip... Even the guys gossip about girls like, 'You know this girl? Her name is Afia. She plays cricket, and she wears shorts.' One guy will talk to another, then another will go to the other friends. There may be nothing wrong with me playing cricket or wearing shorts, but the way they convey it to others makes it an issue."*



# AFIA



As a working young adult, Afia has enough means to support herself and craves the independence and freedom to live her life in her own terms. Fed up with the scrutiny and constant gossips, Afia moved to the UK where she is settling in well.

*"Initially, I thought it was boring, but now I like it here because there is no one to tell me, 'Afia, you need to be home by this time!', 'Afia, where are you going?', 'Afia, you can't do this!'. I live alone, I can do whatever I want. But you know, like, I don't do anything. I finish work at 9 and I go home straight. Back in Hong Kong, maybe I was doing all this because someone was stopping me. If you don't stop me and just let me go, I'll be home in 1 hour. I like my life here. It's a small village. No tension, no one to disturb you."*

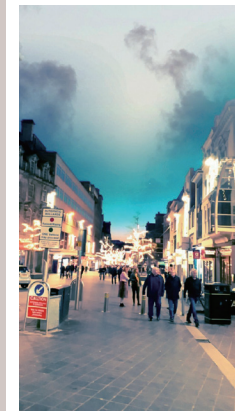
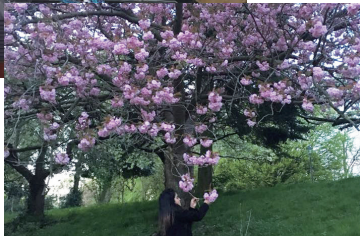
Now that she is living afar for the sake of enjoying her independence, it is still bittersweet for her as she has had to give up the comfort of home and being with her family, especially the care of her mother. But even with the distance, Afia feels closer to her mother than she did when in Hong Kong.

*"When I was in Hong Kong, I never used to talk to my mom like sit down and tell her what's happening in my life or how's my work life going. It was just 'hi mom, how are you?' stuff like that. Now, when I do, I video call her to see her and tell her what's happening in my life, my work and we will talk for an hour or two... So, I think our relationship has grown."*

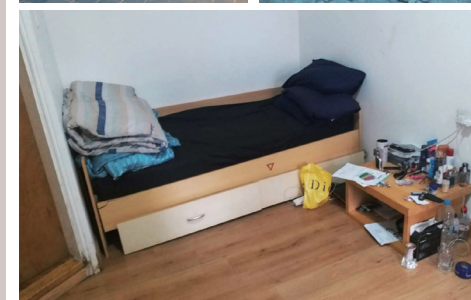
Although she doesn't foresee her relationship improving with her father anytime soon, she hopes to visit her mother and sister soon. Living alone in the UK, Afia misses the presence of family, her mother and sister. She hates having to go back to an empty house. But she has no intentions of returning to Hong Kong for good as she is fully enjoying the independence and freedom she has always craved for.



## Afia's life in the UK



The little town in Liverpool, where I experienced my first ever snow. The place is very quiet and very boring. I don't have many friends right now, so I'm also alone most of the time. But, I still kind of like this place.

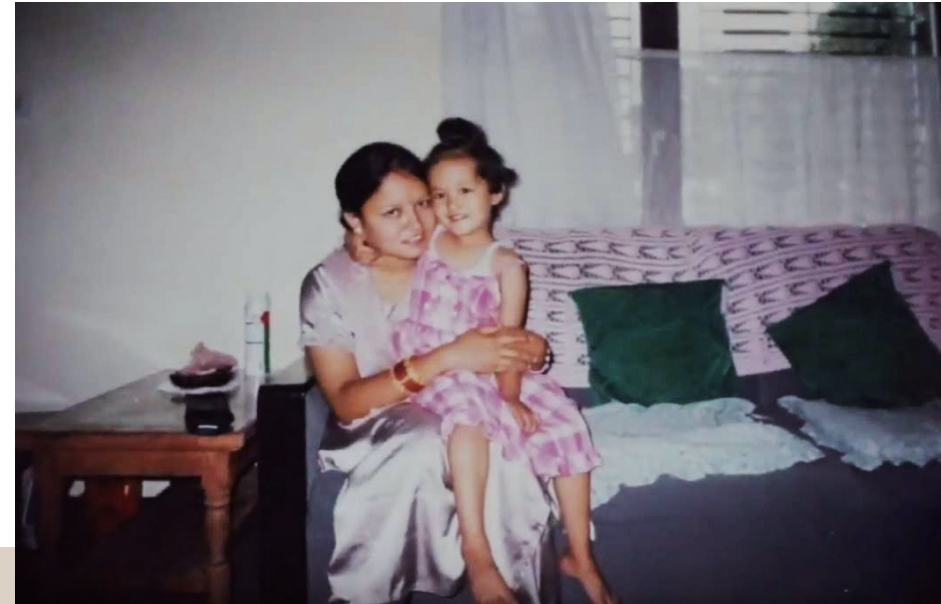




# SUSKIHANNA

## "Can't I be the daughter and support them?"

Female, 22, Nepalese  
Born in Hong Kong  
Living in Hong Kong for 15 years  
Mother a hotel attendant  
Grandfather in Gurkha during 1970s  
Only child



Suski comes from a working class family. Her father came from Nepal and her mother was born in a segregated army camp in Hong Kong. They didn't receive much education and spoke very little English and Cantonese. Under these limitations, they got married and settled in Hong Kong. Their first home was in a tiny sub-divided flat in Chungking Mansions. They moved to another sub-divided flat when Suski joined her parents in Hong Kong at the age of 7, where she didn't even have a proper bed or a desk. So, she had to find ways to keep herself concentrated in her studies.

"...when we lived in the sub-divided flat there was no sunlight, so it would always feel like night time, and I would always sleep on the floor and, I had no desk. So for me, if I had to study a lot, I can't just do it on the ground, so I would usually go to the library or stay in Chi Wah (Learning commons in HKU) for a really long time... I always worried about the time my mother would get back from work because once she gets back, I can't study because she always puts the TV on a very loud volume and the TV is very near me."

Though her parents struggled financially and they maintained a frugal life for the family, her father still had

great aspirations for her in terms of education and career. Her father had hoped for Suski to pursue an engineer or business career. By contrast, her grandparents and many relatives in Nepal and abroad had very different expectations for girls and boys.

"I went back to meet my relatives in Nepal 10 years later and when they found out I was still studying at 20, they asked why I wasn't married yet. They had grandchildren, and the boys were free to do what they want and be loud while the girls were made to serve food and tea, just silently sitting there. They would tell me there is really no use to let girls pursue education in front of my face... they still can pursue education but always lower career than guys."

Living far away from the relatives' influence, Suski's father raised Suski on his own terms. The kind of life that was practical but also quite unconventional in Nepalese society and even frowned upon by her own relatives. Growing up she always had short hair, wore more shorts than dresses, and was active in sports. This helped Suski develop her own sense of identity.

"People say, 'You shouldn't force her to play sports, they are for guys. She cannot get tanner, her focus should be somewhere

else not playing sports, not getting injured'. A lot of the relatives didn't like the way I was raised because they thought I was raised like a boy... I wasn't conscious about what gender I was when doing it. I like the way he raised me because I don't limit myself according to my gender."

It's not that Suski was free from all the subtle gendered expectations heavily instilled within the older generations. Even at home, although she grew up with more options, she could see the expectations from her mother that was tied to her being a girl.

"My mom would always be like I'm a girl I should know how to do the housework. Although I do housework, but it's not expected of guys. Both gender should know basic hygiene and cleanliness, but when you say it to girl, it's expected of them... My mom is always asking me to improve my cooking... I think cooking is something I can improve anytime, it's not something that determines my worth."

Suski put more effort in her education and interests and battled hard with her parents over her subject choices. She persevered through the years, pushing forward her education and attending university while pursuing her passion in video making. As a

result, her mother finally became her supporter. And with this ambition, she has managed to make her point at least to her family.

"I always had this feeling why should I be viewed less just because I was a girl?... my dad was the eldest in the family and everyone thought it was sad that he gave birth to a daughter. Even when I talk to my grandmother now she tells me I have to be both the son and the daughter of the family, and I am like why can't I just be the daughter? But they would be like, 'No, since you are the only child, you will have to financially support your parents. So you are the son.' And I ask, 'Can't I be the daughter and support them?'"

Suski didn't pursue the path of an engineer or a businesswoman like her father had wanted and instead became a teacher. She is now the breadwinner of the family.

"I started working so I 100% support my parents. We used to live in a sub-divided flat, but since I have a new job, now we can afford a better apartment. We can have a nice flat because I am going to pay for the entire rent, electricity, and water, everything... now I feel like it's more like home because now I have my own room..."



"I want to do more so  
they can do less."

Male, 18, Thai  
Born in Hong Kong  
Living in Hong Kong for 10 years  
Mother a waitress  
Father a chef  
1 elder sibling, 1 younger sibling

# NAMCHOK

Many families migrate to Hong Kong in the hope of a better future for themselves and their children. But what sacrifices would they be prepared to make for this better future?

Namchok's parents came to Hong Kong from Thailand during the 1990s in search of better employment opportunities and a better life for their family. After working for a few years in Hong Kong, Namchok was born but soon sent back to Thailand at the age of 4 to join his elder sister so that his grandparents could look after him. Having to spend much of his childhood in Thailand, he empathizes with his parents who too had to leave their parents in search of employment at an early age.

*"...my mom, she first went to Singapore when she was 18, and since then she didn't go back to look after my grandparents. She gave birth to my elder sister when she was 20 or something. She never got the chance to take care of my sister. My sister called my grandparents mom instead of her, now everything is different, she knows what's right and what's wrong. I just feel that I want to take care of them and I don't want them to struggle anymore."*



Namchok's parents faced many hardships settling in a new environment, finding employment and a place to live, while dealing with homesickness in an unfamiliar place. Still, they worked extremely hard. It was a constant struggle having to provide for their children and their parents and siblings who had family of their own.

*"They had 1 full-time job and 2 part-times, something like that. They would work very hard and do any job to earn money like even throwing rubbish for the restaurants. Anything. They would work 3 shifts everyday and never complain. It was mainly to send money back to Thailand... They sacrifice themselves for us to live comfortably."*

Even after joining his parents in Hong Kong at the age of 8, Namchok saw his parents continue to struggle. His dad works in a restaurant as a cooking chef and his mom works night shifts at the airport in a restaurant as a waitress. Even now, Namchok feels his parents don't lead a life as comfortable as he would like.

*"There are just times [my dad] would say, 'Don't be a chef like me, it's really tiring'. I guess that's the reason why he won't teach me how to cook even though I ask. When I go into the kitchen, he will ask me to go away because he doesn't want me to be like him. He doesn't want me to end up like him. That means, you know, he's not really enjoying his life, but he never complained, and he's hard-working."*





Namchok's parents are not able to guide him through the education system of Hong Kong, so he has to rely on himself and his teachers for school related matters. But at home, they try their best to keep their children's life stress-free so their focus is solely on their own education.

"[My mom] would never let me know that we are struggling because she doesn't want me to stress with the family business because it might disturb my studies, so most of the time she will just tell me to focus on my studies and look after my sister... my dad, sometimes he would cook and even when I come home late, the food is ready for me you know, and that's enough for me."

For Namchok, his parents are his inspiration and motivation for everything he does. So he tries his best to make his parents happy and proud whenever he can. One such happy and proud moment for his parents was when Namchok won a full scholarship to study at Baptist University, which was a huge financial relief for his parents and an achievement big enough to be make his whole village in Thailand proud.

"[My dad] said he was proud!... When he is proud of me he would never say anything because he was never praised when he was young, but he would try and you know, secretly tell my mom... It's just something that, a miracle for them. My grandma said, 'When you come back to Thailand, if you get into university I will give

you 500K baht', and I was just so happy. They are really, really happy. Kids in my village, we just don't have the chance to study. Teenagers getting into university is so rare in my village you know; my sister is the only one who got into university. Not the only but, the rest got into university but don't get to complete. So, I am like a hope for the village."

After graduating from university, Namchok has one clear goal which is to give his parents an easy and comfortable life back in the Thailand with their families. He sees his parents' happiness to be his responsibility and it's something he will work hard for.

"I want a brighter future. I want to make more money... I want my parents to relax a bit, so I just want to do whatever for them to be happier. I just want to do more so that they can do less, do more so they can enjoy more. I'm not doing it right because they still look tired, but I'm still on my way of doing so, in the process of trying to help them out."



Namchok receiving the Multi-faceted Excellence Scholarship

2018年多元卓越獎  
Home Affairs Bureau  
Multi-faceted Excellence Scholarship Presentation



**Namchok making his parents proud**



民政事務局  
2018年多元卓越獎學金頒發  
Home Affairs Bureau  
Multi-faceted Excellence Scholarship Presentation Ceremony



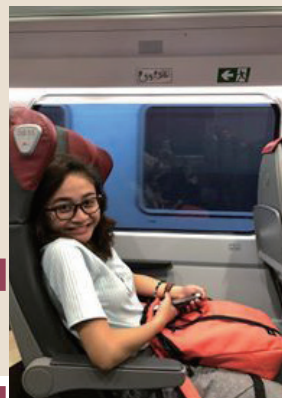
2016-17年度  
優秀青年及優秀青年活動計劃  
2016-17  
優秀青年及優秀青年活動計劃



## Enjoying family time in Europe!



My mom, sister and I getting excited for our summer escapade!



# JAMIE

Female, 21, Filipino  
 Living in Hong Kong for 15 years  
 Mother a hotel salon receptionist  
 Father a Social Security System officer at the  
 Philippines Consulate  
 1 elder sibling



Reunited in Barcelona! A big family from the UK, US, Spain and Hong Kong.







**"Even though it's mostly straight talks, we are finally talking."**

Tenchho's relationship with his parents hasn't always been smooth. Although he was born and brought up in Hong Kong, he completed 5 years of his senior secondary school in Nepal without his parents. When Tenchho returned to Hong Kong, he worked as a bar-tender and became addicted to drugs. Tenchho came clean to his parents after 4 months and his parents became a big reason for him to quit his drug habit.

*"When I told my parents about my drug use, they were shocked. My dad, he was quite patient, he didn't show his anger or anything. My mom didn't know what to do, so she started screaming and all. I felt guilty, I felt sad because I was addicted. No matter how bad I felt, I still had to take it... Now that I am not taking anything, I wanna dress up, I wanna look good and all. But, when I was taking that, I was like I don't care what I'm wearing, I don't care how I looked... I don't think that's only Nepali society, but like if my mom's friends know about it, they are just gonna keep talking behind her back. So, my mom was scared about that. I was also guilty if the others knew I was taking drugs, then they won't respect my mom... So I started thinking, 'I'm taking this, I'm messing myself, and I'm wasting my parent's money, their reputation.'"*

Tenchho recalls his parents being busy most of the time in his life since his dad worked as a construction worker and his mom used to work in a restaurant. When he was still in primary school, he lived with his extended family, including his grandparents who took care of him. But once he entered secondary school, his family moved out to a separate

apartment and his grandparents moved to the UK. After that, Tenchho was frequently alone and he was aware his parents didn't have much option but to work. He was mostly out in the playground near his home where he had met older friends. That's when his experimentation with soft drugs started.

*"I used to go to school, come back day time and go straight to play basketball and they would be at work. So, I am not sure if it is my fault or their fault that we don't get too close. Even now I leave around 11:30 till 4:30 then I take care of my stuffs in the evening, so we don't talk a lot even nowadays."*

Once Tenchho's parents found out about his drug addiction, despite initially feeling the disappointment, they were very supportive of him entering rehab and steering his life into a better direction. He is clean from drugs now and with his new passion for Muay Thai, he sees an improvement in his relationship with his parents.

*"My parents were the ones financially supporting me for Muay Thai after rehab. I can't really say full support because they don't want to see me beaten up with bruised face and all. It's something I want to do better than taking drugs. If I am not going to take drugs and do this instead then it's okay. But you can hear from their voice, they are trying to say you are gonna get hurt. (chuckles)"*

His parents are not big fans of his new passion, his grandparents even less. Even though his parents continue to nag him often for his lack of commitment like how he joined Taekwondo and Army training but quit halfway, they still show up to his tournaments to watch him fight. And, even though that means receiving tough love or being bashed about losing the fight, Tenchho is still glad to have their support.

*"... when I won, she said you got lucky (chuckles)...When I lost, my dad was like, 'It's okay.' Well, my dad is actually like that sometimes, 'It's okay, you can go back again another time,' and all. And, my mom was like, 'See, I told you, you can't do it!' (laughs) 'You're smoking, you're not running, you don't have proper sleep, your body still doesn't look good.' Because she thinks having 6 packs makes you look stronger... It's not like old times where every time my parents open their mouth, it was about like saying, 'Why are you still taking it? What are you gonna do with your life?'... We didn't even talk properly. So, right now finally we are talking. And even though it's just like rude jokes and all, but, we are still talking. So I'm good with it."*



Male, 21, Nepalese  
Born and raised in Hong Kong  
Mother a restaurant worker  
Father a construction worker  
Only child



"It's a struggle...  
There is this thing at  
the back of my head  
like I don't want my  
parents to feel I've  
abandoned them."

Female, 22, Filipino  
Living in Hong Kong for 20 years  
Mother a flight attendant  
Father a clerk in finance company  
1 younger brother

# PATRICIA



Many youths dream of independence and living their life freely without family rules. Patricia, who lives with her parents and a younger brother, told us about her wish to become independent. When she started her first full time job, she would dream of the possibilities of moving out and sharing a flat with close friends. The thought of not having to constantly update her parents on her whereabouts and having her personal space was very tempting. But Patricia has a second thought after a year.

*"Now that I am working, I realize moving out is lot easier said than done. It's really hard to move out in Hong Kong just because of the prices. I would say it's not much of a want as before. I guess it could be because I am older and I have a job, so they give me the freedom to go out lot more but when I was in the university, it's not like they stopped me, but they would expect that I would be home by certain time or spend this much time with them. But I think my decision could have also been influenced by my brother and how it has been lately... I would be comfortable knowing I'm still around my family."*

Patricia's brother who is 8 years younger than her has special needs. He attends school for children with special needs and is nonverbal. With her mom working as a flight attendant with irregular shifts, it's usually the rest of the household who take care of him. Although Patricia hasn't always been actively involved, she is aware that her parents could do with extra support now that her brother is in his teen years. With the help of her boyfriend who works with special needs children, she does what she can.

*"In general, his behavior has been very difficult because he is very physical. He would hit, scratch, bite and kick but there is nothing much you can do. You can hold him down and wait for him to calm down, but that is just the reality of the spectrum. ...My parents don't always know what to do because there is no manual on this. So, if something happens at home, I tell my boyfriend and he gives me feedback and suggestion. But, it's difficult for my family to cope, also because he is getting bigger. We are a lot smaller compared to him (chuckles), so, yeah. We have a helper, but she is also getting older. And, it's tough to rely on her always."*

Family bond and support are the core values that Patricia has learnt from her own parents. However, she still likes to spend time with her friends and boyfriend, and sometimes it's a struggle to juggle between full time work, family and her social life.

*"Growing up, my parents have always been around. They don't go out with their friends a lot of the time. Pretty much their whole life, it's purely family. So, I think it's just how I'm raised with family as the priority. But, I'd say it's a little different obviously, because you value friends and other things in life... There is sort of different things pulling me. Like my friends want to spend time together, but I just went out with my boyfriend. And, if I go out with my friends on a weekday, then I can't spend time with my family until next day. It's a struggle... There is this thing at the back of my head like I don't want my parents to feel I've abandoned them just because of our family's situation*

*where there needs to be a lot of support. So, there is something in the back of my mind telling me to just be there. Even though I can't be there for dinner, I'm around and I'm eating their food, and that they can still see me."*

Family time for Patricia, she explains, doesn't always mean doing anything in particular together. Sometimes it could be just having a meal together as a family or simply being present. So, normally Patricia reserves her Saturdays for her friends and Sundays for her family.

*"Going back to the personal space, there are times I still look for it because work is stressful and exhausting. So sometimes when I get home, as much as I wish to be present and around my family, I also want personal time where I don't want anyone to bother me, I just want to keep to myself. There are moments like that, but most of the time, the idea of being around family is stronger."*





"It's not the right time for kids."

ALI

Male, 26, Pakistani  
Living in Hong Kong for 23 years  
Mother a housewife  
Father a security guard  
4 younger siblings



We first met Ali at a very interesting point of his life. He was 25, eldest son of the family, and only a few months away from getting married. We were very excited for him, even more excited than Ali himself, it seemed.

"...I was just like feelingless. I was not excited. Most people get excited when they get married, because it's one of the most important part of their lives. But for me, it wasn't... It wasn't a love marriage. It was an arranged marriage. So, there is a difference. I had to marry her just for my parent's happiness..."

Arranged marriage is still a common practice among many South Asian communities and it's not only the daughters but also the sons who have to oblige. Many parents prefer to be involved in picking the spouses for their children to ensure that they marry someone from what they regard as a respectable and trustworthy family. Ali was engaged to his cousin who is 24 years old and studying nursing in the US.

"Most of the Pakistani parents have the thinking, if the girl is from our own family, if we face any problem, it will be solved in our family behind closed doors... Some of the parents think the girls in Hong Kong are not that traditional, and they don't know how to do the housework, and maybe they will just speak back to you. If you tell them to do something, they will be rude to you and they will be rude to your parents. That's why they prefer girls from Pakistan."

Ali still considered himself lucky given that his parents didn't force him to marry at a younger age. They wanted him to have a stable job and financial stability before getting married which is not always taken into consideration, especially back in his parent's time. His mother was 16 and his father 17 when they married. Ali's father was still studying at that time, and after 2 years came to Hong Kong to work and earn a living for the family.

Ali's wedding took place in Pakistan in his hometown Kasgumma, Kashmir with all his relatives and friends present. It was a huge celebration with around 1000 guests. After 2 weeks of hectic wedding rituals and meetings with relatives, Ali officially tied the knot with his wife.

Sitting with us for the interview 5 months later, Ali recalls his first thoughts after getting married.

"(Laughs) It's really awkward. We just say hello because in our language we say Salam. So Salam means peace be upon you. We used to say that and from that we start talking... just like the normal things like what she likes, what she wants to do... but normally, the first few days you guys don't talk (laughs)... we didn't meet each other before so it took a little time to understand each other..."

After almost a year after marriage, Ali's relationship with his wife has improved and they maintain communication through the phone because of their long distance. For Ali, building the relationship is still an ongoing process.

"Sometimes I am busy at work and she will WhatsApp me, and if I don't reply, then she will say, 'Oh, why aren't you replying me? You are too busy for me?' Because she thinks she is the most important person right now. But she doesn't understand that I have to work to earn a living for her and myself... At the start, I couldn't understand her, and she couldn't understand my words, what I'm trying to say. But after some time it just settled down."

Ali's wife will join him in Hong Kong once she completes her studies and gets cleared for her dependent visa. With that, now his concerns have shifted from getting married to fulfilling the duties of marriage.

"Normally in our culture, even my parents they want children after the first year of marriage. ... When my mother goes out, for example, to meet her friends or relatives or for gatherings, they usually ask, 'oh, when is your daughter-in-law coming to Hong Kong? Are we hearing the good news soon?' Like that... These comments put pressure onto my parents, and the pressure comes to me (laughs)."

Thinking of his new family, Ali reflects on his experience of his own parents and his family. Ali, his mother and siblings moved to Hong Kong in 1997 to join his father who came to Hong Kong through his father-in-law with working visa. Before Ali and his siblings joined the workforce, it was his father solely providing for his family of 7 as a security guard. His mom as a housewife took care of the family. Ali wishes to take a different approach in planning his family.

"It's not the right time for kids... if I have kids, my focus will be on their future and not my own... [In] my case, we are not living together, so it's a good thing for me. I have more time to plan for my career first. Because I have seen my parents having children at a very young age, and I don't think they were ready for children, because my father wasn't having a suitable job and my mother, as usual, she's just a housewife. So, it's good for me. I have more time to plan my family."

Ali is very clear about his family plan and career goal of becoming a social worker. He will have to move out of his current home once his wife moves to Hong Kong. By then, he is hopeful that, like many Hong Kong couples, both he and his wife will work and share the household expenses. Once they are settled, he wishes to have 2 kids and raise them in his own way. Give them best of education, opportunities, and even the freedom to choose their partners in the future.





Like many ordinary young people in Hong Kong, non-ethnic Chinese youth are involved in a range of leisure and creative activities. Through developing different hobbies, they are able to find the space for self-discovery, to gain a sense of achievement, and to relieve the stresses and strains in their everyday life. Some of these hobbies eventually lead to personal career development and greater recognition within the school and the wider community. Through participating in group based leisure activities, they are also able to cultivate more meaningful connections with different social and ethnic groups in Hong Kong.

# LEISURE



# ALI

Male, 26, Pakistani  
Project Assistant in ISS  
Enjoys photography

"I feel happy  
inside doing  
something  
I love."

Out of many things in life, Ali enjoys photography very much. It is something that he grew fond of during his secondary school years in Hong Kong thanks to his classmates.

*"... my classmates used to attend them (photography class) and they used to take pictures with mobiles. I started getting interested once I saw my friends' pictures, they looked quite beautiful. Sometimes we don't really focus on small things when we are busy so I thought it's a great idea to just relax my mind when I am too stressed about work and studies, all those thing. So, at that time I started taking pictures with mobiles."*

Ali was so hooked on photography he decided to invest on it. The camera features were limited on his mobile phone so he bought his first camera with his own savings during his senior secondary school year.

*"I just saved up my pocket money, like my mom used to give me some money everyday... to buy some snacks during recess... when I was in secondary school. So, I just saved up (around HKD 200 per month) for around one year and then, with that money I bought the camera. The first camera I bought was not that expensive, not that advanced. It was just good enough for taking some good pictures."*

Ali was very proud that he had made his first purchase, a Canon 600D worth HKD 3000 with his own savings. While continuing his hobby in photography, he was also able to expand his friendship circle and bond with others over this shared interest through social media. Most of his social media

friends are local Chinese and Ali gets along with them well. They explore photography together, and learn more about each other in the process.

*"Mostly we talk about photography skills, like how can we shoot this scene more beautifully. Because I talk with them in Chinese in Instagram, like we WhatsApp each other or something... I don't tell them I am a Pakistani or a South Asian... So, when they [talk to] me first time, they think I am a Hongkonger. But when I meet them face to face, they are always surprised (laughs). Sometimes they want to know about my own culture and how I am different from them. And, once it happened like my friend wanted me to stay the night for Astrography, like capturing stars, Milky Way, all those things. But I told him, 'Oh no, I am not allowed to stay outside after 10 pm.' So, he asked me, 'How old are you?', I said, 'I'm 20 something.' 'But you're still not allowed?!' (laughs) That's the difference. Because their parents are not that strict, so they can go for night camps and all. But my parents don't allow. Although I am already an adult, they still get worried."*

Ali's photography skills have improved a lot since he first started 5 years ago, opening up opportunity to even earn side income.

*"After 2 years when I started working, I bought a better camera, like more advanced and professional. Because at that time I was quite skilled to receive some jobs from other friends, maybe introducing me to a company... I was not charging too much like other professionals. So, through friends, I received a few [photo-taking] jobs of marriages. Also I covered some large scale events, some charity organizations, organizing events. So, some of my Chinese friends introduced that event to me."*





## Ali's landscape photography



Through his photography, Ali occasionally makes a few thousand dollars per event. So, he finds his hobby to be very rewarding. Nevertheless, Ali tells us that photography is an expensive hobby and he has to be mindful of the costs.

*"The camera itself is not expensive but the lenses are quite expensive. Sometimes I save up, sometimes the jobs that I get like \$1,000 or \$2,000 in a day, depending on the kind of event I am covering. With that money, I buy more lenses for different settings... You don't receive the job every day, or you don't get it for a few months. So, sometimes if I feel that thing is required to take a better picture, if I'm not getting a job, I'll just wait for it. Because if I'm not earning anything from photography, if it's just a hobby, then I shouldn't be spending too much on it."*

Ali tries his best to strike a balance between spending and earning from his hobby. But regardless of whether he earns extra income or not, photography is something that he will continue to indulge in. That's because, in a demanding, fast-paced city life of Hong Kong, his hobby is what keeps him sane.



*"... it's like a way for me to relax from the busy life. Like for example, when I am too stressed I just go out, I don't do anything else, I just go outside and take pictures. I feel happy inside, I feel satisfied that oh, I am doing something I love and I have some time for myself, not only working for others doing this and all those things."*

Ali's forte is landscape photography of Hong Kong. He spends much of his free time going around Hong Kong taking photos and shares them in his social media sites. With each of his photos he hopes to show everyone the beauty of Hong Kong and everyday life that may go unnoticed.



I think there was a news, someone compared Hong Kong to Taiwan and said Hong Kong doesn't have many beautiful places to capture pictures compared to Taiwan. That's why I want to tell people Hong Kong is also beautiful... Hong Kong has given me a better future, better place to live, and a better living standards and that is the least I can do.



# AFIA



Female, 27, Pakistani  
Works in restaurant  
Enjoys sports



**"I want that fame!"**

*"You disgrace me. If it was my son playing for Hong Kong, then I would have been proud but you are a girl and that is not a good thing."*

That was the response Afia received from her father when he found out she was secretly representing the Hong Kong's national team in playing cricket.

Afia started playing cricket ever since secondary school. In fact, it wasn't only cricket she played in school. She participated in a number of sports like basketball, volleyball, swimming and athletics. However, cricket was something she continued on even after secondary school despite her father's disapproval who sees sports as something only reserved for boys.

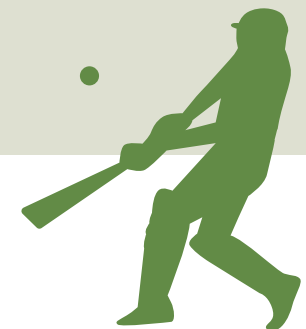
*"I played cricket, but my father never agreed on this. I used to lie to him about having tutorial and stuff, and then I would actually go to games. Sometimes I would take my sister with me just to make him believe more that, 'Okay, they are going to the tutorial'. We would go to the match and my sister would just sit there getting bored while I was playing."*

She is not entirely sure where her passion for cricket came from because she was not as dedicated when she was first selected for the cricket team in her secondary school. She points

out that cricket is something that many Indians and Pakistanis are ferociously passionate about so that might have been an influence. She also believes that the environment of her club helped her continue playing cricket even after graduating from secondary school.

*"As soon as we left school, we were put into a club. The coaches from Delia [Memorial School] were also from there. They put us in their clubs. The girls and even the coaches were Pakistanis, so we were very comfortable with them and the way they teach. If you don't understand, you know, they can go out of their way to explain to you. But, if we have maybe foreigner or Chinese coaches, it could be a bit hard for us to understand or maybe a bit hard for them to explain to us how to do certain things. So, I think that was one of the reasons I started liking cricket."*

Afia even made it to the Hong Kong's national team, participating in a number of competitions in Hong Kong and abroad. Committing to the national team meant intense dedication. She had to wake up at 4:30 in the morning for training sessions, which happened 3 to 4 days a week, along with extra hours at the gym. It was not an easy hobby. Afia thinks it's the pride and recognition that she earned that kept her going.







*"Playing for Hong Kong, it's a pride. You are playing for national squad. It's hard to even get into the squad, I'm playing for them... When some Pakistani hear you play for nationals, that's a big thing you know?... it kind of gives encouragement to the girls of my society I think."*

Despite her dedication and strong commitment to cricket, Afia felt that she wasn't always rewarded fairly when it came to selections for the national tournaments.

*"... Before, it was very unfair in the Hong Kong team. They would say that you would be selected in the squad if you attend this percent of training. I would actually attend all the training, but in the end, I would never get selected for certain occasions. There were a lot of girls, not just me, even Chinese girls. Let's say the priority goes to the famous club in Hong Kong with the fathers and the families who have a rich background. The girls playing from that club were prioritized even if they are not very good at it."*

So in the end, Afia stopped playing for the national team. She decided that putting in so much time on it wasn't practical, especially when it didn't ensure her financial or career stability. She had to focus on doing a full-time job that paid.



*"If you have your family helping you financially where they say, 'Okay, you wanna play cricket, go play cricket. Don't worry about anything else.' Then, that's when you are able to achieve your dreams. But if you have to struggle between your work and trainings and everything then obviously, you lag behind."*

Afia hasn't completely given up on cricket, however. She is now in the UK, in search for better opportunities. While searching for a stable career to support herself, she has put a complete stop to playing cricket for the time being. But she remains hopeful. She considers this a break until she establishes a stable life in the UK and is ready to start again.

*"I have a lot of passion for cricket. It's like our people, Pakistani people think girls can't do anything, and I want to show them that, 'Yes, there are some girls who can do it.' I want to play for like maybe bigger countries like England team, because then the matches come on TV, and I will be like turn on the channel, 'I'm there.' ... I want that fame!"*





Male, 24, Indian  
Management trainee in a logistic company  
Enjoys football, basketball and Online games



# IQBAL

"Football has an important role in my life."

Iqbal is very interested in football and has a lot of memorable moments about football.

Iqbal used to play football with his cousins. As a little kid, he was often the goal keeper.

"Maybe I was always the guy who had to be the ball-boy when we play cricket or football. For cricket, I was always the guy who picked up the ball. For football, I was the goal keeper. So just these very minimum tasks to do. I would cry and go home and tell my sisters that our cousins didn't allow me to play and that they hated me. And my sisters will console me by saying, 'okay, they will allow you to play, maybe you go down again.' Soon after returning, they would push me and say, 'why did you tell them?' and all that."

Iqbal has 4 elder sisters. Among all the cousins, he was also one of the youngest. When he was a small child, he used to play with his sisters and some girl friends in the neighbourhood. If he wanted to play with boys, he had to join his cousins in football. During weekends and school holidays, Iqbal had the chance to play football until some of his cousins moved to the UK. Unexpectedly this opportunity to play football with older boys gave him some advantage later on.

In Primary 2, Iqbal joined the McDonald's Football Coaching Programme which was offered in every district in Hong Kong during the summer. Iqbal went through the Stage 1 training and was

promoted to Stage 2. If he was able to go to Stage 3, he would play for the Sha Tin District Team.

"When I was younger, my cousins used to bully me to be the goal keeper. So I was not really afraid of the ball coming to me. So I choose to be the goal keeper again. And then my performance is always good and even some of the kids used to look up to me. They're like, 'you're good in this.' I don't know why at the end I did not enter the district team. Sometimes I think it might be because of racial discrimination or something, because I was not really good in Chinese, and those coaches, they are always speaking Chinese to me."

Iqbal was very upset with the outcome because he was considered the better keeper out of the two goal keepers at stage 2. His teammates felt sorry for him as well. That's why he attributed him not being selected to the language problem which he calls "racial discrimination".

He felt frustrated and stopped playing football for a few years until Primary 5, when the school set up a new football team. There was a big argument between him and his father, and he even got slapped. Like many other parents, his father preferred him studying hard to playing football. Eventually he joined the team. However, things did not turn out as expected.

"It was not the same anymore. The two to three years really changed me a lot. I was not good anymore, I couldn't play as well as I did before. I gained a lot of weight in those years. I remember in Primary 1, I was the fastest, but in Primary 6, I was physically weak and then



because of this, I got bullied, I got laughed at. My closest friends, they became the cool kids in the school, and then I was more of the joker type among them, from Primary 5 to 6. Yeah, so again, I just quit and didn't continue."

Very soon, Iqbal found another interest. Again, like many boys, he fell in love with playing computer games. It was like an 'addiction'.

"At weekends I will not go anywhere, I stay at home. My school friends, they used to ask me, 'do you want to come out to watch a movie?' I would say, 'no, it's family day.' But actually I was playing computer games the whole day. I'll just sit there, my parents would bring me lunch, bring me dinner, I'll not stand up. My health status was really bad. I will not say I was obese but I was skinny and had a belly, it's a very bad state. I was addicted to it, very addicted."

One day, football came into his life again and made another significant change on him. On a normal weekend, he went to the football playground near his home in Ma On Shan. He joined a group of local Chinese kids and played with these strangers. By the second time they played together, they started to talk to him.

"We talked a bit, like who I am, who you are. Actually my Chinese was not that good. I spoke broken Chinese. But I talk with them, they find me funny because my name is Iqbal. It sounds like a football player's name which is 伊巴 (Ibra, Zlatan Ibrahimovi, a Swedish professional footballer) so they gave me this nickname. Yeah, and then I used to fool around with them and then they added me in WhatsApp group. We used to go out, we played football and went for desserts at night. Certainly we're like best friends, all of us."

For some time, he maintained both hobbies of computer games and football until he found new meaning in football through friendship.

"I was up to the stage in online game that it's hard to push up to the top of the game. I just find it boring, it's just not fun anymore, same game, same level, same thing going on and on again. It's a very repetitive stuff. So I quit the game. But then football was never the same, I mean events never repeat it, there's always something new, right? With football you need new tricks, you have new ways of shooting the ball, you have so much new stuff to explore. So we used to do this small training, small matches between us, to learn new tricks, have fun together. Maybe if you lose, they kick your butt, all this fun stuff. So it got more and more fun."

Iqbal no longer sees himself as an ordinary Indian man because he speaks better Cantonese, is more familiar with the local lifestyle, and has a local mindset. Two months before the DSE, Iqbal decided to work hard. He spent 12 hours in the study room every day. His friends would call him out to play football for 15 minutes as a break and gave him encouragement. This group of friends have become one of his best circle of friends.







# NAMCHOK

"It's because of rugby I am where I am now."

Male, 18, Thai  
University student  
Enjoys dancing and sports

Namchok was born in Hong Kong but moved back to Thailand when he was 4, only to return at the age of 8. Once in Hong Kong, he joined a local Chinese primary school. There he didn't have the highest self-confidence.

"...those who don't know Chinese or English, studying in Hong Kong is knowing nothing in class, whatever the teacher says, you won't understand. You end up sitting in the classroom doing nothing. You are just there doing your own thing like drawing on the table... like me I didn't have the habit of studying. I didn't care about my studies because I didn't think I could do it anyways."

Academically, Namchok struggled and he didn't seem to excel in non-academic areas either. He figured this after joining the football team.

"I was chosen to be the goal keeper, but I was too short, so they replaced me with someone else. Even though I'm worst in the team, I still attend the training all the time and do what the coach told me to. And every time when they have competitions, it's really happy for us to go because we can skip lessons, right? The teacher would still ask me to join him, but not to play, at least to be the 執波仔 (picking balls), not even a bench warmer, a waterboy! I was actually sad, oh my god..."

When Namchok moved to secondary school, not only did he give up on his studies, but he also stopped playing football. Instead, he followed his friends in joining rugby in Form 1. Although he wasn't expecting much from it, he found himself committed to the sport because of the positive learning environment.

"...for football in my primary school, there are star players you know. So, if we do anything wrong, they actually blame you. But for rugby, most of us were new. So, making mistake is like normal for us. The teacher would actually encourage a lot, especially the coach. Like they encourage us a lot so that I wasn't scared to make a mistake."



Namchok's dedication towards rugby increased as he went on, so much that even when all his friends quit, he continued playing. He realized rugby could bring him a sense of achievement that compensated for his low achievement in studies.

*"... after joining a few competitions I start to believe in myself, I start to think that actually I can achieve more in my life. Actually I can be on a stage, invite my parents to take a picture with me because in terms of studying, I just can't study. I just don't know what's going on in the lesson because I really don't know Chinese or English. So, in F.1, I thought that if I play rugby, I can at least win awards. I can at least have medal or trophy in my life so I continued playing for fun."*

As his team improved with practice, they were able to win numerous interschool and district level competitions. Namchok was made the captain of the team in the second year for being a disciplined and a dedicated team member. This recognition he received for his rugby achievements from teacher and schoolmates built his confidence and brought a shift in his attitude towards studies.

*"...the teacher chose me to be the captain and that time I was so happy. And I thought if I work hard in anything I can achieve anything, even in studies. So, I started to worry about academics a bit, and I started to think okay, maybe I should study a bit because in F.1 I didn't study (laughs). So, I start to have the mentality of trying to achieve, eager to get awards. Because of that I started learning English and learn to communicate with people..."*

Namchok put more effort in school, in his academics, extracurricular activities and set higher goals for himself which slowly bore rewards. As he gradually improved academically, all while playing rugby, the school principal took notice of him and nominated him for the Multi-Faceted Excellence Scholarship. The scholarship granted by the HKSAR government is aimed at supporting local students who excel in sports, arts and/ or community service for pursuing undergraduate studies in Hong Kong.

*"... [my principal] said I will have a tough time because I am competing with band 1 students and I'm competing with people who are from the Hong Kong [rugby] team. I thought I couldn't get it... but after the principal chose me, I feel like he trusted me, so I can't let him down. I must do my best no matter what."*

After a tough interview, Namchok won the scholarship. He was one of the 29 awardees to receive the scholarship in the whole of Hong Kong in 2018. Through his scholarship and his hard work preparing for his HKDSE, he successfully enrolled for the Bachelor's program in Physical Education.

*"I think it was not real because I never thought that I would get into university. For my JUPAS right, I didn't even choose Baptist as one of my choice, I chose some associate degree, higher diploma, and OU. I didn't even believe in myself ... but it was because of rugby that gave me confidence and eventually I got the scholarship and got into [university]... it is because of rugby that's why I am where I am now, that's why I am who I am."*

Now an undergraduate student, Namchok is still at awe having achieved something he once imagined impossible. Grateful for the scholarship and the support of his teachers and principal, he is thinking of ways to give back to the society. He wants to become a teacher to inspire low performing students with his own experience so they too can achieve more in life.



## Namchok's rugby achievements







Male, 21, Nepalese  
Muay Thai instructor at Glory gym  
Enjoys mixed martial arts and music

Many of us invest our time in hobbies in the hope of turning them into our full-time profession. Tenchho is driven by the same goal. He hopes to become a professional fighter, so he spends all his time practicing martial art. He was always set on doing something he was passionate about.

When he was young, Tenchho dreamt of joining the army like his own grandfather. But as he entered his late teens, he wasn't confident he would make the cut. He then diverted his attention towards music and practiced for nearly 6 years. He had wanted to become a musician, but falling into the habit of taking drugs, he gave up the dream.

It has been 3 years now since Tenchho picked up a new hobby - Muay Thai (Thai Kickboxing). He trains daily and participates in tournaments locally and beyond. He has always enjoyed martial arts since young but is now serious about it as a career. He sees fame and fortune in this career which ordinary jobs don't promise.

"I just want to keep on training hard, get myself better and hopefully become someone."

# TENCHHO

"I'm not saying I'm doing it just because I love it because I see money in that also, I see fame in it also... every fighter who's rich right now, famous names in UFC like Connor McGregor, they all started like me... with small games like everyone does and moved on steps right, so, what I'm saying is it's not hard for me here as well. I just have to do it properly. If I have all those things in me then I can fight in Hong Kong first, take out people from the big leagues and then move on to some other places. I heard like you go fight in UFC, win or lose you get at least 25K US dollars. If you win, you're gonna get more..."

Tenchho mentions that some people see him as chasing a pipe dream. But he remains focused. He persists, knowing the level of difficulty in trying to achieve his goal. He has already come across several challenging experiences that brought him close to quitting.

"I almost gave up on everything during the summer. I had 3 fights. My first fight I lost really badly. If you check my Instagram, I think there's a video of this guy when he punched me, I flew back because at that time what happened was I came back from work, so, I did construction throughout the day, went home and smoked and that drained my energy, and I went late, so I didn't have enough time to stretch. I fought and I lost. I was quite tired physically and mentally... I was thinking a lot like should I even be a fighter because I tried so hard and it's not really working out. I still have other things also, so I was just thinking of that. But after a month, I came back and decided I still wanted to be a fighter."

Being an amateur fighter doesn't earn Tenchho any income, so giving up and focusing on a paying job would be an easy choice and something he would have considered in his teens. But now in his 20s, Tenchho takes on challenges with more resilience and sees commitment as something reflecting his character.





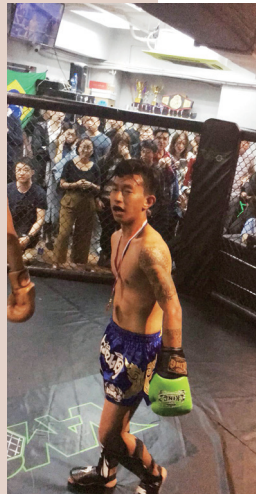
## Tenchho's fight mode



"Before, when I was not doing good, I used to think, like, I'm gonna have a lot of struggle and pain, so I was ready for that. So, it's not easy to give up... when I tell people I'm gonna do this and do that, I actually wanna prove it. Even if I don't, I wanna be in a level like I at least tried. People say they want to do this, but they don't even take the first step. I want to be the person [who, if] I say I wanna be a fighter, a well-known one, I'm going up for that. That's why I have plans for that. That's why I don't wanna leave my dream..."

Transitioning into adulthood, Tenchho is aware of the precarious nature of the profession he has chosen, especially given the pressure of being the only son with responsibilities towards his parents. But, he is still determined to put up a good fight to pursue his dream. He quit his construction job and instead took up a part-time job as a Muay Thai instructor so he can spend most of his time in the gym. Even though he earns less, he is positive that it could be an alternate path for him if becoming a professional fighter doesn't work out.

"Right now, all I am thinking is about myself, like how I want to do martial art, ... maybe if I do something for my dream right now then maybe I can give back later [to my parents]...for me right now, this, martial art is really successful, more than any bartending or construction work or anything that I did... This one I really wanna be... I don't know why I am serious about doing martial art even, it's just that I feel so prepared for that. I just want to keep on training hard and get myself good and maybe be something."





# SUSKIHANNA

**"It's time the youth have a voice,  
especially, the females have a voice."**

Female, 22, Nepalese

Teacher, Community Director & Content Strategist for *The Wandering Voice*

Enjoys writing, video-making



In the past year Suski has been getting much recognition for being publicly present in advocating for the rights of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. She has been featured in newspapers on her participation in an NGO delegation to Geneva during the UN hearing on Racial Discrimination. But she was not always as confident and vocal. Looking back, Suski describes herself as being a shy and an angry girl with low self-esteem as a teen.

*"I was raised in Nepal till I was 7. I didn't know I was born in Hong Kong, but still I didn't want to come back to Hong Kong because when you are a kid you want to be in a familiar place with familiar culture and language. And, I thought it was very unfair how my parents were taking me back to Hong Kong. When I first arrived, everything was so foreign, especially, the language. I think it was very hard to adapt at first because I was also a sick child, I had a rare health condition for a while so, I spent most of the time in the first year in the hospital. So, I felt even more alienated. I became very quiet because I felt so out of place and I felt very uncomfortable."*

She found consolation in writing about her grievances. From her primary school years and throughout her university years, Suski expressed herself through poetry, stories, essays, and journal entries.

Suski's confidence in speaking out only developed after she entered university. She found the courage to do this with encouragement from the people she met during her university years.

*"After I entered university, my positivity also came from others like I met a lot of EM who are pursuing uni. They were either my age or older. They were like my seniors who had done it before and they just seem to be very welcoming and friendly, and it just provided a very, it was a very small but very welcoming community because I was a Unison scholar... I met other professors who were Pakistani Hongkongers, Indian Hongkongers in HKU. I never even knew there were professors of this ethnicity, of this group! When I met them, they were very encouraging, very nice. They were like actual role models that I could look up to."*



Following the footstep of her role models, slowly, what began as a way to vent and document her thoughts became a means for her to address social issues in the public arena. Her writing also evolved into film-making, thanks to her Journalism class. Consequently, she produced her own documentaries on ethnic minority issues. With the help of the NGOs and people she met while dealing with ethnic minority issues, Suski was able to not only raise public awareness but also become an advocate.

*"There is this NGO called Hong Kong Unison and I have been a [scholarship] awardee for few years and they just asked me to come [to the UN hearing]... I accepted because I do feel like for ethnic minority issues, it's other people talking about the issues and not ethnic minorities themselves... it's time the youth have a voice, especially, females have a voice. It's not always people who are older get to speak because we are the ones who went through the education system and grew up in Hong Kong."*

For Suski it wasn't a light matter to be able to partake in such an important delegation being only 21. It was a proud moment for Suski to be representing the minority in an international arena to push the local governments to improve policies and measures for the ethnic minorities. It garnered her a lot of admiration and support especially from the Nepalese.

But it was not something Suski's dad was very supportive of. Her father was concerned of the publicity she was receiving and it was a valid concern. With her story becoming public, she met many supporters but she also received hateful comments from the local public and the Nepalese.

*"Being the youngest there I was a bit scared about why I was chosen. I felt like I had a lot of weight put up on my shoulder, especially because there were some people in the Nepalese community who were turning this story out to become something bigger than it was, and making it seem like I was a brainwashed little kid who didn't have her own opinion or her own understanding of her own experience. So, I felt like I was watched and when I went there it was also my first time, so I felt a lot of pressure I would say."*

For Suski, this wasn't her first encounter with hostility. With her involvement in the creative media field as a student, she had previously come across similar comments. But that doesn't dissuade her from voicing her opinions.

*"You have those racist trolls who are always like, 'Why are you complaining? Why don't you just go back to your country if you have so many issues?' Things like that. 'You weren't able to learn Cantonese so that's your own issue, why are you blaming us?... I am not really afraid of the backlash. There's always gonna be people who misunderstand you or spin your words around. I don't mind being the voice and the face because by now I have grown very thick skin. A lot of time people will create negative news to attract attention for themselves, but that doesn't mean we shy away or we don't rise up to the occasion because if we do that then we will never be represented in society equally.'"*

Now, as a teacher, Suski uses writing and video making as a tool to empower her own students into vocalizing their thoughts and concerns confidently so they won't stay silent on the injustices and unequal treatment in society.



The delegation giving a press conference after returning from Geneva.





United Nations' Office in Geneva, Switzerland

## Suski's journey with writing and video-making into advocacy



### Hong Kong-born Nepali, 21, to speak at UN about local ethnic minorities' fight against racial discrimination

HKU fresh graduate Suskhanna Gurung taking part in NGO delegation to Geneva to raise points about local school system and effect on job searches

HART AM BAYNES  
PUBLISHED 12:28 PM, 22 JUL 2018



Suskhanna Gurung, 21, speaking for Chinese New Year's Eve at a UN committee meeting, addressing racial discrimination in Hong Kong. Photo: Yip Yip

A young woman from an ethnic minority group in Hong Kong will for the first time bring the fight against racial discrimination in education and jobs to a UN committee in Geneva next week.

Suskhanna Gurung, 21, who graduated from the University of Hong Kong earlier this year, will take part in an NGO delegation, meeting experts and members of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.





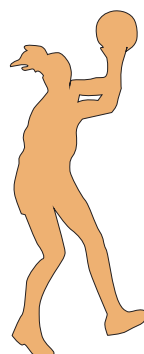
"I am someone who gives 100% in everything I do."



# ISHITAA



Female, 26, Indian  
PE teacher  
Enjoys all kinds of sports



Ishitaa was born to be a sportsperson. She played many sports growing up and even captained the Hong Kong National Cricket Team. Now she has converted this interest and strength into her career.

Ever since she was small, Ishitaa and her father would always play various sports together like basketball, cricket, swimming, and table tennis. Her talent in sports was not the only factor that made her a sportsperson. She also came to realize her immense passion in sports because of her environment.

"Every day after school, I would go downstairs with my friends and play games in the open space. We even had a swimming pool in our building. We would make do with any open area we could find in the building. For example, someone had nailed a basketball hoop in our outdoor area where people would wash their cars. We didn't have top class sports facilities in our building but we could always create a game with what we had. We would play badminton down there, basketball, cricket, rugby, just everything. We played table tennis on our dining table. We would sometimes play cricket in my bedroom. We would move all the delicate items such as photo frames to another room. We would close the doors and windows and hit the ball everywhere. That was a lot of fun."



In primary school, Ishitaa joined many sports classes. Basketball, soccer and tennis were her favourites. Ironically she hated cricket at the beginning because she would see her dad watch it for hours and sometimes days on TV. She only took up cricket while playing with the boys as she felt challenged beyond her comfort zone.

"One day when I was still in primary school, Anita Miles saw me playing cricket with my dad at the Hong Kong Cricket Club and asked him if I would be interested in training with the seniors. So when I was eleven, I started training with the seniors at the Club."

Ishitaa's mother played an important role in supporting her as a sportsperson. Once formal exams at school started for Ishitaa, her mother tutored her at home across all the subject areas to make sure she was keeping up and helped her manage time between training and studying.

"When I was 14 years old, I got into the Hong Kong national cricket team. We would train five or six days a week, two or three hours after school. So this was a big commitment. With exams starting around the same time, mom would find me podcasts so I could listen to study material on the bus while making my way to and from training. It would take one and a half hours each way, so three hours a day travelling was a lot of time being wasted if I did not study then."

Even though Ishitaa's father was very supportive of her cricket achievements, he wanted her to study Business Management at university. After one year of studying Business at HKUST, Ishitaa decided to follow her interest and began her studies in Sports Science



at HKU. After graduation, she pursued her Masters degree in Education at the University of Melbourne in Australia. In 2016, Ishitaa quit the national team because she wanted to focus on her career in teaching PE. She is now teaching PE at the Hong Kong International School.

"I am someone who gives 100% in everything I do. I was able to give cricket all my time and energies while I was studying. However after I graduated, it was time to focus my time and energies in building my career as a Physical Education Teacher. I thoroughly enjoyed the 10 years that I focused on my cricket career. I feel extremely grateful and humbled that I was given the opportunity to captain the National side as well as participate in 2 Asian Games. In Hong Kong it is hard to manage a career and play professional sport, therefore, I do not regret retiring from the national team, as now is the time to build my career as a Physical Education Teacher."

Ishitaa is enjoying her teaching career and is excited to see how far she has developed in the profession. Aside from teaching at the school, she also spends her time coaching a volleyball team and has travelled with a few teams to Shanghai for various volleyball tournaments.





Non-ethnic Chinese youth develop multiple identities across different domains as they grow up in Hong Kong - as sons and daughters, students, teachers, social workers, entrepreneurs, musicians, friends and lovers, local and global citizens, and so on. Their identity is fluid and constantly evolving, as young people navigate the uncertainties and challenges of making the transition into adulthood. Finally, their identity is mutually shaped by individual ethnic minority youth and others in society. Unlike the older generations of immigrants, many of them develop a sense of belonging through greater social involvement and everyday interactions with their own ethnic minority community as well as the broader community. In doing so, locally born non-ethnic Chinese youth may become an agent of change and help shape a more socially inclusive society in Hong Kong.

PASSPORT



# IDENTITY





# MARRIUM

**"I am an independent woman."**

Female, 20, Pakistani  
Born and grew up in Hong Kong  
College student  
Food and Nutrition Science



Marrium thought long and hard when we asked her how she defined herself as a person. It was after a lengthy pause when she proudly exclaimed, "an independent woman"!

*"I don't have to depend on someone. For example, whether I have anything related to government issues or my health issues I don't have to depend on others but many of the woman [from my community] still have to depend on others because of the language barriers they have so, I think I have this thing where I can actually talk confidently about myself to other."*

For many, this may not come off as something new or extraordinary given many societies value independence. But for Marrium it is a giant feat. From the lived experiences of women around her who lack proper education, Marrium knows the importance of being self-reliant.

*"...In our culture for women, it's really difficult for them to talk to men. It's not for me because I'm really used to it in Hong Kong, so I don't find it a problem talking to a guy, but you know some still have the issue with language, and sometimes there are things they don't*

*want to talk about to guys like health or something... I see aunties who have to rely on their husbands. Like, 'you have to take a break from work to come and take me to the hospital. I can't talk to the interpreter, it's so personal. No, you have to come!' So, the husband has to take 2 hours leave just to accompany them."*

Marrium can communicate in English, Urdu and Cantonese without difficulty, so she enjoys the advantage of being able to move about in society with confidence. She is the most educated in her family and the first one on her way to pursue a Bachelor's degree. She believes it is only possible thanks to her supportive parents, who allowed and encouraged her to continue her education. She feels very privileged compared to some women because education is not traditionally seen as a necessity for girls in her community.

*"Parents in my community want their daughters to study, but some think that if they are very educated then they will not do the house chores, and are afraid they will abandon their duties as daughters. That's the culture...but many are trying to be open-minded..."*





Aware of the reservations of the older generations regarding education, Marrium uses her skills and knowledge to help her community, giving them a positive impression about education for women and winning their affection.

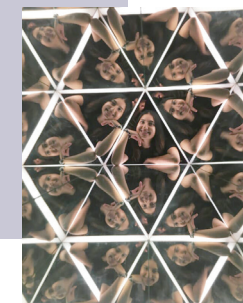
*"I met an aunty who needed me to write a letter of absence for her son to his school because they were going back to Pakistan. I helped her out... Many aunties really like me now because I can help them deal with [interpretation and administrative support for] health issues and everything. If they didn't know me very well, they would just think, 'Oh, she just goes to school and that's it. She has no respect, nothing!'. But, if actually you talk to them, like I help them out that's when they think, 'Oh, I really want my daughter to be like that.'... There is a role model and your daughter can be like that, that's why I think there are changes."*

Traditionally, the roles of a woman are constrained within the home and their main responsibilities include house chores and child-rearing. But with changing times, Marrium's community is seeing more women like herself contributing beyond the household, which in turn changes the perception on education for girls.



*"... My grandma, she went to a hospital. She was there and an interpreter girl came in and she was really educated and my grandma was like, 'Wow! Look at them now, girls are being educated. They can help us!' ... She was just like, 'Look at her, so educated, I hope my daughter could be like that!' That's the thing that attracts them to send their girls to school. So they don't have to depend on someone else. I don't think she would want her girls to be educated in her time."*

With increasing examples of the achievements and contributions of educated girls, Marrium feels positively about more and more families realizing the importance of education for girls. Even if her role is a small one, she feels glad to be part of this progressive change.





Female, 22, Nepalese  
Born in Hong Kong  
Living in Hong Kong for 15 years  
Teacher, Community Director & Content Strategist for *The Wandering Voice*



# SUSKIHANNA

**"Now, whenever someone asks me where I am from, I say Nepalese Hongkonger..."**

*"I think growing up in Hong Kong as a teenager is a pretty frustrating and confusing thing. Especially the time when I grew up there weren't lot of resources and help being offered, so you feel pretty confused about who you are. I also think it's confusing how we are segregated from local Chinese students. Why do we have to go to schools that have no Chinese students when the majority of the Hong Kong population in Hong Kong are Chinese people?"*

Forming one's identity is a lengthy and complex process, but it can be even more complicated when your upbringing is torn between two places with different cultures. Being born in Hong Kong but raised partially in Nepal, Suski felt confused regarding her sense of belonging when she was brought back to Hong Kong.

*"I wasn't very involved in the Nepalese community because firstly my parents weren't interested, so they never took me to Nepalese events. Secondly, primary to secondary school, since I never had Chinese friends or someone to introduce me to the culture so I wasn't exactly in the Hong Kong community as well. I felt like in primary and secondary school I was in this weird state of not belonging to any place... For me and few of my friends, we felt like outcasts, like outsiders, like this misfit group that didn't belong to any communities."*

Suski's sense of identity and self-esteem was further challenged when she entered university where her peers came from an affluent background.

*"When I first entered university, I was suddenly surrounded in a very strange environment because in primary and secondary school we were always surrounded by ethnic minority, usually from lower socio-economic status. Suddenly, I was there with mainly Chinese people and also people from overseas. Students there came from like Band 1, top of the top schools. They can speak so many languages, can play so many musical instruments, they get good GPA, they play sports, they are in the national team and the university team. They had so many resources put into them when they were kids to craft them into this person who seem so excellent. But for us we had a different upbringing and understanding of life... I think in Year 1 I wasn't comfortable telling people my ethnicity or very proud of my identity. Because you know when you are younger, you just want someone to relate with and fit in a crowd..."*



Cultural programme organized by Nepalese university student group, which Suski is a part of.



Suski's insecurities were also related to the negative stereotype of ethnic minorities as being less capable.

"Whenever I tell someone I study in HKU, they wouldn't believe I'm an ethnic minority. They would ask, 'did you come straight from another country?' or 'did you go to international school?'... They think I have to be a special case or I don't come from that community because they assume people from that community don't reach this level because all the news you hear on ethnic minority are mostly negative and the representation is negative, so people think negatively about us... A lot of Chinese people - when I say they don't know we exist, I mean whenever they think of ethnic minorities they think of immigrants only. They don't think of us."

During her university years, Suski noticed that these subtle forms of racism were more evident and that ethnic minorities were viewed as lower-class citizens.

"Some friends in university would say I look like a domestic helper because of my face and skin color... For a lot of local students, the joke is that if a person is tanned, even if it's a local Chinese then they look like domestic helpers or South Asians. The humor is so racist, but the joke gets passed around campus and hall-life so easily, and there is no one to stop it. I feel very uncomfortable as well... I tried to point it out to them you can't do this, it's racist, but some people think that I am trying to be a killjoy. They think that I am being too sensitive... They think it's just humor so there is no impact behind their words."



I miss it all,  
The vibrant culture,  
The bustling market place.

early mornings drinking chai with my grandparents,  
making up for years spent apart, with the Himalayas  
as our backdrop.

hair drenched in coconut oil, curls hanging loose in  
the dry air,  
sun-kissed with a tan, skin deep, a t-shirt and a lungi;  
old and new.

kitchens of friendly chatter where one's day begins  
and ends,  
homes laced with the delicate smell of herbs and  
spices.

where I am not questioned about my identity,  
where I can understand every word spoken.

Even in all its ruin,  
Over any other place,  
I would still choose Nepal.

Poem written by Suski,  
after returning to Nepal  
for the first time in 10  
years since she moved  
to Hong Kong at the  
age of 7.

Suski became more aware of her own identity as a minority based on the exclusion and differences she felt during those years. Her sense of identity strengthened further when she met friends who were more accepting of her in university.

"In Year 3, I met local Chinese friends who were very supportive and would protect me. They would tell me I am a Hongkonger too and not to listen to others, and I think that really made my bond stronger to Hong Kong. Having those friends who represent Hong Kong believe that I am also a part of Hong Kong really opened and changed my mind. If I hadn't met those people, I wouldn't call myself Hongkonger."

Acceptance was empowering to Suski. In recent years, she has been using her experience in Hong Kong to raise awareness and even advocate for the rights of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. She has now grown to become confident of her identity.

"Now, whenever someone asks me where I am from, I say Nepalese Hongkonger because it doesn't feel right to say just Nepalese or Hongkonger... We had this group of Nepalese Hongkonger students in HKU and hanging out with them I realized like our struggles are very unique. It's not just Nepalese struggles and it's not just Hongkonger struggles either. It's like a mixture of being from a different ethnicity, living in a different culture... People tell you, 'you can't be a Hongkonger because your parents are Nepalese'. But the thing is my grandfathers have contributed to the Hong Kong society. A lot of ethnic minorities have contributed to the Hong Kong society, so I feel like it's our rightful place to call it home if it feels like it."



"I am a true Hongkonger, I am also an Indian."

Female, 18, Indian  
Born and grew up in Hong Kong  
College student  
Early Childhood Education

ANNA



Anna was born and has lived her whole life in Hong Kong. She attended local Chinese schools throughout her childhood and Cantonese is her first language. Apart from English and spoken Punjabi, she is fluent in Chinese speaking, writing and typing. Despite being born to Indian parents, Anna feels she is every bit a Hongkonger.

"The way I speak, maybe what I eat... [like] 'stinky tofu', 'deep-fried pig intestines', 'TamJai' ... our gatherings are like party room and go to friends' place to play Mahjong. I know how to play Mahjong; I always ask my friend let's play mahjong tonight though I am not so good but I can still play. Also Cho Dai Di. And I can fluently communicate in Cantonese that's the important bit."

Anna feels that the company she keeps, the trends she follows, and the lifestyle she leads, are just like any other local youth in Hong Kong. Since she has many local Chinese friends, she learns a lot from them and doesn't want to be different from them. She doesn't always see standing out from the crowd as a positive thing.



"Sometimes when my friends wear the traditional clothing, like when we are in the lift, people cover their nose and they think my friends smell. Our body will stink when we sweat, you may stink when you sweat, isn't it? ... most of my friends are local, so I wouldn't wear traditional clothes to go out with them. I feel awkward and weird, and also I wouldn't feel comfortable wearing Indian suits. But, they are really pretty, I do love it. I wear them when I go to Sikh temple and when I do Indian dance or have parties."

Being familiar and well adapted to the local environment, Anna generally feels she fits in Hong Kong well. This is reinforced as she dresses, speaks, eats and engages in all the activities most locals do. Nevertheless, she still seems to stand out.

"I've experienced people scanning me couple of times, maybe stare at me in MTR. Not really in a strange way... My appearance, skin color is different, so they probably scanned me. If I see a foreigner, I would scan them too... So if they stare at me for a long time, I will just smile so they'll turn their eyes away. Sometimes they smile back at me, and sometimes they just get scared, then I just laugh."

When it comes to identity, she sees herself as a Hongkonger with an Indian heritage. Living in Hong Kong may have made Anna a Hongkonger, but she still remains connected to her Indian heritage as she continues practicing many aspects of the Indian culture. In her day-to-day life, she has no complaints about her dual identity. It's something she is proud of.

"I can't deny my Indian race, as my nationality is Indian. I am a true Hongkonger... I am also an Indian... [because of] Physical appearances, religion (Sikhism). There are few Hongkonger believe in this religion. There aren't many foreigners who believe in this religion, except Indians. And, the things I know, like Henna and Indian dance. These are related to India... it's something that connects me to India."

In fact, Anna bonds with the local Chinese through Indian culture like showcasing the Indian dance, or holding a henna booth to provide henna drawing services. She sees the appreciation others have for her culture, that's why she believes she has the best of both worlds and would not trade one for the other.

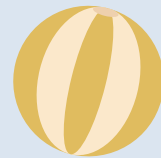


## A home away from home



### November 2017:

This was taken in my hometown, Dumaguete. Growing up, I would only visit home once a year but this year alone, I've gone back three times. I've recently developed a love for my hometown and this shot was taken along Escaño Beach, very close to my family home. I just like how peaceful this photo is - very much like my hometown where things are generally much more slow-paced as compared to Hong Kong which allowed me to just appreciate my day to day life.



### December 2017:

Once again, I took a trip back home to visit family. They threw me a small surprise party in celebration of my graduation (last November). For the last 3 years, I've been going back every December to visit my dad's side of the family. It makes me realize that much of my Philippines throughout the year are really to spend time with loved ones, almost to make up for not seeing them throughout the year because of me being in Hong Kong.

### November 2017:

One great thing about living in Hong Kong is that it's in quite close proximity to the Philippines. I tend to go back to visit family every couple of months, but this month it was an absolute delight as I had my cousin and her children (my niece and nephew) visit me.



# PATRICIA

Female, 22, Filipino  
Living in Hong Kong for 20 years  
Digital & Sales Assistant



## Karli's faith is her identity



### October 2017:

Fearless 2017. So grateful to have been a part of a workshop empowering youth and setting their faith on fire. It was a weekend without gadgets and sense of time, a weekend with God and friends you haven't seen since forever. My heart was overwhelmed with joy as we spent the weekend without worries of going home early to finish assignments.

### March 2018:

Another activity I participated this month was my youth group's Stations of the Cross, where we remember the Passion of Christ. Hearing other youth's sharing about their life was very inspiring and empowering, how just like Jesus, we suffer, but we rise up again, remembering that we are not alone in this journey.



# KARLI

Female, 20, Filipino Chinese  
Born in Hong Kong  
Living in Hong Kong for 6 years  
University student  
Majoring in Asian Studies



### October 2018:

My faith has been one of my strongholds in all aspects of life. It has been my constant source of strength, peace of mind and comfort. This photo was taken as I led a worship in one of our community events. I am always, always grateful, for the life I have, for all the opportunities I was given, for my ever loving and supportive family and friends.





# ANSAH

Female, 33, Pakistani  
Born in Hong Kong  
Living in Hong Kong for 27 years  
Social Worker



Ansah explicitly called herself a Hongkonger. This was the first sentence she used to introduce herself.

*"First of all, my name is Ansah, and I call myself Hongkonger. I won't call myself any other nationality, but I call myself a Hongkonger, and I feel, I am, I am calling Hong Kong my home because I was born in Hong Kong, brought up here, studied here and working here. So, yes, I call it my home."*

Ansah identifies with Hong Kong because, unlike in Pakistan, she feels safe, comfortable and familiar with the place here. She called this the sense of belonging in everyday life. She identified herself even more as a Hongkonger when she became

aware of the many political changes happening in Hong Kong. Every year she tried her best to join the June 4 candle-light vigil and the July 1st rally.

*"I don't think being active in these specific events is important, for example, June 4th or July 1st. I think the importance is you being aware of the thing, aware of the event, aware of the situation. I always called myself Hongkonger because I feel everything happening in Hong Kong is also happening to me. It also happens to my family and happens to our people. If it is something about Hong Kong, it's about me. So whenever I can make it, I will squeeze my time and attend these social events."*

Ironically, though Ansah makes herself present in these political events

*"Everything happening to Hong Kong is also happening to me."*



without hesitation, it takes time for the local Chinese in the event to accept her and her non-ethnic Chinese friends as 'local'.

*"Whenever we attend the June 4, a lot of the time people assume we are foreigners and that we only come to see what's happening in Victoria Park as many foreign tourists do. Year by year, we recognize a lot of the familiar faces and the people who speak up on the microphone. Year by year, they also recognize us, a lot of these organisers and volunteers, when they see our face, they would say, '又係你哋呀' (you guys again!). So we are being recognized as Hongkongers."*

This experience of social recognition has reinforced Ansah's belief in the importance of the presence of ethnic minorities in the local political events. This experience of being accepted by the local Chinese was the most intense when she

and her friends joined the "umbrella movement".

*"It was one of my amazing experiences in Hong Kong I would say. Even though we didn't do much we only stayed on every single evening, we greeted everyone, drew Henna (some ethnic minorities were there to put Henna Umbrella on people's hands), talked to people, helped in the recycling area, helped in the washroom and wherever help was needed, it felt like we belong to the place, to Hong Kong. And people were interacting with us, talking to us, accepting us, and actually appreciating what we were doing."*

During that period, Ansah and a group of friends were busy raising the awareness among ethnic minorities about this incident through social media like Facebook and Instagram. She noticed that many ethnic minorities in Hong Kong didn't know what was happening in the



society because they didn't understand Chinese news and they couldn't get much from English news. She thought the best way to know about the society is to be present in the scene. So, they began to take action to arouse people's attention. When the ethnic minorities became curious of what they were doing there, Ansah asked them to come along and see for themselves.

*"We choose to hold our banners and march around Admiralty, Wanchai, Mongkok, Causeway Bay. We had an Indian girl and her mother, a Pakistani boy and his father, marching with us. Wherever we walked with the banner, people clapped, they hugged us, and they said, '係呀,'*

# 你哋都係 香港人

*(Oh yes, you are also Hongkongers).' I mean, they accepted us on the face. Many of us speak and understand Cantonese. After hearing such comments from local Chinese the Indian was so shocked and was emotional as well. I asked her 'why are you crying?' She said, 'it's the first time I saw people were accepting us, they are saying we are Hongkongers too.' I said, 'Oh yes.' Even though we call ourselves Hongkonger, but it's how another person accepts us, and that really matters."*

Obviously the issue of identity is not only about self-recognition but also about mutual acceptance. In recent years, while some local Chinese rejected to identify themselves as "Chinese" and refused to join the June 4th commemorative activities, Ansah continued to find it important to keep up with these political events.

For Ansah, people should not be divided by nationality. It is the sense of humanity that ties people together into one community. Ansah is now working towards organizing the grassroots to speak out their needs to the government, no matter they are local Chinese, immigrant Chinese or ethnic minorities. She believes that all social policies such as labour, housing and medical are influencing every citizen in Hong Kong regardless of their ethnic background. Although these policies should equally protect the interests of all social groups, the voices of the marginalized groups are the least heard. As a Hongkonger social worker, she is ready to help anyone who is in need regardless of his race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, etc.





"I just hope that local Hongkongers and ethnic minorities can integrate well together."

# HUSNAIN

Male, 23, Pakistani  
Born and grew up in Hong Kong  
University student  
Majoring in Faculty of Arts  
Minor in Media and Cultural Studies



Me and my teammates during a service trip on heritage preservation in Armenia.

## VOLUNTEER ENGLISH TEACHING

This is the HKU-Jockey Club Nurturing Global Leaders programme held in Yangon, Myanmar.



Me and my students were excited on the last day of teaching. The completion ceremony.

Husnain described himself culturally more inclined to Hong Kong's language and lifestyle than to Pakistan's. The interview with Husnain was conducted in Cantonese because he said he liked the language. When asked to talk about his childhood, Husnain chose to talk about his language experience in the schools.

*"In the kindergarten, there were Chinese class and English class. I was in the Chinese class. And then for primary, I went to a Chinese medium school. So I didn't know how to speak Urdu. I didn't know how to communicate with my native people. Some family friends recommend my mother to send me to Li Cheng UK Government Primary School so that I could study with other South Asian students to learn Urdu. There I began to get in touch with other Pakistani children and I started to speak Urdu. For secondary, I went to Delia Memorial School, another South Asian school. I spoke Chinese only when I was in Chinese class or talked to the teachers."*

That was how Husnain became multi-lingual. He spoke Urdu to Pakistani and Indian friends,

English to Filipino and Nepalese friends, and Cantonese to the teachers. Over time, Husnain found himself speaking more Urdu than Cantonese because most of his friends were South Asians. When he looked back, there was a sense of regret that he didn't speak much Cantonese when he was in primary and secondary schools.

As a Pakistani in Hong Kong, Husnain understood that his mother wanted him not to be distant from the Pakistani community so he must know the national language of Pakistan, Urdu. But she also wanted him to learn Chinese. In the secondary school, there were two types of Chinese syllabus. In the parents' notice, his mother ticked the box of "difficult" Chinese.

*"Actually mother didn't know the difference. She only knew that Putonghua would be taught in one of the syllabuses so she ticked that box. When I joined the class, I found it very difficult for me to handle it. In the primary school, the Chinese I learned was tailor-made for non-ethnic Chinese students, so it was not of the*





During a study tour in Cape Town, South Africa.

same level as the local Chinese curriculum. I got zero mark in all the dictations during junior secondary. I kept on saying, 'I don't want to take this one, please change me to the easy one.' But my mother said no. It was so hard to catch up from zero. Later on I improved a lot."

Finally, Husnain was one of the few non-Chinese students in Hong Kong who took Chinese Language for Hong Kong DSE and got a pass grade. Looking back, he preferred to study in a local school of English medium, with both ethnic Chinese and non-ethnic Chinese students.

"If I had a chance to choose again, I would choose to study in a local school because I want to have more local friends. Now in the university, I tried to make more local friends because I feel I am more Hong Kong than Pakistani. I like to watch local TV and I like to speak in Cantonese. So when I talk to my Pakistani friends, we don't always have similar topics of interest."

As a first year university student, Husnain found himself in-between the Pakistani friends circle and the local Chinese circle, not able to fully integrate into either community.

"It is a big issue if you don't fully integrate with any communities. My problem is I want to make more local friends so I don't have much time with my Pakistani friends. With the Pakistani friends, I feel there is difference between us. With the Chinese friends, we have cultural difference. For example, I don't eat out with local friends due to religious requirements on food. I will see where they go. If it is not a big group, they know I can eat seafood, they will make sure the restaurant has seafood. Recently a friend asked me to eat out but because most of the food I couldn't eat, finally we had dessert only."

Though Husnain could not fully enjoy meeting with Chinese friends through eating out, he enjoyed socializing with friends through sports.

"I join the university's karate team which is composed of a mix of local Chinese and non-Chinese students. I enjoy the training and practice with my seniors and my Si-fu (a Chinese training master). We are like a family so I like doing karate."

On the other hand, as a born Muslim, Husnain identified strongly with the Islamic religion. Since Primary 5, Husnain has gone to the mosque everyday. He stayed there for 3 hours during weekdays and 6-7 hours during weekends. There he studied Holy Quran and learned about the Islamic religion and culture.

"This is a good religion. There are many rules that we need to follow strictly. Every rule has a meaning behind, leading you to be self-disciplined and to be a nice person. I went to mosque everyday when I was small. Now I became busy, I was not able to visit the mosque so often, but I follow the compulsory rule. For example, a Muslim has to pray 5 times a day. No matter how busy I am, I pray 5 times a day, because religion is so important to me. Without religion, I may be too care free, no control of myself, do whatever I like to do including something bad."

For Husnain, his sense of identity is multi-faceted and flexible. While he tried to be a committed Muslim, Husnain preferred to live culturally like a Hongkonger. He liked to communicate in Cantonese. As an ordinary young person, he was looking for his real interest in career which he would find fun and meaning in it. As a university student, he tried to expand his horizon as much as possible. For example, he joined the Hong Kong Youth Ambassador Scheme through which he volunteered in large scale events and went for exchange programme overseas as a Hong Kong representative.

"I loved going for service trips as well, including doing volunteer teaching in Egypt and Myanmar, which are some of the best trips in my life. I hope to meet different people and make people happy. By travelling to different places, I can share stories with different people and listen to stories of the new people I met."

Now as a final year undergraduate student, Husnain was aware of the importance of integration. He noticed that even in the university, the ethnic Chinese and the non-ethnic Chinese seldom stayed together. As few Chinese would take the initiative to get to know about the non-Chinese, he chose to walk up to the Chinese and make friends with them. He was happy that for many of his Chinese friends, he was the first non-Chinese friend they have ever made.

"I just hope that local Hongkongers and ethnic minorities can integrate well together."



"I have a conflict of identity."

# RIZWAN

Male, 19, Pakistani-Indonesian  
Born and grew up in Hong Kong  
University student  
Majoring in Engineering

Rizwan is a Pakistani-Indonesian. Before his parents got married, his father was a Pakistani worker while his mother was an Indonesian domestic helper in Hong Kong. They met each other in Hong Kong, fell in love, got married and worked hard to raise their two children. His mother taught the children to speak Cantonese so that there would be a common language in the household.

"When I was a little boy, I spoke Cantonese. I didn't know any other languages. I know only Cantonese. My father knew Urdu, English and Cantonese and my mother knew Indonesian and Cantonese. So Cantonese is the common ground between them. When they need to discuss something, they speak Cantonese. My mother speaks quite well but my father can only speak basic Cantonese. So when they misunderstand each other, they use their own languages to express their anger. And then nobody knows what is going on. After they calm down themselves, they use Cantonese again to continue the discussion."

Rizwan started to play with local Chinese friends when he entered a kindergarten near his home. Because of his skin colour, the children in the kindergarten initially didn't want to play with him. He felt upset by their rejections.

"In the beginning I only played with another Pakistani boy in the kindergarten. The two of us were the only non-Chinese there. We spoke Cantonese with each other. And then I came forward to talk to the local Chinese kids, and then we played together. I would feel unhappy when I was rejected. But when their mothers asked them to play with me, they played with me."

Because of her proficiency in Cantonese, Rizwan's mother managed to befriend the local Chinese mothers. This has helped Rizwan to integrate into the school. Before primary school, Rizwan used to communicate with other children and teachers in Cantonese. However, this created awkward situations for Rizwan. Although he's Pakistani, he didn't like to play with other Pakistani children because they would say mean things about him. Since the Mosque he went to was also near his home, there were chances that his kindergarten friends and Mosque friends would be at the nearby park at the same time.

"In the Mosque, most of the children spoke Urdu. It was very hard for me to communicate with them. Therefore, in the park, I played with local Chinese more than with Pakistani. Very soon I found a conflict of identity. I didn't know which group I should go to.

Because I am half Pakistani and then they are Pakistani, I felt confused, it seemed that I should play with Pakistani but actually I played with the local Chinese. Sometimes the Pakistani children would scold me. They said I was a "jee-neh". My elder brother knew a little Urdu, he said, 'they mean you are a Chinese because you don't play with them.'"

What Rizwan means by "conflict of identity" is that there is a mismatch between his skin colour and the language he speaks. While many people tend to select friends based on skin colour or race, little Rizwan preferred to make friends with people based on the language they speak. The tendency of people to get together based on skin colour may not be uncommon. What seems curious is that kindergarten children differentiated people by race and ethnicity, and that it was the minority kids who refused to join the majority group.

In the primary school, the situation gradually changed as the majority of the students were non-ethnic Chinese, mostly South Asians. As Rizwan learned more English in school, he began to become friends with his South Asian classmates. Over the years, from primary to secondary school, Rizwan considered himself more fluent in English than in Cantonese. But he never picked friends based on their nationality nor the language they spoke.

"Right now I have many friends, friends from different ages and ethnicities. I will not pick Chinese friends only or non-Chinese friends only. I treat them all equal. When I grow up, I find fewer people have negative attitude towards me speaking with the Chinese. It happened only when I was small."

Rizwan doesn't want to differentiate people based on their skin colour. He prefers to live in an environment of equality and openness. What about his subjective identity in Hong Kong?

"I feel that I am a Hongkonger. I was born here, grew up here. I know the environment and the system well. I have many friends here. This is my home. I am going to apply for a Hong Kong SAR Passport. A Hongkonger should hold a Hong Kong SAR Passport. But not all Hongkongers are of Chinese blood. I think people of different races can call themselves Hongkongers. I don't think it is an issue of debate."

Rizwan has a mindset similar to many local young people in Hong Kong. He will not accept an arranged marriage, will find a wife himself, and will only plan for marriage after he has a professional career and an apartment of his own. His plans are that of an ordinary Hongkonger.

很久沒見呀

有空出來飲茶



# RESOURCES



## Government-funded support service centres

Provide various tailor-made learning classes, after-school tutorial classes, and dedicated programs for ethnic minority youths, as well as counselling and referral services, integration programs, etc., to help ethnic minorities integrate into the community.



Links to all programmes and services provided under Race Relations Unit, Home Affairs Department:  
<https://www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/programmes/programmes.html>

CHEER Centre	Unit 3, 6/F, Futura Plaza, 111-113 How Ming Street, Kwun Tong, Kowloon  Free Telephone Interpretation Service Multi-languages information Website: <a href="http://hkcscheer.net/hk/">hkcscheer.net/hk/</a> Service leaflet available at: <a href="http://www.had.gov.hk/rru/tc_chi/programmes/files/hkcs_leaflet.pdf">www.had.gov.hk/rru/tc_chi/programmes/files/hkcs_leaflet.pdf</a>	3106 3104
HOME Centre	Yau Tsim Mong Centre Shop B, G/F & 1/F, Sun Wah Building, 73 Battery Street, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon	3610 4418
	Sham Shui Po Sub-centre Shop A, G/F, South Ocean Building, 130 Kiu Kiang Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon  Website <a href="http://www.nhahome.hk/web/index.php">www.nhahome.hk/web/index.php</a> Service leaflet available at: <a href="http://www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/programmes/files/home_centre_leaflet.pdf">www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/programmes/files/home_centre_leaflet.pdf</a>	3610 4428
HOPE Centre	3/F Tak Lee Commercial Building, 113-117 Wanchai Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong  Website: <a href="http://www.isshk-hope.org/">www.isshk-hope.org/</a> Service leaflet available at (English only): <a href="http://www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/programmes/files/english_2.pdf">www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/programmes/files/english_2.pdf</a>	5188 8044 2836 3598
LINK Centre	Shop B-E, G/F, Cheong Nin Building, 1013-1033 Kwai Chung Road, Kwai Chung, N.T.  Website: <a href="http://www.hkcnlink.hk/">www.hkcnlink.hk/</a> Service leaflet available at (English only): <a href="http://www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/programmes/files/LINK_leaflet_final.pdf">www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/programmes/files/LINK_leaflet_final.pdf</a>	3955 1555
SHINE Centre	Shop B2, Tuen Mun Central Square 22 Hoi Wing Road, Tuen Mun, N.T., Hong Kong	3188 4555
	SHINE Centre Community Development Team 3/F & 4/F, Lee Kong Commercial Building 115 Woosung Street, Jordan, Kowloon  Website: <a href="http://www.christian-action.org.hk/shine/">www.christian-action.org.hk/shine/</a> Service leaflet available at: <a href="http://www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/programmes/files/Annex1_CA_leaflet.pdf">www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/programmes/files/Annex1_CA_leaflet.pdf</a>	3422 3820
TOUCH Centre (Tung Chung Sub-centre)	Left Wing, 1/F, Tung Chung Community Services Complex 420 Tung Chung Road, Tung Chung, Lantau Island  Website: <a href="http://www.naac-touchcentre.org.hk/">www.naac-touchcentre.org.hk/</a> Service leaflet available at: <a href="http://www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/programmes/files/TOUCH_leaflet.pdf">www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/programmes/files/TOUCH_leaflet.pdf</a>	2988 1422
Yuen Long Town Hall Support Service Centre for Ethnic Minorities (SSCEM)	3/F, Yuen Long District Community Services Building, 4 Yuen Long Tai Yuk Road, Yuen Long, N.T.	2479 9757
	Chomolongma Multicultural Community Centre Wing Ning Village, Yung Yuen Road Ping Shan, Yuen Long, New Territories  Website: <a href="http://www.sscem.org/">www.sscem.org/</a> Service leaflet available at: <a href="http://www.had.gov.hk/rru/tc_chi/programmes/files/YLTH_leaflet.pdf">www.had.gov.hk/rru/tc_chi/programmes/files/YLTH_leaflet.pdf</a>	2617 1369





Links to an extensive list of service providers:  
[https://www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/other/other\\_useful.html#5](https://www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/other/other_useful.html#5)

## OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS

### Hong Kong Unison

Specialize in policy advocacy and public education for ethnic minorities. Also provide service referrals and Youth development and empowerment programs like scholarship and Career Guidance Program for ethnic minorities.

Website: [www.unison.org.hk/](http://www.unison.org.hk/)

### The Zubin Foundation

- Call Mira

Helpline for women and girls, services offered in English, Hindi, and Urdu Monday, Thursday, and Friday from 10 AM to 4 PM.

Tel: 9682 3100

Website: [www.callmira.org/](http://www.callmira.org/)

- Opportunity Bank

Opportunity Bank is a HUB which connects ethnic minorities with resources such as jobs, upskilling training courses, scholarships as well as healthcare services in a one-stop, easy to access platform.

Website: [www.zubinfoundation.org/opportunitybank](http://www.zubinfoundation.org/opportunitybank)

### WEDO GLOBAL

(Worldwide Exchange Development Organization) specializes in youth development and training by providing exchange opportunities to South Asia. Multi-cultural leaders are nurtured by bringing youth together to experience cultural diversity, and engage in community development training programs.

Website: [www.wedoglobal.com/en](http://www.wedoglobal.com/en)

### Youth College (Ethnic Minority Project)

Assist students to obtain recognized qualifications to better equip them for further studies or career advancement.

Website: [www.yc.edu.hk/vdp](http://www.yc.edu.hk/vdp)

### The Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA)

Provide rehabilitation services for youth - counselling, residential treatment, halfway houses and other support services.

Website: [www.sarda.org.hk/eng/](http://www.sarda.org.hk/eng/)

### Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service - Yau Tsim Mong Family Education and Support Centre (Specialized Service)

Provide support services on interpretation and translation services, workshops on social integration, employee retraining courses, and drug prevention.

Website: [www.yang.org.hk/en/](http://www.yang.org.hk/en/)



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