

## **Mental Health Challenges and Barriers for Ethnic Minorities in Hong Kong**

In the past decade, there has been an increase in the number of Ethnic Minorities (EMs) who reside in Hong Kong accounting for 1.9% of the population (excluding Foreign Domestic Helpers and Whites). 63% of EM youth identify themselves as being both a HK person and their ethnic origin as they are born and educated here. However, they are perceived by the local community as being a transient population, encounter racial discrimination and face social exclusion on multiple levels. Language is one of the biggest barriers in cultivating inclusion, connectedness and limiting access to healthcare, schools and highly skilled jobs. These barriers exacerbate the mental health challenges faced by EMs and impact the quality, depth and choice of the care they receive. Stigma against mental illness is widespread amongst EMs and affects one's willingness to seek help in fear of being judged, shamed or perceived as weak. For recovery to be effective and sustainable, it is critical to go beyond symptomatic mental health treatment to cultivate a positive environment with a holistic focus on the individual; one that fosters a sense of hope, belonging, support, empowerment and security. A recent study revealed that, although 73% of youth EM's accept being labelled as an Ethnic Minority, 89.3% would prefer to be called something else such as Hong Kong + (Hong Kong Indian, Hong Kong Thai). A starting point for increasing inclusivity is to revise the term 'Ethnic Minorities' to embrace this hybrid sense of identity. Some other measures that could be implemented to improve the mental health of EMs include stopping segregation in schools and developing Chinese as a Second Language Curriculum to give EM's an entry point to white collar jobs.