

[For Immediate Release]

Suitable Opportunities are Hard to Find for Ethnic Minorities KELY shares concern for EM youth employment

- >80% ethnic minority youth are unable to take part in internships or find work experience
 - Job hunting and career prospects is causing serious stress to youth
- An inclusive environment for youth will help ease career anxiety and encourage overall economic growth

[30 April 2024, Hong Kong] **KELY Support Group** (“KELY”), a Hong Kong-based nonprofit organisation dedicated to empowering youth to reach their full potential, has been supported by **Prudential Hong Kong Limited** (“Prudential”) to set up a KELY Youth Advisory Council. The nine council members were all local secondary school and university students, who had spent one year to organise and conduct an **Ethnic Minority Youth Employment Survey** (the “Survey”). Prudential also funded KELY’s **Open Door Work Placement Programme** (the “Programme”) in the latter half of 2023 to provide various internship opportunities for ethnic minority (EM) youth in Hong Kong. A press conference has been held to announce the Survey results, and has invited participants of the Programme to do a sharing.

With a pool of around 500 young people aged 16 to 25¹ in the Survey, over 80% of the EM youth responded that although they recognise the value of internships and would like to gain such experience, they had not been able to do so due to various reasons. This has become a source of anxiety among them, and employment pressure is taking a serious toll on their mental health.

The Open Door Work Placement Programme offered internship opportunities across a myriad of industries to EM youth in Hong Kong, complete with comprehensive pre-employment training and post-employment debriefing. Interviews with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) were arranged so that participating students could compete for these work placement opportunities. This also offers a window for both to better understand each others’ culture and customs, which could alleviate EM youth’s anxiety and concerns for their future, and live up to their full potential.

¹ Supplementary information for the Ethnic Minority Youth Employment Survey:

A total of 509 responses were included in this analysis

Age Distribution: The age profile of the respondents is predominantly young, with 49% falling within the 16-18 age bracket, followed by 32% aged 15 or below. Those between 19-24 years constituted 15%, while only 1% were aged 25 or above.

Nationality: 64% of the responses came from Asian Minorities (excluding Chinese), such as Filipino, Indian, Nepalese, and Pakistani. Other Minorities include African, Middle Eastern, and White Caucasians. The demographic groups highlight and contribute to the diversity of the survey.

Language Proficiency: 15% speak Cantonese as their first language, while 63% have English as their mother tongue. A total of 15% speak Cantonese as a second language or additional language. English is spoken by 22% and the remaining 63% is a mix of languages from their parents’ passport culture ranging from Pashto to Vietnamese.

The two cohorts of students have all completed their internships at the beginning of the year. A total of 20 students were offered placement opportunities at 10 different SMEs².

Participating youth and SMEs both claimed to have learned much in the process, proving the programme to be an effective channel for employers to learn more about different cultures, and for them to understand what EM youth have to offer. It also goes to show how Hong Kong shines as a social-cultural inclusive city, where new collaborations and opportunities could fly with inspired ideas.

Job hunting and career anxiety is hindering development

Not being able to find suitable internships could result in self-doubt for youth. Uncertainty in their own future could also cause anxiety, and further affect their social life.

The Survey also found that 35% of EM youth would first go to their family or friends when they feel stressed while job hunting, while 32% of them would pursue stress relief activities, such as sports, meditation, or other activities of their interest. Survey findings also showed that in addition to CV writing and interviewing skills, youth also found practical experience in problem-solving and computer literacy to be helpful while job hunting. The content of the Open Door Work Placement Programme was thus designed based on these skills to support EM youth who took part in it.

Being part of this Programme gave students an opportunity to understand the workplace and resolve their misconceptions, so as to help eliminate their anxiety. A Programme Participant, Atteqa Khan, said, “Having this experience is the best opportunity for me to familiarise myself with business-related workplace. I think there is still discrimination in some parts of this society, but Hong Kong is an international city that welcomes all sorts of talents, so for those who are hardworking and perfectly capable, there is no need to worry.”

Differing job expectations reveals lack of cultural sensitivity

The Survey found that 55% of youth think that their education institution cannot provide sufficient career counselling for them. Upon further investigation, it was found that while many services and programmes are dedicated to providing pre-employment training and internship opportunities to youth, most of them are not catered to the special needs of EM youth, nor can they be adjusted for youth from a particular cultural background. This is also the reason why while youth may know about these services, they are still reluctant to seek help from them.

74% of the surveyed young people ranked direct internship opportunities as the most valuable resource. Career talks (54%) and individual counselling or mentorship (51%) were also highly regarded as essential resources for navigating their career paths.

² Participating SMEs (in alphabetical order) are as follows: AHE Creation Limited, BOCI-Prudential Trustee Limited, John Joseph, KELY Support Group, Prudential Hong Kong Limited, Prizm Group, SME LAB (HOLDING) LIMITED, THE BLOMSTRE LIMITED, Team Building Asia and Zire app.

Regarding factors that they would consider when looking for an internship, 35% of the youth claimed that monetary remuneration is a key consideration when they go job hunting, and that they would prefer paid internships due to family conditions. In second place is flexibility in working hours at 26%, while gaining working experience and personal interest both stands in third place, with 24% listing them as a key factor respectively.

Ms. Cindy Ng, Programmes and Services Senior Manager of KELY Support Group, said, “Internships are more than just a chance to work - it is the first step for young people to get in touch with society and work. It's really important to make sure internships are well-organised and have mentors who can guide them, so that they really learn, grow, and build up their confidence. EM youth have very different cultural backgrounds. They and the enterprises that they work at are more prone to encounter language barriers or culture shock. We hope that all services and corporates that support youth, as well as people who work with them can all be more sensitive to cultural differences, and that they will try to reduce the challenges that EM youth might have to face. Being able to accept one another, being more inclusive is how we can create a harmonious society together.”

An inclusive, multi-cultural environment would encourage growth and development

All the participating SMEs are in rapid development, and have a great need for talent. One of the employers, **Mr. Jack Law**, who is also the **Director and Founder of AHE Creation Limited**, said, “We really enjoyed having our intern, Alishba, with us. She has been a great addition to the team and we have learned a lot from her too. Her multicultural background gave us a new perspective on how to communicate with our partners outside of Hong Kong. The Open Door programme is really a win-win for both ours and the intern’s development.”

As programme sponsor, Prudential puts heavy emphasis on the value brought by cultural inclusion and what it would mean for Hong Kong society. **Mr. Wayne Fong, Head of Corporate Affairs, Prudential Hong Kong Limited**, said, “As a community, it is crucial that we actively seek out talent through an inclusive lens. We are proud to work with our small to medium-sized enterprise customers to provide placement platforms for our future generations to shine. In collaboration with KELY Support Group, Open Door Work Placement Programme empowers youth through skills training and internships. Once again, we congratulate all the programme graduates. We look forward to building future-ready capabilities and advancing our diversity and inclusion efforts.”



From left to right: Mr. Wayne Fong (Head of Corporate Affairs of Prudential Hong Kong Limited), Gurleen Kaur and Athena Lau (Member of KELY Youth Advisory Council), Zain Sheikh and Atteqa Khan (Student Participant of the Open Door Work Placement Programme), Ms. Cindy Ng (Programmes and Services Senior Manager of KELY Support Group), and Mr. Jack Law (Director and Founder of AHE Creation Limited), attended the press conference together.



KELY's mission is to empower youth to reach their full potential. Both the YAC and the Open Door Work Placement Programme are dedicated to let youth shine.



Mr. Wayne Fong, Head of Corporate Affairs of Prudential Hong Kong Limited (left) and Mr. Jack Law, Director and Founder of AHE Creation Limited (right), who both took in youth participants of the Open Door Work Placement Programme for an internship, are glad to see that the participating youth have grown since their internship.

Please visit bit.ly/KELY_EMYouthEmployment_PC to download high resolution photos and presentation materials (including survey results).

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About KELY Support Group

KELY Support Group (KELY) is a Hong Kong-based nonprofit organisation whose mission since 1991 is to equip young people with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities needed to support themselves and each other. KELY envision a world where young people are empowered to reach their full potential, and collaborate with schools and various partners to offer programmes to Chinese- and English-speaking youth between the ages of 14 and 24 around our three core focus areas: Mental Health and Wellbeing, Drug and Alcohol Awareness, and Positive Youth Development. Please visit KELY.ORG for more information.

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