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Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor visits ethnic minority families as part of a New Home Association activity to distribute face masks and other necessities, in Yau Tsim Mong district on March 1. Photo: ISD

Even in the best of times, ethnic minorities in Hong Kong face discrimination in their everyday lives. In the worst of times, such as in this pandemic, the inequalities in society become more pronounced.

My team and I work to empower young people to reach their full potential. Many of our programmes are dedicated to working with ethnic minority youth, who have less access to the resources and opportunities for development.

But inequality affects not just ethnic minorities; it affects all of us. As the worldwide spread of Covid-19 shows, if we want to guarantee our health, we have to ensure that those around us are healthy – and that means everyone needs equal access to critical information and resources.

Sadly, efforts by the government and our society to promote greater diversity and inclusion over the past three decades are still found lacking. Language barriers, intolerance for cultural differences and

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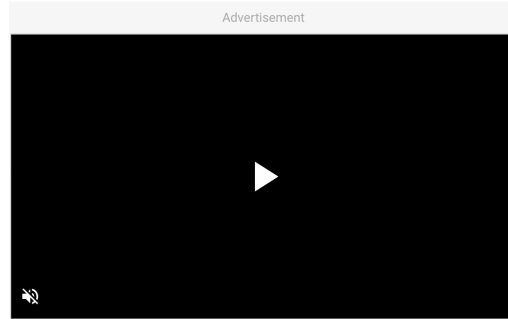


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negative stereotypes are major barriers preventing members of ethnic minorities from equal access to education and career opportunities. These same barriers exacerbate the impact of the pandemic on our ethnic minority communities, and by extension, our wider community.



Fighting the spread of Covid-19 requires all of us to have timely, accurate and relevant information, but most news updates in Hong Kong are in English or Chinese. Government statements, which have only recently been translated into Urdu, Hindi, Nepali, Thai, Tagalog and Bahasa Indonesia are filled with formal language and technical terminology, making it difficult for the ordinary person to understand.

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While our city scrambles to buy face masks and hand sanitisers, members of our ethnic minority groups struggle to find information in their native language on where to find these products.

With one in five persons from the ethnic minorities living in poverty, the inflated costs of hygiene products also present a significant barrier to the protection of themselves and their loved ones.

Recognising this, my team has joined several other organisations and individuals around the city in distributing hundreds of free hygiene care packs to members of ethnic minorities. But these one-off distributions are not enough.

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On March 21, we recognised the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Covid-19 makes clear that our health is only as safe as that of the most marginalised in our community. If we are serious about protecting ourselves, we must be just as serious about fighting inequality and discrimination. Our city's health depends on it.

Sky Siu, executive director, KELY Support Group

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