



Report to the **UN Committee** on the **Rights of the Child**



Content

I. Some notes on the report

II. Report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Section 1: General measures of CRC implementation

- Over 63% of children never heard of the CRC
- Children's responses on *"What can the Government do to promote children's rights so that the public can know more about it?"*
- Children's article - *Hong Kong needs to establish a Children's Day to let the public know the rights of children*

Section 2: Definition of the Child

Section 3: General principles of the CRC

Non-discrimination

- Children's responses on "Have you ever experienced or witnessed discrimination at school?"
- Children's article - The dilemma of children of sexual minorities

Respect for the views of the child

- Children's responses on *"Does the school usually provide opportunities for students to express their views (e.g. class routine, timetable, school facilities, etc.)?"*

Section 4: Civil rights and freedom of children

- Children's responses on *"Do you think Hong Kong children's right to participation in peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom to receive information and ideas, and freedom of expression are being protected?"*

Section 5: Violence against Children

- Children's responses on *"When we talk about child protection, what is the first thing that comes to mind that you think the United Nations (Adults) must know?"*
- 84% of children had experienced being left unattended at home
- Children's responses on *"Have you ever experienced or witnessed bullying at school?"*
- Children's article - *Children forced to training camps*
- Children's article - *The hidden tragedies of children: abuses from friends and close adults*

Section 6: Family environment and alternative care for needy children

- Children's article - *Children face challenges leaving children's homes*

Section 7: Disability, basic health and welfare of children

- Findings on children's health, welfare and disability
- Children's article - *Medical problems faced by children*
- Children's article - *Inadequate sex education*
- Children's article - *Young girls with crisis pregnancy*
- Children's article - *Schoolchildren under too much pressure to study leading to suicide risk*
- Children's article - *Impact of the Hong Kong education system on students' mental health*
- Children's article - *Voices for a sustainable future: A child-led roadmap for HK's Green Transition*

Section 8: Education, leisure and cultural activities of children

- Findings on children's sleep, rest, play and learning environment
- Children's article - *Expensive transport fare for children in Hong Kong*
- Children's article - *The problem of e-learning*
- Children's article - *Academic pressure and students lacking diverse pathways*
- Children's article - *Children's right in using playground facilities*
- Children's article - *Challenges faced by non-Chinese speaking children in Hong Kong*
- Children's article - *Overly controlling school policies violate students' rights*

Section 9: Special protection measures for marginalized children

- Findings on marginalized children issues
- Children's article - *Livelihood challenges of children refugees and asylum seekers*
- Children's article - *Education challenges of children refugees and asylum seekers*

III. List of 50 child contributors

IV. Acknowledgements

Some notes on the report

The content of this report was developed in three stages together with children. In March 2019, Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights conducted an induction workshop to let children understand the reporting process under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as well as the role of children in the process. After the workshop, 20 children opted in to help investigate the child rights situations in Hong Kong from their perspective. In the end, they joined hands and contributed a total of 12 articles in this report through research and further interviews with children.

Later on, social unrest broke out in Hong Kong followed by the attack of Covid, all the activities came to a halt for quite a while.

In 2023, Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights designed a survey and trained six youth volunteers (post-secondary students) to help conduct in-depth survey interviews directly with children to understand how they perceive the child rights situations in Hong Kong. 171 children coming from 18 primary and secondary schools, welfare agencies and NGOs took part in 2024. The survey findings also contributed to a significant part of this report.

In 2025, Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights conducted "I Have Something to Say" Children's Forum at The University of Hong Kong providing a platform for 25 recruited children aged 10-17 to voice out on matters of their concern. Their presentation content also provided a total of seven articles in this report.

Some of the content in this report was originally written in English and some in Chinese by children. For those written in Chinese, the Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights helped to translate them into English.



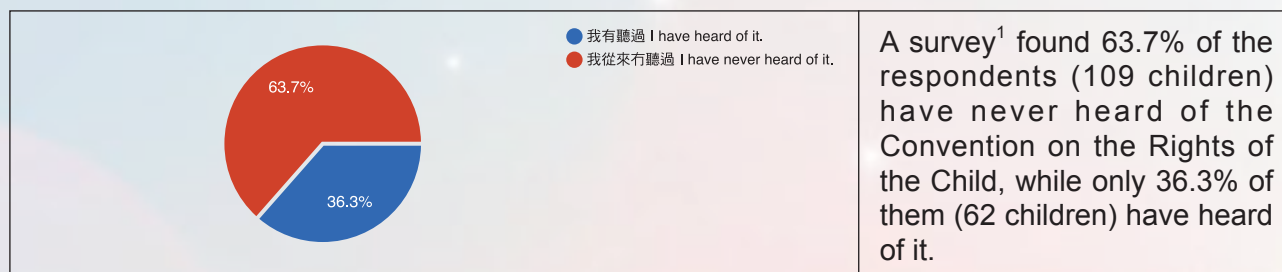
Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights

Report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Section 1: General measures of implementation of the CRC

3. 你有沒有聽過《兒童權利公約》? Have you heard about CRC?

171 則回應



Children survey question: ***“What can the Government do to promote children’s rights so that the public can know more about it?”***

Children’s responses:

On promotion

1. Distribute flyers and bags printed with ‘Protecting Children is Everyone’s Responsibility’, play videos about child protection in large shopping malls
2. More activities can be promoted, such as board games and theater, incorporating content related to children’s rights, so students can play and enhance their understanding of children’s rights
3. Organizing carnivals related to children’s rights
4. Create child rights posters and distribute everywhere

On education

1. Incorporate children’s rights into the general studies curriculum, starting from Primary 1
2. Teach and popularize children’s rights
3. Promote through talks targeting not only children, but parents and teachers as well. They need to respect children’s rights.
4. Promote family education and teacher education so they know our rights

On child participation

1. Provide more channels for children to have a voice
2. Hold children’s forums and so we can voice out
3. Invite children to participate in opinion polls, interviews and forums. Let the public hear the concerns of children.
4. Need to help children with difficulties to participate, eg. through internet

¹Hong Kong Committee on Children’s Rights. (2024). *Survey for Children: Child Rights Situation in HK*
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EnzBGYGixJsQHwjLi7o9B58r1D2JFWK3/view?usp=sharing>



Children's article

Hong Kong needs to establish a Children's Day to let the public know the rights of children

The United Nations stipulates in the Convention on the Rights of the Child that children should enjoy the rights to Survival, Development, Protection, and Participation. The establishment of a formal Children's Day in Hong Kong serves as a concrete practice of this Convention, reminding society to recognize children's independent personalities and needs. For example, many countries organize legal awareness campaigns during Children's Day to promote policies such as banning child labor and improving educational resources.

Secondly, children nowadays face academic pressures and excessive use of electronic devices, leading to rising mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and parental scolding. Children's Day provides dedicated spaces for relaxation and entertainment, such as schools organizing fun activities and families arranging parent-child interactions to help children relieve stress and cultivate positive emotions. Adults frequently celebrate holidays like Valentine's Day and Christmas with joyful festivities. Why is there so little widespread promotion for Children's Day, a holiday dedicated to children?

Thirdly, it could help strengthen society's focus on deprived children. Those living in poverty, with disabilities, or who have been abused are often marginalized. During Children's Day, non-profit organizations frequently launch fundraising or outreach initiatives, such as donating books or providing medical resources. For instance, Ronald McDonald House uses this occasion to urge the public to support families of sick children, promoting a more equitable distribution of resources.

Fourthly, it could foster social identity in future citizens. Children's Day activities, such as community cultural experiences and environmental education, enable early exposure to societal values. Japan's Children's Day features carp streamers symbolizing courage and growth, while

Sweden invites children to visit parliament to learn democratic principles. These experiences help shape a sense of responsibility and belonging.

Finally, we urge adults to reflect on education and parent-child relationships, as many parents neglect quality time due to busy schedules. Children's Day serves as a bridge for strengthening family bonds. For instance, China's Ministry of Education encourages parents to “put down their phones and focus on being present” on this day. South Korea hosts “Family Week” activities, promoting shared participation in traditional games to enhance parent-child connections.

We also noticed that Father's Day and Mother's Day are marked on calendars and celebrated by everyone, yet many parents and even children forget about Children's Day that is extremely important to children. We surveyed students at our school and found that only half of them were aware of Children's Day. Therefore, we hope to organize various celebrations for Children's Day, such as events at large shopping malls and the Government designating it as a statutory holiday. Additionally, we propose hosting different seminars to promote this holiday, ensuring all Hong Kong citizens are aware of it and that children feel valued.

Last but not least, let us conclude that Children's Day is not merely a celebration but a crucial opportunity for society to examine children's rights and invest in the future. Its significance extends far beyond a single holiday, encompassing individual growth and societal progress, and requires joint efforts from governments, families, and educators to realize.

Section 2: Definition of the child

Children participants do not have specific comments on this particular section.



Section 3: General principles of the CRC

Article 2: Non-discrimination

Children survey question: ***“Have you ever experienced or witnessed discrimination at school? If you do, would you mind talking about it?”***

Children’s responses:

“Ethnic minorities will be discriminated at school, students will verbally abuse them, laughing at their skin color and saying that they are ‘not hygienic’, they will not play with ethnic minorities,” said a child.

“The pronunciation of new immigrants might not be accurate, classmates will laugh at their pronunciation even if they tried their best to speak better,” said a child.

Children's article

The dilemma of children of sexual minorities

According to Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the State Party has the duty to protect children from all forms of discrimination. However, children of sexual minorities in Hong Kong suffer from different forms of discrimination and even physical violence, causing serious psychological pressure and trauma to them.

School Administration and Education

In 1997, the Guidelines on sex education in school, and Basic Education Curriculum Guide–To Sustain, Deepen and Focus on Learning to Learn (Primary 1-6) in 2014 amended by the Education Bureau only covered a small part related to sexual orientations and sexual minorities². Schools were not able to provide sufficient and comprehensive sex knowledge to students in the formal education curriculum, resulting in the incorrect understanding among the majority of students towards sexual minorities. For example, the belief that homosexuals must contract AIDS. Besides, a study published by the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED) in 2015 indicated that 49% of 322 pre-service teachers hold a medium level of prejudice against sexual minorities; while 16% of respondents have extreme negative attitudes against sexual minorities³.

In school administration, some schools with religious backgrounds including Christianity and Catholic would ban students from discussing sexual minorities in schools. They would also instill in students the viewpoint that sexual minorities go against the will of God, leading to students' misunderstanding of sexual minorities and even discrimination. Moreover, the HKIED report indicated that at the institutional level (such as school rules, sex education, counselling... etc.) sexual minorities are not being taken care of, making them feel insecure in the school and they dare not to express their feelings to teachers.

The Family Factor

Parents generally believe only marriage between a man and a woman would bring a normal family life, people with other sexual orientations are abnormal and morally decayed. This puts great pressure on children of sexual minorities. Some parents even demand their adult children to have offspring so as to comply with the idea of filial piety in the traditional Chinese culture. This prohibits some children of sexual minorities from having or building a relationship.

Pop Culture and the Media

The stereotypes that gay men are particularly feminine or gay men behave or dress up strangely is deeply rooted in Hong Kong pop culture. For instance, the TV drama *The Mysteries of Love*⁴ portrays gay characters as “pervert” and mocking them with the neologism of “pork and chicken chops”. This instills incorrect knowledge about homosexuals to children and the general public and promotes discrimination. In 2018, Hong Kong public libraries placed 10 children books related to sexual minorities in the closed stack collection⁵, which poses a negative stance against books related to sexual minorities. This causes children to have little understanding or misconceptions towards the sexual minorities.

Forms of Discrimination against Sexual Minorities and their Consequences

Children of sexual minorities in schools suffer from different degrees of pressure or discrimination (HKIED), such as physical violence, verbal insults, online harassment resulting in a bad interpersonal relationship. The HKIED research showed that there are students of sexual minorities

who were bullied by others (including classmates, teachers and school staff). They are also prone to physical violence, sexual harassment and bullying. Furthermore, the research also showed some teachers thought sexual minority students were mentally ill and tore student couples apart. All these forms of discrimination made sexual minority children feel insecure and tend to hold back their feelings and sexual orientations, causing consequences to their mental health, which might elevate to self-harm and drug abuse.

Suggestions:

Introducing education on sexual orientation, gender identity and equality into primary and secondary school curriculum

We believe the government should establish education guidelines for issues on sexual minorities, making students understand that although the sexual orientations of sexual minority children differ from the majority, they enjoy equal human rights and freedom and should not be discriminated against or targeted. At the same time, the school management should maintain an accommodating and open-minded atmosphere in schools, allowing students to discuss topics related to sexual minorities freely. The school management should also ensure all children will not suffer from differentiated treatment due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Pre-service and In-service Teacher Training

We suggest training should be provided for pre-service and in-service teachers on sexual orientation, gender identity and equality, and these should be included in courses at the Education University of Hong Kong and regular in-service teacher training. This aims to eliminate discrimination of teachers and school staff against sexual minorities and to teach them how to maintain a sexual minority friendly environment in schools and support students in need.

²Cheng, I. (2018, January 9). Information Note, *Sexuality education - legco*. Hong Kong: Information Services Division. <https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/1718in03-sexuality-education-20180109-e.pdf>

³Kwok K. (2014), Study on "Gender and Sexual-Orientation Harassment and Discrimination Experiences of LGBTQ Students in Secondary Schools, the Hong Kong institution of Education.

⁴GdoTV(2012), "TVB the most homophobic and comrade friendly elections". <http://gdottv.com/main/archives/5944> (only available in Chinese)

⁵South China Morning Post, And Tango Makes Three among 10 children's books with LGBT themes taken off the shelves in public libraries in Hong Kong, 2018/6/20, <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/community/article/2151705/and-tango-makes-three-among-10-childrens-books-same-sex>



Article 12: Respect for the views of the child

The Children Survey asked this question: ***“Does the school usually provide opportunities for students to express their views (e.g. class routine, timetable, school facilities, etc.)?”***

Children’s responses:

- Always (score 5) - 14%
- Usually (score 4) - 21.6%
- Sometimes (score 3) - 25.1%
- Seldom (score 2) - 22.2%
- Never (score 1) - 14.6%

There are 36.8% children indicating that they have never or seldom been provided with opportunities to express their views in the school setting.

“Even if they have provided the opportunity, they seldom genuinely listened and never followed up our expressed views,” said a respondent.

Section 4: Civil rights and freedom of children

Children survey question: ***“Do you think Hong Kong children's right to participation in peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom to receive information and ideas, and freedom of expression are being protected?”***

Children's responses:

“Adults often avoid discussing serious matters with children. They have defined things children shouldn't do or shouldn't say,” said a child.

“These days, children are quite afraid to talk about politics; everyone knows there's a line you mustn't cross,” said a child respondent.

“Few people take the time to contemplate or act upon this, for everyday life offers scant space, and society remains adult-dominated, with children largely passive recipients,” said another respondent.

“Anything outside politics is fine, but anything political seems to be something you can't safely publish,” said a child.

“There isn't much of it. Freedom of speech only exists on certain social platforms, like Instagram. There are some reservations when it comes to protection,” said a respondent.

“It's dangerous to do so,” said a child.

“No, because from childhood onwards I was forbidden by adults to express my own thoughts (especially by family members),” said a child.

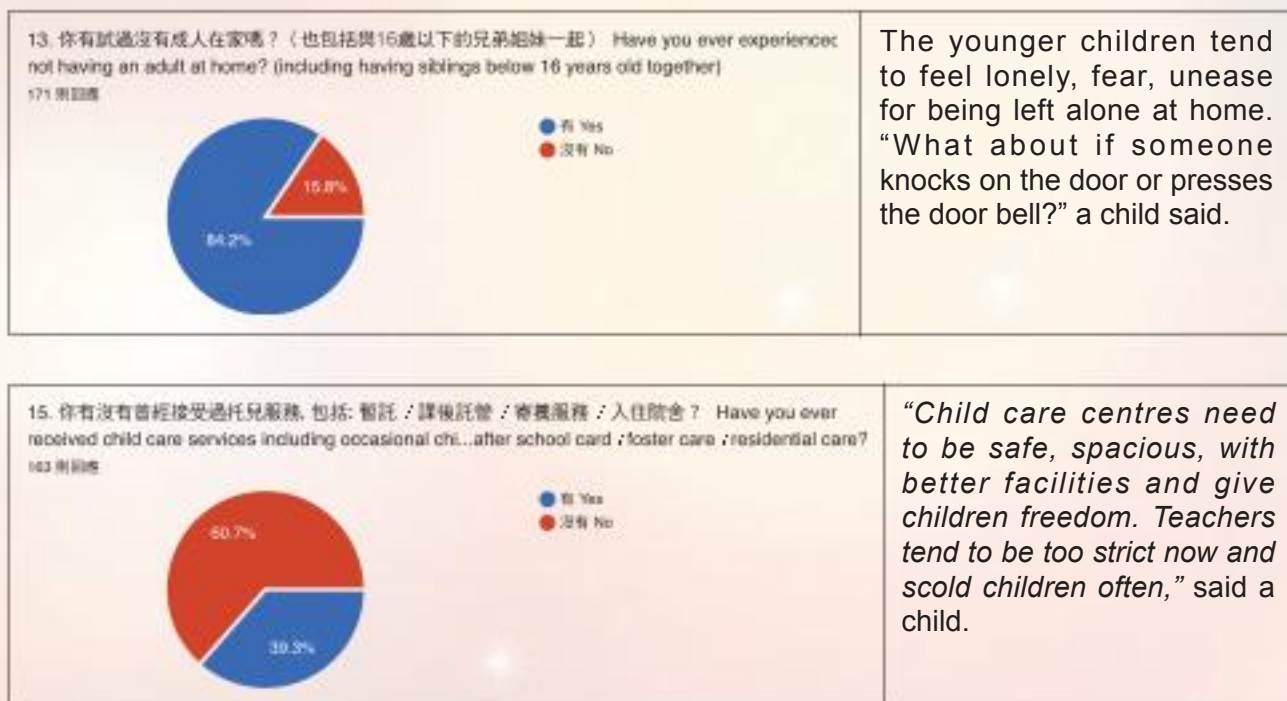
Section 5: Violence against children

Children survey question: ***“When we talk about child protection, what is the first thing that comes to mind that you think the United Nations (Adults) must know?”***

Children’s responses:

1. Domestic violence and abuse, as abusing children will affect their growth (more than 35 mentions)
2. Ban all bullying and discrimination cases in schools, teachers treating students in an unfair way (15 mentions)
3. Allow more play space and opportunities for children (several mentions)
4. Children do not have enough time to rest and play time as they use almost all of their time to complete their homework and do revision (several mentions)
5. Academic stress, respondents think that adults do not understand their situation (several mentions)
6. Adults are dominant, they should listen to children’s opinions. Children should not only be cared for physically, but should also pay attention to their mental wellness.

The survey also found more than 84% of children had experienced being left unattended at home, with 20 children said they had such an experience before Primary 1. Only less than 40% of the respondents have received child care services including occasional child care/ after school care/ foster care/ residential care.





Another children survey question: **“Have you ever experienced or witnessed bullying (happens continuously) at school? If you do, would you mind talking about it?”**

Children’s responses:

“A male classmate bullied a junior by burning her notebook with a candle and putting a lot of nails in her backpack,” a child said.

“I saw classmates being pushed down the stairs several times; students who are quiet will be bullied,” a child said.

“I saw a boy grab another boy and bump his head onto the blackboard with a loud bang,” another child said.

“They stole a classmate’s pencil case or stationery, threw it in the trash and made them pick it up,” said a child. “Sometimes they even commanded someone to stand on a trash can and kneel in front of them.”

“It is common to see classmates being blamed and laughed at through social media,” said another child.

Children's article

Children forced to training camps

In recent years, many schools have encouraged or forced students to join training camps related to discipline and leadership, saying it is good for students when facing adverse circumstances and enhancing their self-confidence. There is a rapid rise witnessed in the numbers of camps. However, by emphasizing “students’ absolute obedience towards instructions”, there had been reports of unreasonable orders imposed on children in some training camps, leading to a large number of child abuse cases. For instance, in the leadership training camp organized by Po Leung Kuk, it was reported that a knife threat is involved in an argument between the coach and a student; throwing down of students’ personal belongings from the second floor, using offensive wordings to describe students, to the extreme of asking students to eat grass, etc.⁶ These kinds of behavior certainly caused psychological pressure or even great harm to children, to the extent of humiliation of one’s dignity. A student said the coaches declared that they were not subject to the restriction of law when they entered the camp, and warned students not to resist their instructions on the grounds of law. This greatly increased the psychological pressure of students and coerced their obedience to the coaches. Though many students and parents had lodged complaints, Po Leung Kuk never responded positively to the complaints. The director even denied the accusations and linked them to the so-called “weak-mindedness” of the younger generation. The Education Bureau admitted that in recent years they received a few enquiries or complaints on the Po Leung Kuk leadership training camps, and had offered advice and support to schools involved. But the public argued that this could not force the schools to solve the problems. The public suspected even after the complaints were filed, the training camp would continue to run and the problem of child abuse could not be truly resolved.

As the Po Leung Kuk disciplinary training camp violated the children’s right to be free from violence, we demand all disciplinary training camps in Hong Kong to be monitored by the Education Bureau in order to protect the rights of children. The Education Bureau should appoint staff to review regularly whether the treatment of students in training camps has complied with human rights, and seriously conduct surveys with student participants. Lastly, measures and suggestions to improve training camps should be put forward by the Education Bureau, or they should formulate guidelines which training camps have to strictly follow to stop children from being abused in disciplinary-oriented training camps.

⁶Tong, E. (2020, March 31). *Fresh allegations of abuse at Student Leadership Camp emerge*. Hong Kong Free Press HKFP. <https://hongkongfp.com/2017/03/17/withholding-water-made-eat-grass-fresh-allegations-abuse-student-leadership-camp/>

The hidden tragedies of children: abuses from friends and close adults

Child abuse is a topic often shunned or placed aside. With children like us being subjected to and forced to endure tragedies, we believe that empowering and educating children through enriching them with knowledge and information is essential.

Children have a natural dependency on guardians and close adults. With many abusive cases originating from a child's parents, children may also have been manipulated or gaslighted into thinking this is normal, or being threatened to not speak up about what happens to them. Additionally, children are often taken advantage of, with family members or friends implementing and normalising such actions against them.

This issue also holds a little more hurt in our hearts than others, and it is partly the reason as to why we chose it specifically. We would like to share a case where a child is unknowingly being abused by their own family. This child is a friend of ours. It was a traumatic experience and will be engraved forever. We deeply appreciate that she was willing to share their story here, and we hope you can respect and appreciate it too. It is common in many Asian households to hold values of tough love. For our friend, this came in the form of hitting and slapping various items, as well as constant verbal abuse and neglect. If her performance at school did not meet her parent's expectations, she would be subject to multiple hits, constant scolding, and even being denied meals until her grades improved. Her siblings were also victims of their parents' abuse, and with no one to reach out to or share the experience with, they believed that this was not a big problem. Therefore, they never spoke up about it. This impacted her daily life and hindered her social interactions, causing her to fall back even further in school. Some of her friends and other students around her noticed the physical bruising and scars she had on her body, but some were afraid and didn't want to make her feel awkward by bringing this issue up.

This cycle of fear and abuse continued, up until the day she spoke up about it to her friends. Her friends immediately told trusted adults, who contacted appropriate authorities. Now, she and her siblings are safe from abuse and continue to receive counseling, safe from harm. Isn't it worrying to believe that if no one around her noticed, or if she never had been brave enough, that she'd still be stuck in the constant loop of abuse? Her story highlights the critical importance of recognizing the signs of abuse and the need for supportive friends who can help break the silence. It emphasizes how, when children have the power to speak up, they can protect themselves and seek help.

Child abuse cases skyrocketed during the pandemic, but did not stop even after the post-COVID effects had elapsed. A total of 1,504 new cases of child abuse have been registered in 2024 according to the Social Welfare Department⁷. With the ranking of physical abuse (39.6%), followed by sexual abuse (34.7%), neglect (21.8%), multiple abuse (2.9%) and psychological abuse (1.1%). This does not include the majority unreported cases.

In Chinese or Asian societies, some adults still hold onto beliefs like 'Spare the Rod, Spoil the Child' or 'Hitting is a form of Love.' Sometimes, individuals turn to sexual violence to feel in control. The desperation to overpower someone and hopes to gain status in the eyes of others are disgusting excuses for adults and minors to commit unruly crimes against others.

Sometimes, children don't even realise that they are being abused, with the idea of it being simply disciplinary action. If we are not taught the difference between abuse and discipline, we could suffer abuse from our parents for our whole childhood, severely hindering their future. In worst

cases, it will create a generational loop of abuse and pain, with children growing up to become just like their parents, unknowingly hurting and inflicting agony on their own kids believing that they are doing them good, not harm.

Child abuse doesn't only happen at home. It can also take place in places usually deemed to be happy and welcoming, performed by people who are supposedly kind and trustworthy. An example of this is the incident coming from the scandal of 2021: 40 child care workers were jailed for up to 5 years and 4 months over child abuse at a Hong Kong residential home. 39 toddlers and young children were found to have been subject to mistreatment, including head-hitting, hair-pulling, slapping, tossing the children onto the ground and towards the wall, and appeared at the District Court regarding the issue.

It's devastating to know that children aren't even safe in our schools. In another case, a 41-year-old secondary school teacher was sentenced to 22 months in jail for sexually abusing a 15-year-old student in 2023. He pleaded guilty to unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor and indecent assault. The teacher developed a romantic relationship with the student shortly after she joined the Christian school in 2022. He sexually assaulted her twice in a shopping mall toilet near their school in Cheung Sha Wan. The crimes were discovered when the victim's father found inappropriate messages on her phone. The court emphasised the severity due to the teacher's breach of trust and the 24-year age gap.

Our recommendations:

1. Implement mandatory courses into school curricula for children to understand and differentiate the line between love and abuse. So, they would not perceive the abusive behaviour coming from their guardians is normal. This can eliminate the generational abusive cycle and pave the way for a brighter future ahead.
2. Schools should work with NGOs that are focused on combating child abuse. For example, invite them to schools to host workshops and events that explain the real meaning of abuse and what is good and bad for children through engaging activities. This will allow them to engage with sensitive topics in a fun and stressless way.
3. Set up peer support programs in schools. Recruited students should receive basic training on mental well-being and counselling. Within schools, they should be made known to students, with clear and easy ways to contact them. Children who believe themselves as victims can easily and comfortably reach out to another fellow student, who can then report to trusted teachers in charge or appropriate authorities. This would not only provide the victim a safe space to release themselves and talk freely but also a great learning experience for the peer support students to improve their soft skills. To keep the experience safe, we think a confidentiality pact should be made, and peer support students should be volunteers, with the right to withdraw whenever they want.

⁷Social Welfare Department. (2024). Child Protection Registry Statistical Report.
https://www.swd.gov.hk/storage/asset/section/654/Annual%20CPR%20Report%202024_Bilingual_Final.pdf

Section 6: Family environment and alternative care of needy children

Children's article

Children face challenges leaving children's homes

Small Group Home (SGH) is provided for children who need temporary stay and care because they may be abused or their families are unable to take care of them due to illness, incarceration, or other reasons, or because the families have poor relationship with children. Each SGH houses eight children, ranging from 4 to 18 years old.

After they enter SGH, they will be taken care of by a couple, house parents, and provided them with family-style care, and let them go back to school and have normal development. On top of that, social workers and psychologists provide them with counselling services and psychological assessments.

The duration of children living in SGH is varied. Some lived for 2-3 years, some will stay for a much longer time from primary school to secondary school.

Family social workers, SGH staff, children, and their parents will have meetings every half year, to examine when is the suitable time for children to leave these homes, as SGH is always a temporary care service.

However, it is always challenging for children to leave once they enter the SGH. Now, please read the stories of children that we collected at the SGH.

Story 1

There was a child at the SGH named Tsengtseng (pseudonym). He was a very independent child who could help cook meals, wash dishes and clothes, hang laundry...etc. He wondered why almost all the children who had entered the home with him had left the children's home and returned to their own families, and he is so capable of taking care of himself still could not reunite with his family. He also did not know what path lay ahead after turning 18. He felt truly helpless.

Like Tsengtseng's story, many children at the SGH face the same question: Why can't I go home even though I've done so much and made so much progress?

For children who have not been able to leave the SGH yet, one of the difficulties they face is not knowing their parents' expectations and standards. At the same time, some parents lack motivation and don't want their children to return home.

When children first enter the SGH, their parents and family social workers set a goal for family reunification. Once that goal is met, they return home. But as time passes, after the initial reunification goal is achieved, a second requirement emerges. Once that second requirement is met, a third requirement follows. For example, one child was placed in the children's home because he had stopped attending school. But once he made progress and returned to school, the parents demanded that his grades improve. After that was achieved, the parents then claimed they couldn't pick him up from school because they had to work.

However, one of the principles in the CRC is "family reunification". Shouldn't children be able

to reunite with their families in a safe environment, rather than having to meet all requirements and satisfy all conditions before returning home? On the other hand, this also reflects the lack of confidence in parents' ability to care for children who return home.

Story 2

There was an older brother named Wai Lok (pseudonym) and he had already left the children's home. At first, he thought his life would be better than before, with more freedom and quiet space. But when he actually stepped into society and lived on his own, he realized how challenging life could be. He still remembers one particularly helpless moment. He thought buying a water heater would be enough to take showers, only to discover he also needed to buy a shower hose to connect it. Life presented countless difficulties. Returning home, he had no one to talk to. He found it very hard to adjust. For a period, he had to talk to his social worker and the school counselor to share his feelings so as to reduce his stress.

Besides Wai Lok, others who had left the SGH are also facing different challenges. Some children who returned home to reunite with their families still faced difficulties in getting along with them. They may have been separated from their families for a long time, and the environment and lifestyle are so different that it is hard to adjust. For example, one child shared with us that SGH encouraged and taught him to cook so he could apply those skills at home. But when he returned home, his mother was so anxious and worried about his safety that she wouldn't let him into the kitchen. They might also argue with family members at home, with no one to mediate, leaving them unsure how to handle the situation.

For those who left the SGH when they had reached the age of 18, they encountered previously unimagined challenges when they had to live alone, like work difficulties, financial pressures. This is especially true for those who need to pursue tertiary education. They immediately face pressures from tuition fees, with the first installment often exceeding HKD10,000, which is a huge burden for them. One young person worked hard at a summer job after the DSE, earning over HKD20,000, all of which went toward tuition fees. They could only apply for tuition assistance only after paying the fees. Fortunately, he had saved his summer earnings. Otherwise, he might have lost his place at university. Then there are all the other expenses like meals, electricity bill...etc. Returning home, there is no one to talk to and share with.

Whether one can leave the children's home or not, the road ahead is equally difficult.

Our suggestions:

1. For children who have already lived in children's homes for three years or more, their long term welfare plan should be handed to the court with mandatory work plans. Childhood only consists of 18 years, three years have already taken 1/6 out of the childhood period and it takes up a big portion of children's growing and development stage. At the same time, we believe children should return home as early as possible, because once they become teenagers, it only increases the difficulty of reuniting with their families. Given the relatively fragile emotional bond between parents and their children, coupled with the need to adapt to the changes brought by adolescence, parents likely face greater challenges in caring for teenagers.
2. In order to make parents and children adapt and build confidence, we suggest allowing children to spend half of the time at children's homes, another half spending with their families. Besides children learning at children's homes, parents should also undergo different education courses,



such as appropriate parenting, emotional management and adjusting their expectations for their children.

3. We propose to give a longer transition period to at least six months to help children leaving children's homes adapt better and receive more support. Currently, the home's social workers follow up on these children and youth for an additional three months. This is very insufficient as it takes time to adjust to living outside these homes. A longer transition period can allow aunts and social workers to regularly check on their well-being through home visits or phone calls, and provide appropriate support to help lessen their stress. We also propose to equip children preparing for independent living as early as possible.
4. Additionally, we propose implementing a big brother/ big sister program by inviting former children's homes residents to return and share their experiences. This would help children gain a more comprehensive understanding of potential future challenges they may face, while providing them with an additional support network.

Section 7: Disability, basic health and welfare of children

Findings from the Children Survey:

- Almost all the respondents of the Children Survey said that Hong Kong cannot provide public play facilities for children with disabilities.
- Respondents cited the obstacles faced by children with disabilities: 1) Transportation arrangement, 2) Lack facilities for them, 3) Face discrimination and exclude by the society, 4) Cannot enjoy play facilities in the community, 5) Insufficient assistance, 6) No one thinks from their perspective, 7) Hinder their learning, 8) Difficult to apply for jobs.
- Impressions and feelings of respondents who had consulted the hospital doctor or stayed in the hospital were: Confused, nurses are impatient, bored, scared, nervous, worried, angry, expensive, need to wait for a long time, can only stay in the ward.
- Many respondents suggested that there should be more children's hospitals in HK which are more child friendly; and the concerned authorities should find ways to cut the queuing time of children for medical treatment in hospitals.
- Over 13% of respondents rated they are a bit lacking and do not have enough resources for basic needs. They explained that the transportation fee, school fee and daily necessities are expensive, but the transportation and school allowances have been reduced. Some said the living cubicle is too cramped and has poor ventilation. They seldom buy new clothes, toys and eat at restaurants.
- More than 38% of respondents rated the mental health of children in Hong Kong as not too good (22.3%) and very bad (16.2%).
- Over 54% of the respondents think that the society has not sufficiently and properly publicized and educated children and youths about mental health.
- 80.3% of the respondents have friends who had the thought of committing suicide (Applicable to secondary students only).
- Hearing the news on student suicide, respondents feel sad (23%), scared (21.3%), worried (18%), angry (13.1%), shocked (4.9%), others feel frustrated, not good, heavy, regretful, helpless (Applicable to secondary students only).
- Respondents thought the main factors causing school children to commit suicide include: 1) Academic Stress, 2) Not understood by adults (especially parents) who do not think students face pressure, 3) Interpersonal relationship, 4) Being bullied (Applicable to secondary students only).
- Some respondents remarked that it is important for schools to provide students with a space to share their pressures and thoughts rather than excessively hiding and avoiding this important topic.

Children's article

Medical problems faced by children

The medical expense has posed a big financial burden on grassroot families. Recent survey results from the Children's Council⁸ indicated nearly 40% of parents spent on average more than HK\$2,000 medical expenses per child in the past year, accounting for nearly 10% of the household income. About 90% of the respondents did not receive any medical assistance. It is clearly seen that parents are under heavy financial pressure.

Moreover, due to limited financial resources, some parents are unable to bring their children to seek dental check-ups, resulting in difficulties in the treatment of dental diseases. According to the statistics given by the Department of Health⁹, 96% of the primary school children participated in the School Dental Care Scheme and received regular dental check-ups. Yet, as they did not have subsidized dental care service after being promoted to secondary schools, 40% of the parents thought it was too expensive and therefore had no intention to bring their children to seek dental check-ups regularly; only 30% of the respondents claimed they would still receive a dental check-up. The sharp downward trend reflected the fact that if there was no subsidized health care plan, citizens would neglect their dental health because of the high cost, which could hinder the health development of child health.

In addition, the waiting time in public hospitals is too long. In the investigation report from the Society for Community Organisation¹⁰, nearly 80% of the respondents said the waiting time for public healthcare services was excessively long. The report stated the median average waiting time for the public General Out-Patient Clinic was 1.5 hours; the median average waiting time for Accident & Emergency (A&E) service was 3 hours; and for Specialist Out-Patient Clinics, the median waiting time is 6 months and the longest waiting time being 30 months. According to statistics released by the Hospital Authority¹¹, the median waiting time of new stable case bookings at Eye Specialist Out-Patient Clinics was 77 weeks (roughly 1 1/2 years) for New Territories West cluster, while that of Psychiatry in Kowloon East cluster was 57 weeks (more than a year). The excessively long waiting time may obstruct children from receiving treatment and weaken their intention to seek medical treatment, causing the aggravation of diseases and affecting child health.

The government encourages students to participate in the healthcare services provided by the Department of Health every year, but it has failed to diagnose or treat correctable problems in time. For example, participants of mental health assessment are only given general results and recommendations such as "stay relaxed and cheerful". Even when students failed, they will be transferred to specialists or welfare agencies, where up to 47.4% of those students would avoid the follow-up assessment. The centre will then suspend its follow-up action until the next annual assessment; therefore, treatments could be delayed and causes negative impact on student's mental health¹².

The current student vision screening test only focuses on visual acuity tests without comprehensive in-depth examination¹³; even when eye problems are found, referral to optometrists for follow up takes a long time, resulting in missing the best time for treatment. It is clearly seen that the public healthcare system cannot provide effective prevention and treatment in the mild condition, the delayed treatment will cause severe consequences to child health. School children need professional body check-ups to find out potential diseases to take preventive measures early.



To sum up the above problems, the government should address the issues and adopt various possible measures to safeguard the physical and mental health of children through improving the situation and offer services that the present public healthcare system cannot provide, namely improvement of student health service, examination and review of existing assistance mechanisms and provision of health care vouchers for children.

⁸Children's Council (2018), Children's Council Motion 1: Urging Government for implementation of Children Health Care Voucher Scheme, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fi-IT4eO5abKX60tCrp4vXJpE3hAJ9a/view?usp=sharing>

⁹Department of Health (2019), LC Paper No. CB(2)1632/18-19(03) (pp.2), <https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr18-19/english/panels/hs/papers/hscb2-1632-3-e.pdf>

¹⁰Society for Community Organisation (2016), Grassroots Children Health and application of Medical Service Research Report (pp.14), https://soco.org.hk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/child_health_survey_2016_7.pdf (available in Chinese only)

¹¹Hospital Authority, Waiting Time for Stable New Case Booking at Specialist Out-patient Clinics (Version from 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023), https://www.ha.org.hk/haho/ho/sopc/dw_wait_ls.pdf

¹²Leung, C. (2019, March 12). Ombudsman Slams Health Department for high rate of health check no-shows. South China Morning Post. <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3001362/ombudsman-slams-health-department-failing>

¹³Child Health--Pre-school Vision Screening. Family Health Service. (2023, February). https://www.fhs.gov.hk/english/health_info/child/14812.html

Children's article

Inadequate sex education

Hong Kong's culture has resulted in conservative attitudes toward sex-ed. In 1997, the Education Bureau published Guidelines on Sex Education in Schools, and in 2014, published Basic Education Curriculum Guide—To Sustain, Deepen and Focus on Learning to Learn (Primary 1-6). Despite this, sex-education is not a mandatory subject and varies largely between schools. On average, students receive three hours of sex education per annum, according to a survey conducted by the Legislative Council¹⁴. Another study which was conducted between 2020 to 2021 by the Equal Opportunities Commission illustrated that there were around 28 schools did not teach sex education in class¹⁵. Furthermore, Bain & Company estimates 5,400 crisis pregnancies in Hong Kong each year, the majority of mother's being single girls under the age of 25 years old (Mother's Choice)¹⁶. While many conservatives may be opposed to adolescents being sexually active, youth will engage in sexual activities regardless of this. Instead of dismissing this, Hong Kong needs to address the issue of inadequate sex education head-on. Knowledge about how to have safe sex not only protects Hong Kong's children but provides a plethora of benefits for Hong Kong as a whole.

Hong Kong's Legislative Council discovered that out of those who do receive sexual education, 80% learn only the very basic knowledge of contraceptives (Hale). Lack of understanding can be seen from the survey conducted by the Children's Council 2017 on students, which included 5 questions on sex education¹⁷. Among the many surveyed, only 8.5% of primary students got 4 or more questions correct. Even worse, only 3.1% of secondary school students achieved the same score. As a result, problems such as crisis pregnancies arise. Crisis pregnancy affects the mother and forces her with life-changing decisions. The Legislative Council also found that 40% of students do not learn about HIV protection.

In order to protect the youth, it is recommended that good and adequate sex-ed should be compulsory in the school curriculum. According to the Guidelines on Sexual Education in Schools, key concepts include human development, health and behaviour, interpersonal relationships, marriage and family, society and culture. More specifically, every month, it is suggested that there should at least be 10-13 hours of sex education for primary school children and 15 hours of such for secondary school students. Since many schools do not follow the guidance, it is proposed that the government should implement stricter regulations to ensure that it is followed.

¹⁴Cheng, I. (2018, January 9). Information Note, *Sexuality education - legco*. Hong Kong: Information Services Division. <https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/1718in03-sexuality-education-20180109-e.pdf>

¹⁵Li, A. (2022, November 23). *Hong Kong urged to improve sex education in Secondary Schools*. Hong Kong Free Press HKFP. <https://hongkongfp.com/2022/11/23/hong-kong-urged-to-improve-sexuality-education-in-secondary-schools/>

¹⁶*For youth*. Mother's Choice. (2023, February 7). <http://www.motherschoice.org/en/what-we-do/for-youth/>

¹⁷The 12th Children's Council (2017) Motion 3 . "The Government should implement sex education in primary and secondary schools as part of the standard curriculum" 2017, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZNe5jLKEaL6R_o-AszN8genFimkuv8T/view?usp=sharing

Children's article

Young girls with crisis pregnancy

Tackling the issue of crisis pregnancy is an area in which the Hong Kong Government needs to divert more attention and resources towards. Recent research by Bain & Company estimated the number of “crisis pregnancies” in Hong Kong at 5,400 each year, with the majority of cases involving single girls under 25 years of age.¹⁸ Prevention is a critical first step, given the fact that awareness or education from a young age may thwart such from happening in the first place. A 2016 survey from the Commission on Youth highlighted findings from young people (aged 12-24), where 44% of the interviewees admitted not using birth control, and 40% of them acknowledged their lack of understanding about sex, and the use of pornography and the media as their medium of “education”.¹⁹ Furthermore, the preference of sex education being taught in “purely scientific terms” over practical ones at schools, in addition to the lack of an overarching, centralised system of monitoring their syllabi on sex educations, means that the Hong Kong landscape is difficult to securing a sound prevention of crisis pregnancies²⁰ (SCMP, 2012).

Crisis pregnancy is a very vulnerable stage of life, it is recommended that the government should proactively provide women of Hong Kong with adequate physical and mental health services throughout their crisis pregnancies, no matter their financial status, age, race, or decision as to the infant. While the government has already built a network of Integrated Family Service Centres directed to provide therapeutic welfare services for different kinds of family problems, the specific concept of teenage pregnancy remains under-addressed, under-funded, and under-researched. Reinforced by the prevalent problem of stigma, which not only affects the families of victims, but the very professionals - medical and social welfare - who are entrusted with the caring of these girls, much more dire and direct care is expected and required²¹ (Justin Heifetz, 2016).

It is necessary to protect the pregnant teenager's options, which, though theoretically consist of both abortion and giving birth, realistically always point to the former given her likely socio-economic limitations and a lack of support from family members. And while it is recognized that safe abortion and sustainable healthcare plan is vital for the wellbeing of young mothers, such is not the lived experience currently enjoyed by many teenage women in Hong Kong, especially those from deprived backgrounds. Multifold financial and administrative/legal barriers are being imposed from above, with an example of how legal and available abortion services “charge fees ranging from HK\$310 to \$10,000, and do abortions only up to 24 weeks of pregnancy”. In response, young women have routinely resorted to poor-quality, illegal clinics in mainland China, reinforcing a cycle of ill-health and neglect²² (Hung, 2010).

Postnatal care or a healthy transition after an abortion needs to receive more attention and resources. As of now, postnatal and newborn assistance from the government remains largely in the form of recommendations rather than services; where counselling does exist, it focuses disproportionately on the first half of a crisis pregnancy, and not its aftermath.

Reintegration of young women into society is an equally pressing issue to tackle. Many girls are struggling to continue with their education and professional careers due to a lack of access to affordable and non-stigma education services or legitimate qualifications.



¹⁸“For Youth.” *Mother’s Choice*, 3 Oct. 2016, <https://www.motherschoice.org/en/what-we-do/for-youth/>

¹⁹“For Youth.” *Mother’s Choice*, 3 Oct. 2016, <https://www.motherschoice.org/en/what-we-do/for-youth/>

²⁰HK feels the pain of crisis pregnancies. *South China Morning Post*. (2012, May 12). <https://www.scmp.com/article/1000882/hk-feels-pain-crisis-pregnancies>

²¹Justin Heifetz (2016, November 14) *In Hong Kong, Accessing Abortion Is Difficult, Expensive, and Dangerous*. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/ywmdvk/abortion-hong-kong-border-mainland-china>

²²Suet Lin Hung (2010, Nov 24), Access to safe and legal abortion for teenage women from deprived backgrounds in Hong Kong. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21111354/>

Children's article

Schoolchildren under too much pressure to study leading to suicide risk

We would like to share about our daily routine. Every day, we arrive at school at 7:40am, and the classes dismiss at 3:10pm. After getting home and showering, we have tutoring until 5:30pm. After dinner, we have to complete our homework and study for dictations until 9:30pm. Weekends aren't much better—tutoring sessions keep us busy then too. Day after day, this routine leaves no time for rest. Does anyone really think this is a happy childhood?

Actually, I used to like playing piano a lot, but under intense academic pressure, I gradually lost interest in playing piano. Parents always say they want us to grow up healthy and happy, but is this kind of childhood truly healthy and happy? If parents truly care about us, they should give us more time to rest and relax, allowing us to genuinely enjoy the joys of growing up.

This issue isn't just about our feelings—data and research also reflect the impact of students' stress on their mental health. Studies show that over 70% of students believe “academic problems” are one of the main causes of suicide. In recent years, student suicide cases in Hong Kong have continued to rise, a situation that is deeply concerning. In November 2023, the Hong Kong Christian Service conducted a “Study on Student Suicide and Help-Seeking”²³, interviewing 150 secondary school students. They found that student suicide is influenced by multiple interacting factors. Even more concerning is that 90% of students do not choose to seek help from adults including teachers, social workers, or family members when facing negative emotions.

Furthermore, the study data from the past five academic years indicates that over 12,000 students have received social work services. These figures remind us that mental health issues among schoolchildren cannot be overlooked.

Professor YIP Siu Fai, professor of The University of Hong Kong, stated that the causes of youth suicide stem from a combination of factors, including academic pressure, lack of family support, and feelings of despair. Recently, a number of “unusual and unusually frequent” suicide incidents may be linked to the “contagion effect” caused by media coverage and widespread discussion on social media. The impact of such information on students' mental well-being warrants serious attention.

In fact, the impact of suicide far exceeds our imagination. Approximately 1,000 people take their own lives in Hong Kong each year, and each suicide affects an average of 6,000 to 30,000 friends and family members. Research indicates that relatives and friends of suicide victims exhibit higher rates of suicidal ideation than the general population, placing them within a high-risk group for suicide. Each instance of suicide or attempted suicide inflicts long-term consequences on individuals, families, communities, and society as a whole. Therefore, we must confront this issue head-on and actively seek solutions.

The Government should do something to help children alleviate the academic pressure, also help children to establish healthy and regular lifestyle habits, eg. maintain a balanced diet, engage in regular exercise, adhere to a consistent sleep schedule, foster an active social life, and manage stress appropriately. The community should also help children to seek professional help promptly if they have begun to detect mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, or bipolar disorder. Through cooperation among schools, families, and the community, we believe that students' pressure can be reduced effectively and promote mental wellbeing.



²³Hong Kong Christian Service. (2023). Research on Student Suicide and Help-Seeking Attitudes. https://www.hkcs.org/en/pressrelease/20231213-Student_Suicide_Study

Children's article

Impact of the Hong Kong education system on students' mental health

According to Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children; Articles 28 and 29 stated that education should foster a child's comprehensive development, but not only academic results. The education system should not be a source of stress and anxiety, nor should it neglect students' mental health.

However, both local and international research, along with our daily observations, reveal significant shortcomings in Hong Kong's education system in this regard. This not only impacts students' emotional and mental well-being but may also undermine their motivation to learn and hinder their long-term personal development.

We think that there are two major problems that lead to the mentioned issue. Firstly, teachers vary in quality, neglect student needs and provide insufficient mental health support. Despite the government's implementation of a "three-tier emergency response mechanism" to help schools identify students with higher suicide risk early and provide appropriate support to these students as quickly as possible, increased recruitment of school social workers, and provision of one-off subsidies, these support measures still fail needy students to get timely support.

We conducted a survey with a total of 1,200 secondary school students covering 20 secondary schools across Hong Kong from March to April in 2025. The results showed:

- 58% surveyed students believe that "teachers pay insufficient attention to students' mental health."
- 46% students expressed that "they had experienced emotional distress, but their teachers failed to notice or follow up."

A student wrote in the survey: "Teachers care more about grades than my feelings. When my performance drops, I'm only told to attend extra classes—no one asks what's going on."

This reflects that some teachers lack adequate training in mental health identification and support, failing to promptly detect students' emotional crises. This violates the principle of the CRC that safeguards children's right to appropriate care and protection.

The second problem causing the issue is due to the test-driven education, heavy pressure from public examinations.

Hong Kong's education system has long been centered on exam preparation, especially for the public exam HKDSE. The research conducted by The Hong Kong Council of Social Service in 2025 stated:

- 41.9% surveyed students have symptoms of depression or anxiety;
- 20.9% students' pressure reach full marks (10 marks);
- Exam stress is positively correlated with psychological distress, with female students being particularly affected.

Our survey also indicated:

- 72% of Form 5 and Form 6 students believe that “excessive exam pressure” is the primary cause of psychological distress;
- 39% students report that “they began experiencing chronic stress starting in Form 5, which intensified in Form 6.”

A Form 6 student said in an interview: “Every day when I get home, all I do is work on exercises and study. I have no time to rest. Even when I'm exhausted, I dare not stop because I'm afraid of falling behind.”

This system not only deprives students of the right to enjoy learning but also imposes long-term psychological burdens, violating the Convention's principle that education should promote children's physical and mental well-being.

From the above problems, we have three recommendations:

- 1). Teachers' mental health awareness training should be enhanced. All teachers must receive pre-service and in-service training in mental health identification and support skills, including gatekeeper training. And establish clear guidelines requiring teachers to regularly monitor students' emotional well-being alongside academic assessments.
- 2). Long-term, comprehensive campus mental health resources should be expanded. The coverage rate of school social workers and educational psychologists should be raised to a double. Transition from temporary subsidies to permanent funding to establish a long-term support network.
- 3). The assessment system should be reformed to reduce exam pressure. Drawing from experiences in Finland and other regions, introduce more diverse assessment methods such as classroom performance, project-based learning, and continuous evaluation to reduce the decisive influence of single public examinations. We believe that reducing the weight of large-scale mock exams before Form 5 provides students more time to explore interests and build confidence.

The true purpose of education is not to produce top-scoring exam papers, but to cultivate healthy, happy individuals capable of facing future challenges. The CRC reminds us that education should be guided by the best interests of the child.

Today, we see a system overly focused on exam results that neglects mental health. I call upon the Education Bureau, schools, and society at large to heed students' voices, reform the system, reduce unnecessary pressures, and comprehensively strengthen mental health support. For every student has the right to grow in an environment free from excessive stress and to have a healthy, hopeful future.

²⁴The Government of the HKSAR. (Dec 2023). Government launches Three-Tier School-based Emergency Mechanism <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202312/01/P2023120100650.htm>

²⁵The Hong Kong Council of Social Service. (May 2025). Research on the Mental Health Status and Help-Seeking Intentions of Secondary School Students Under HKDSE Stress. <https://www.hkcss.org.hk/%E5%9B%9B%E6%88%90%E5%8F%97%E8%A8%AAhkdse%E5%AD%B8%E7%94%9F%E5%91%88%E7%8F%BE%E6%8A%91%E9%AC%B1%E6%88%96%E7%84%A6%E6%85%AE%E7%97%87%E7%8B%80%EF%BC%8C%E6%B1%82%E5%8A%A9%E6%84%8F%E9%A1%98%E4%BD%8E/?lang=en>

Children's article

Voices for a sustainable future: A child-led roadmap for HK's Green Transition

This report represents our collective voice as Child Human Rights Defenders. Our findings are based on a year-long programme (2025-2026) designed to understand the climate situation in Hong Kong. Such a process helps us to evaluate the HKSAR's progress in fulfilling its obligations under the UNCRC, specifically concerning the climate crisis.

Our evidence-based process:

- **Direct Local Observations:** We participated in nighttime ecological explorations in Mai Po and multiple beach clean-up actions. These provided first-hand evidence of how pollution and habitat destruction threaten the Right to Life, Survival, and Development (Art. 6) in Hong Kong.
- **Regional Peer Consultation:** We represented Hong Kong at the "Bangkok Climate Action Week," engaging with 60 youth leaders from across Southeast Asia. This experience highlighted that while Hong Kong has significant resources, our climate policy often lacks the "frontline" perspective found in more climate-vulnerable regions.
- **Safety, Ethics & Validation:** Our activities adhered to the Committee's 9 basic requirements. This report was drafted by youth ambassadors through design-thinking workshops and validated by our peers to ensure no adult interpretation skewed the results.

Observation 1: Current climate education in Hong Kong is "theoretical" and "domestic-centric," failing to bridge the gap between classroom learning and the region's climate-vulnerability realities.

Our Finding & Rationale: Existing government exchange funds focus heavily on historical culture or basic technology in developed regions. However, UNESCO identifies Southeast Asia as one of the most climate-vulnerable regions globally. Hong Kong youth are currently "blind" to the humanitarian impact of the climate crisis in our own neighbourhood. There is a total lack of specialised exchange programs focusing on transgenerational justice and regional adaptation.

Recommendation: Establish a "Cross-disciplinary Youth Climate and Sustainable Development International Exchange Fund."

We propose a **Strategic Four-Stage Exchange Model:**

1. **Pre-trip Capacity Building:** Seminars led by climate scientists and development economists on regional vulnerability.
2. **Immersive Field Investigation:** Fieldwork in climate-impacted coastal lowlands or urban slums in Southeast Asia to observe "frontline" impacts.
3. **Cross-Regional Co-creation:** Collaborative Design Thinking to prototype solutions for regional challenges like water scarcity and extreme heat risks.
4. **Community Feedback Loop:** Participants must translate their findings into local action in HK schools or public housing estates.

Observation 2: A "Participation Gap" exists in which children are treated as passive recipients of policy rather than as active participants in the green transition.

Our Finding & Rationale: Environmental advisory structures remain "one-way." Children provide suggestions but have no power over the Allocation of Resources (Art. 4) or the final policy text. This contradicts Art. 12, as our views are heard but not given "due weight" in the HKSAR's "Climate Action Plan 2050."

Recommendation: Formally institutionalise a "Youth Climate Change Concern Group."

- **Inclusive Representation:** Membership should be prioritized for children under 18, including student environmental leaders, young social innovators, and community climate volunteers.
- **Policy Co-Authorship:** The group should be authorised to co-author an annual "Youth Policy White Paper" that requires a formal written response from the Environment and Ecology Bureau.
- **Resource Management Rights:** Core members should be trained to serve as evaluators for youth-led action grants, ensuring that resource allocation reflects the logic of youth innovation.

Observation 3: Administrative "Red Tape" and high financial thresholds effectively silence child-led climate action at the community level.

Our Finding & Rationale: Existing environmental funds require complex business registrations and professional auditing. For student teams, these barriers are insurmountable. This prevents children from realising their potential as community leaders.

Recommendation: Launch a "Climate Action Seed Matching Fund" based on "Trust-Based Philanthropy."

We suggest a **Three-Tiered Funding Structure:**

- **Level 1: Micro-Startup Grant (HK\$5,000–\$20,000):** Targets school teams for short-term workshops. High-grant percentage (up to 100%) with video-based applications.
 - **Level 2: Community Impact Fund (HK\$20,000–\$100,000):** Targets joint-school networks. Supports projects for vulnerable groups. 80% funded / 20% matched via volunteer hours.
 - **Level 3: Innovation Matching Fund (Up to HK\$500,000):** Targets youth social enterprises. 1:1 government-to-private sector match to incentivise corporate ESG investment.
- **Core Management Principles:**
 - **Flexible Pre-disbursement:** Provide 50-70% upfront to prevent cash-flow bottlenecks for youth.
 - **Mentorship Database:** A library of ESG leaders and scientists to provide technical guidance.

Summary of Recommendations:

We urge the UN Committee to recommend that the HKSAR Government:

1. **Institutionalise Partnership:** Create the "Youth Climate Change Concern Group" as a statutory platform with co-authorship rights.
2. **Operationalise Regional Education:** Redirect resources toward "Global South" climate exchanges.
3. **Remove Barriers to Action:** Implement the tiered, trust-based "Seed Matching Fund" with upfront disbursement.

Conclusion

"Nothing about us, without us."

Climate change is an urgent threat to our human rights. We are not just the "future"; we are the most innovative and motivated generation of the present. We ask the Committee to help us ensure that the HKSAR Government moves from "consulting us" to "empowering us."



Section 8: Education, leisure and cultural activities of children

Findings from the Children Survey:

- Over 20% of children have less than 6 hours of sleep every night.
- Over 28% of children have less than 1 hour of play and rest time every day.
- 42% of the children respondents think that there is too much homework that they need to use plenty of time to complete and there are too many exams and tests that they are struggling a bit.
- Tutorial classes after school are common for children (about 72%) and make them feel tired.
- 39.9% of the respondents feel tired attending extra-curricular activities (ECA) after school. “ECA are activities for children to play and relax, but the activities are similar to tutorials like learning mathematics, competitions, which make children stressed,” said one child respondent.
- Most of the respondents think that Hong Kong public playgrounds do not have sufficient play facilities and space as the facilities are only provided for younger children, and some of them need repair, the area of play space is small.
- Asking about unfair treatment in school, many child respondents shared the view that their teachers will only blame students who have bad academic results even if they are the victims. Teachers draw the conclusion before checking the facts. Teachers will provide more opportunities for students with good academic results, such as exchange, getting access to competitions. When bullying cases happen, teachers will pretend they do not know even if they witness the process.

Children's article

Expensive transport fare for children in Hong Kong

Currently, the half-fare concessions for public transport in Hong Kong are limited to children aged below 12²⁶, and only the MTR provides half-price discounts for full-time students (aged between 12-25)²⁷. This has caused reluctance from many children from financially underprivileged families to participate in extracurricular activities that are too far away from their residence. The government does not provide specific transport allowances or concessions for children between the age of 12 to 18 to cover these expenses, resulting in children losing the opportunities to broaden their horizons. For example: A round trip from Fanling (Wah Ming) to Exhibition Centre Railway Station by KMB bus no. 978 costs HKD 55.80²⁸, which is similar to what a lunch set costs in an average eatery.

The current Student Travel Subsidy Scheme in Hong Kong is insufficient to support the full transportation costs of children in need. In addition, the eligibility for application is stringent, so non-eligible children in need cannot receive subsidies. For example, the annual income limit of a four-person household with a full-rate allowance is HKD 217,475²⁹. By simple calculation, that is a monthly income of HKD 18,123.

To address the above problems, we suggest:

All public transport operators provide half-price concessions for students. As long as students have personalized Octopus cards with student status, they should be entitled to half-price discounts on all public transport. By such measure, it can reduce the financial burden of families in need, and children could have more opportunities to participate in different activities and expand their horizons.

In addition, we hope that the government can provide extra transportation assistance for children with most needs to participate in extracurricular activities. It is hoped that children can be encouraged to participate in different activities, and be offered more opportunities to broaden their horizons.

²⁶LCQ6: Student travel subsidy scheme. Press Releases. (2008, March 12).
<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200803/12/P200803120259.htm>

²⁷LCQ11: Fare concessions for students offered by public transport operators. Press Releases. (2018, April 25).
<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201804/25/P2018042500273.htm>

²⁸Bus Route 978. Search.kmb.hk. <https://search.kmb.hk/kmbwebsite/index.aspx?lang=en>

²⁹Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency. Financial Assistance Schemes for Primary & Secondary students. Method of Assessment. <https://www.wfsfaa.gov.hk/en/sfo/primarysecondary/tt/assessment.php>

Children's article

The problem of e-learning

E-learning means every student making use of electronic devices to cooperate with teachers through student-centred practices, and deploying different learning strategies to achieve learning objectives and enhance students' interests in learning. Unfortunately, e-Learning was under-utilised as it was not widely practiced, and eBooks were less adopted by schools. We believe that it is most appropriate to use electronic devices two to three times a week. However, survey showed that there is still 57.2% students who are using electronic devices at a frequency lower than our expectation³⁰. At the same time, it was found that e-Learning to most teachers was limited to distributing learning materials while students wanted to consolidate their learning and have more enjoyable lessons through e-learning.

In fact, the supply of eBooks in Hong Kong is sufficient, but the expensive price of eBooks reduces the tendency of school adoption. This makes the stakeholders such as teachers unaware of the benefits of eBooks.

To address the above issue, we suggest:

Firstly, we believe that training in e-Learning should be added to the curriculum of university diploma/bachelor programmes in education; we suggest the training of e-Learning should be included in the core subjects, so every teacher can apply e-Learning flexibly in their future teaching to enhance the interest of students in learning.

Secondly, we suggest that teachers use various multimedia such as photos, videos and different types of programs in class as supplementary materials to make the lessons more enjoyable. Simultaneously, the government can arrange more seminars and send posters to promote the benefits of eBooks to schools, in order to encourage the adoption of eBooks and make good use of existing resources. Because of the high price of eBooks, we believe that the government can provide funding for schools as there is no such funding from the Education Bureau.

In conclusion, what we expect to achieve ultimately is to familiarize teachers with e-Learning, so they can better use e-Learning to teach students in class instead of using electronic devices in one-way teaching. Students can also make use of electronic devices for learning to achieve the objectives of e-Learning.

³⁰9th Junior Chief Executive (2018). Mini Policy Address – 9th Junior Chief Executive. The Boys' & Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OkJ01w5WnqIb4qBmC3H4nzmoRdF6TIDp/view> (Chinese only)

Children's article

Academic pressure and students lacking diverse pathways

The studying mode in Hong Kong is exam-oriented, especially focusing on traditional subjects such as Chinese, English, Mathematics, Sciences etc. The development of non-conventional academic subjects is slow. Under the situation of a homogenous study pathway, the definition of 'success' in the eyes of general public limits to studying the so-called 'superior subjects' (such as medicine, law, global business), resulting in parents and schools demanding students to focus on their studies, to give up other activities and to take part in additional tutorials and drills. This gives students much pressure, leading to mental health problems. Some students even committed suicide.

The current education system: against its policy initiatives

1. Excessive interference on children's right to development

Hong Kong children face extremely keen competition. It is a normal scene for the applications for prestigious primary schools to exceed dozens of times of its school places (an example is 53 applicants competing for one place at the HKUGA Primary School). It seems too early for school children to have to face the pressure of competition. There are different interview skill classes teaching children knowledge and techniques that might be too difficult for their age. For instance, there were primary school interviews asking prospective primary-one students to process two-digit addition, subtraction, multiplication and even basic algebra. Children are forced to spend a great deal of time preparing for school interviews, neglecting other aspects such as basic life skills, emotion management and creativity. This leads to the phenomenon of "Hong Kong Kids" (a term referring to children without self-care skills), and greatly reduces the time for play and rest which children deserve.

2. Long school day and large amount of homework faced by primary school students

Full-day primary school education was introduced in Hong Kong in the year 2000 in phases, which aimed to allow students to finish most of their homework in the afternoon in schools and then return home for rest. However, long school hours and a large amount of homework make students finish their homework until night and affect their rest time, harming the mental health of children. We suggest the Education Bureau to instruct schools in reducing class hours in primary schools, setting time limits for class and homework, and giving children sufficient time to rest and develop their hobbies.

3. TSA of Education Bureau leads to unnecessary drills

The Education Bureau divides primary and secondary school education into four key stages. In each stage (P.3, P.6, S.3 & S.6), the Bureau arranges students to receive system assessments to evaluate teaching effectiveness of schools and to set benchmarks for school rankings. As such, many primary and secondary schools keep forcing students into drill, so as to raise school rankings through their good assessment results.

We suggest school assessments should be conducted in anonymous and in random sampling models and they should not be taken as the basis of school rankings. In this way, schools will not force students to academic practice for pursuing good rankings, hence getting rid of the incentive

for drills completely.

4. Applied Learning Courses

To promote vocational training and diverse career development, the government offers Applied Learning Courses as elective subjects for senior secondary school students. According to the information from the Education Bureau, the courses are designed for students to explore their career aspirations and orientations for life-long learning. Yet the courses are only available for secondary-five and -six students and do not cover the entire senior secondary school curriculum. Also, the highest grade obtained in this regard is only equivalent to a level comparable to level 4 for Category A subjects in public exams and it is less recognized in Hong Kong tertiary education. The incentive to study these courses is thus not high.

Whether it is the conventional subjects or applied learning courses, they both aim to utilize students' talents and should be treated as equal in a fair manner. The government should enhance the overall recognition and popularization of this type of courses by making them the equals of conventional subjects. Students should be allowed to choose suitable courses and horizons of development based on their abilities and interests without worries—this is truly providing diversified pathways for students.

5. The University Admission System

Under the current system, most HKDSE candidates are admitted to universities through JUPAS. Most faculties determine the admission of HKDSE candidates by their HKDSE results as priority, while Other Learning Experiences (OLE) is considered only when candidates get the same scores. Interviews are exempted in certain subjects. As long as the scores meet the thresholds, an admission will be guaranteed. Under the score-oriented system, many students take subjects with lower thresholds as a back-up plan; they will enrol in subjects of their second choice which they have no interest in. This may result in unsatisfactory academic performance and even the quitting of their studies.

Undoubtedly, the scores make an objective standard allowing schools to understand students quickly, but it does not reflect the ability of students entirely. Universities should focus on the subject attainment tests and interview performance to decide whether they admit a student or not.

Tertiary education is the final checkpoint before students step into society and the adult world. Universities should be more cautious in monitoring the ability of students comprehensively, instead of admitting students with a sole standard. This can ensure students to truly develop their talents and build up themselves for the future.

Children's article

Children's right in using playground facilities

Currently, there are over 4,500 playground facilities in the public rental housing (PRH) estates managed by the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) and over 600 leisure venues managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD)³². Most play equipment is provided for children aged 12 or below and they are not suitable for children aged over 12 (due to the small sizes of the equipment) and children with disabilities. Currently, there are signboards and security guards patrolling in most playgrounds banning teenagers from using the facilities, hindering them from exercising their recreational rights.

At present, there is only one inclusive playground in Tuen Mun Park opened for children aged under 18 years old and for children with special needs.

Besides, many play and fitness facilities have been in a state of disrepair for a long time, causing long-time inconvenience to neighboring residents who want to use them³³.

According to the Playright Children's Play Association, real play should allow children to play in interesting public spaces.³⁴ Yet, the playground facilities in Hong Kong are not designed and made for children aged between 13 and 17³⁵, leading to exploitation of children's rights in play and recreation.

To cope with the above issues, we suggest:

Firstly, we suggest the government lift the ban and allow children aged between 13 and 17 to use playground facilities so as to exercise their rights.

Moreover, playground facilities suitable for children aged between 13 and 17 should be built in new playgrounds in Hong Kong.

In conclusion, we hope the government can pay more attention to the right to play of children aged between 13 and 17, and let them have the opportunities to use the playground facilities in Hong Kong. We also hope more inclusive parks should be built. Right now, there is only one inclusive playground in Tuen Mun Park. Obviously, it cannot meet the needs of children with disabilities across Hong Kong denying these children's right to play and recreation.

³²Lau, Y. K. (2017). Public playgrounds in Hong Kong. Legislative Council. HKSAR
<https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/chinese/essentials-1718ise04-public-playgrounds-in-hong-kong.htm>

³³Ibid

³⁴你準備好為遊樂空間出力了嗎? . playright: 智樂兒童遊樂協會 . (2021, October 27).
<https://www.playright.org.hk/%e4%bd%a0%e6%ba%96%e5%82%99%e5%a5%bd%e7%82%ba%e9%81%8a%e6%a8%82%e7%a9%ba%e9%96%93%e5%87%ba%e5%8a%9b%e4%ba%86%e5%97%8e%ef%bc%9f/> (只有中文)

³⁵Leisure and Cultural Services Department. (n.d.). Play Equipment for All.
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Children's article

Challenges faced by non-Chinese speaking children in Hong Kong

Non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students in Hong Kong face multiple challenges. To name a few are language barriers, religious differences, and mental health concerns.

For children whose mother tongue is not Chinese yet living in Hong Kong, they encounter various difficulties in communication and daily life. Take a simple example: if you go to a restaurant to order food, or take a minibus and don't know how to ask for a stop, wouldn't you also feel lost and confused?

On normal school days, when most classmates speak fluent Cantonese, NCS students inevitably feel excluded. Very often, they remain within the social circles of NCS students for extended periods. Some even isolate themselves, unwilling to make new friends, naturally losing opportunities to expand their social networks. This frequently leads to low moods.

Besides language barrier, most are accompanied by various daily concerns about religion. We all know different religions have different restrictions and rules. For instance, Muslims are forbidden from eating pork. Now imagine, after you struggled half day of classes and head down to the canteen, but the only food option available actually contains pork.

Not only for food, some religions such as Muslim need to pray 5 times a day, the surrounding environment must remain free of any images. So what should they do when they are in class at school every day? Some schools even prohibit students from wearing religious symbols like necklaces due to dress code regulations. Some students who need to wear headscarves are unable to participate in certain physical education classes, such as swimming lessons. This creates many daily inconveniences for these NCS students.

Why do these problems persist? It's because we've consistently overlooked their religious needs. The issue isn't that we don't know how to address them—it's that we simply don't want to.

Many NCS students struggle with subjects like Chinese Language, Chinese History, as well as non-Chinese subjects such as Mathematics, General Studies, Integrated Science, Musical and Visual Arts..., etc. due to weak Chinese language foundations. A research found over 60% of NCS students indicated that they did not have a clear understanding about the contents of non-language subjects taught in Chinese (Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission, 2019).

This persistent sense of frustration is known in psychology as “learned helplessness.” It means that when someone repeatedly fails despite their efforts, they come to believe that nothing they do will make a difference, ultimately leading them to give up entirely. When NCS students realize their efforts cannot match local students' standards, they may adopt a defeatist mindset, believing further effort is futile.

There is an examination called TSA (Territory-wide System Assessment), and all Form 3 students are required to take it in Hong Kong. The problem is, NCS students have to take the same Chinese language examination according to the standard of local students. Even if the examination does not count towards their grades, this provides them with unnecessary pressure.

Language barriers make it hard to integrate with peers. A prolonged lack of belonging can easily lead to emotional issues like depression and anxiety. Some students, to avoid being mocked, may choose silence and withdrawal, further deepening social isolation.

NCS students also face identity crisis. For those born or raised in Hong Kong, they may neither be regarded as “true Hong Kongers” nor feel connected to their original cultures, creating a conflict in their sense of identity.

In addition, many local students still perceive them as “different from us” due to their appearance, accent, or even their names. In school, when working on group assignments, students naturally gravitate toward those who speak the same language. As a result, they often end up collaborating only with NCS classmates, becoming increasingly isolated from local students.

Below are our three recommendations to help NCS students improve their circumstances that have persisted for so long:

- 1). Schools and the Government should promote and subsidize “on-campus Chinese support classes” specifically for NCS students. Although Hong Kong has resources like governmental and non-governmental organizations offering Chinese classes, parents often don't know where to find them, or class times clash with school schedules. This results in those who need the classes not being able to access them, while places with resources struggle to find students. So, we suggest schools collaborate directly with these service providers to establish “on-campus Chinese support classes” during after-school hours or homework assistance periods. This way, NCS students won't have to travel elsewhere and can learn in a familiar environment. These courses can integrate Chinese learning with daily life, such as teaching how to order at a Hong Kong-style café or shop for groceries at the wet market, gradually building their confidence and practical language skills.
- 2). Daily campus life should be made more inclusive for students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds:
 - a). School canteens can provide at least one type Halal-compliant food on the menu, so students do not need to bring their own lunch boxes or starve. Actually in Hong Kong, more restaurants have Halal food certification, campuses are fully equipped to introduce these options.
 - b). Schools can allocate a small multipurpose room for students who need religious practices. So, they don't need to pray in hallways or near restrooms, which is inconvenient and awkward. This would help them feel like an integral part of the school community rather than an overlooked group.
- 3). Address the psychological challenges faced by NCS students by providing them with mental health support. We recommend that schools collaborate with professional organizations to arrange for counselors trained in cross-cultural psychological counseling to be stationed on campus once a week, specifically serving NCS students. Beyond one-on-one counseling, group workshops could be organized on topics like “Adapting to New Environments” and “Managing Academic Stress” to help them develop a positive mindset. This way, they will not feel like they are fighting alone.

Caring, respect, and inclusiveness sound simple, but we often overlook their importance. To ensure NCS students can thrive in Hong Kong, we must uphold the above three principles.



³⁶Equal Opportunities Commission. (2019). The study for Chinese language proficiency of the non-language subjects textbooks used in primary and secondary schools, <https://www.eoc.org.hk/en/ENews/206-4>

Children's article

Overly controlling school policies violate students' rights

Schools should be places for learning, growth, and self-discovery—but when rules become too strict, they can stifle independence, creativity, and even mental well-being. What's more, many of these policies may violate students' rights, including article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that children have the right to express their views freely in matters affecting them. Article 13 is also important—it protects our right to freedom of expression, so we should be allowed to share our thoughts, ideas, and feelings in different ways, like speaking, writing, or even personal style! If schools truly aim to prepare us for the real world, shouldn't they trust us with responsibility rather than control our every move?

Many schools enforce harsh dress codes, forbid personal items without a proper reason, and punish minor mistakes as if they were major crimes. When schools limit how we dress or what we bring, they're not only being strict—they might also be ignoring our rights under Article 13, which lets us express ourselves in different ways. But do these rules really help students learn—or do they just create frustration?

Let me share with you our school rules. We have Silent Lunch Rules, we are not allowed to talk to friends during lunch, we will be punished for laughing or sharing food. There is a ridiculous amount of CCTV around the school, so there is no privacy for the students. Our school also bans personal expression, like certain hairstyles or cultural accessories, isn't just unfair. It goes against Article 13, which gives us the right to express ourselves, not only through words, but also through our creativity and appearance.

Over controlling policies harms mental health – Constant surveillance and harsh punishments increase stress and anxiety. It kills creativity.

Innovation comes from freedom, not fear of breaking a rule. It also encourages rebellion – some students who feel powerless often push back harder. Most importantly, ignoring student voices violates our rights. Article 12 isn't just a legal principle—it's a reminder that we deserve respect.

You may ask why don't us students just speak up? You get punished for speaking up. If you complain about too much homework, some teachers might say, 'Stop being lazy!' Instead of listening, in some other situations you might even get punished.

Schools always enforce One-Way Discipline. Rules are enforced the same way for everyone, even if a student has a good reason, for example, forgetting homework because of family problems.

In 2023, many Hong Kong students protested their heavy homework load by not doing any assignments for a whole week. Their parents supported this action, understanding the stress and pressure students face from academic overload. This showed growing concern over the intense school demands affecting students' well-being.

Schools should take a better approach. Schools should guide, not control. Here's how: There should be flexible policies – Dress codes should be fair. Discipline should be educational, not just punitive.



If talking to teachers feels hard, students can ask their parents or form a group to share their concerns. When many students and parents speak together, it's more convincing and teachers are more likely to listen without rejecting.

Student involvement is also important, it lets students help shape rules. If a policy affects us, we should have a say. We should know our rights, students have the right to express opinions and ask questions respectfully. Schools can't silence you just because they disagree as long as you don't disrupt classes. We also have to be determined if we are to make a difference, CHANGE TAKES TIME, so speak positively and don't get discouraged BE PATIENT AND PERSISTENT.

Schools should teach responsibility – instead of banning phones, teach digital ethics, and instead of punishing mistakes, use them as learning moments.

Schools should prepare us for life—and life requires critical thinking, freedom, and responsibility. Overly controlling policies don't teach discipline; they teach blind obedience.

If Hong Kong truly upholds child rights, then schools must respect Article 12—listen to students, trust us with responsibility, and create an environment where we can grow, not just obey.

You might say students are just there to complain, and they can't make a real difference by getting involved. But joining student councils, sharing ideas in meetings, or leading surveys helps shape fairer rules. When we work together responsibly, we show we're ready to be heard and to create a better school for everyone.

As the Convention on the Rights of the Child states: "Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them... and to have those opinions taken seriously."

Let's make sure our schools remember that.

Section 9: Special protection measures for marginalized children

Findings from the Children Survey:

- More than half of the total children respondents thought the minimum age of criminal responsibility is 16-18 years old. Indeed, Hong Kong's minimum age of criminal responsibility is only 10 and the children respondents exclaimed as VERY LOW.
- Only 10.7% of respondents knows a minor who has been charged, punished or sentenced for different reasons, and their current situations are staying in a girls' home, have gone overseas, or feeling lost as they felt difficult to be reintegrated into the society.
- Over 53% of the respondents know some children who are of ethnic minority origins in one way or another in their community. Most of the respondents think that communication and language are their major challenges, and they also have difficulties in finding jobs, and face discrimination due to the differences of language, skin color, culture, and customs.
- More than 56% of the respondents know someone who is a new immigrant from Mainland China. Respondents cited that the usage of Cantonese and English are their major challenges. Besides, they also face discrimination and exclusion as some people in Hong Kong have a bad impression towards them.



Children's article

Livelihood challenges of children refugees and asylum seekers

Hong Kong is not a signatory to the United Nations' Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and since 2014, Hong Kong Government has introduced the "United Screening Mechanism to screen non-refoulement, or protection claims" (USM). The likelihood of asylum seekers reaching refugee status is low.

According to Immigration Department Annual Report 2021, "During this period, we determined 20,453 claims, of which 257 claims were substantiated"³⁷ resulting in a substantiation rate of 1.25% only. This process can take years as a result of appeals and others, and places heavy strain on a child's well-being.

In our direct interview, an 18-year-old girl originating from Sri Lanka has shared that she has been seeking refugee status since she was just 3 years old. She elaborated how this prolonged and stressful process has left her unable to "look to the future ahead... because we don't know what's going to happen."

Although asylum seekers can apply for a non-refoulement claim, only 1% of the applications are successful. Even with a non-refoulement guarantee, they are still considered as illegal immigrants - they are not entitled to governmental support. This results in a host of challenges for these children, including a lack of official documentation and financial burdens to their families.

Much of the plight faced by children asylum seekers can be attributed to their lack of official documentation, such as passports or identification documents. According to the Immigration Department, as of June 2015, out of the 9,940 "non-refoulement claimants", "504 were under 18 years old; 269 of them were born here but not recognized as residents of Hong Kong and effectively stateless"³⁸(SCMP). As a result, many asylum seekers are homeless as "there are no hostels that accept asylum seekers because of their lack of Hong Kong Identity Cards"³⁹ (SoCO, 2020).

Furthermore, refugees in Hong Kong do not have the right to work unless given special permission by the Immigration Department. Instead, claimants rely on the HK\$40 worth of food vouchers per day as well as the HK\$1,500 per month to pay for rent⁴⁰ (Justice Centre Hong Kong). Government support to claimants is limited to \$3,200 a month for shelter, food, utilities and everything else⁴¹ (Refugee Union, 2022). According to local NGO Christian Action, "as such, they struggle to make ends meet in a very expensive city". Therefore, parents may face financial difficulties when caring for their children.

In order to protect the rights of these children, it is recommended that further support is given to families in such situations. Moreover, the processing of these individuals should be improved to become more efficient and more accepting.

³⁷Immigration Department (2021), Annual Report. https://www.immd.gov.hk/publications/a_report_2021/en/chapter6.html

³⁸Carvalho, R., & Carvalho, R. (2015, July 11). HK parents of refugee children face hurdles to get them an education. South China Morning Post. <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/education-community/article/1837307/hk-parents-refugee-children-face-hurdles-get-them>

³⁹Society for Community Organization (SoCO). (2020). Asylum seekers denied right to food and shelter. <https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0621cb2-2020-1e.pdf>

⁴⁰Justice Centre Hong Kong. (n.d.). #hungryforchange. #HungryForChange. <https://hungryforchange.justicecentre.org.hk/>

⁴¹Admin. (2022, October 5). *Support Refugee Families in Hong Kong*. Refugee Union. <https://refugeeunion.org/support-refugee-families-in-hong-kong/>

Children's article

Education challenges of children refugees and asylum seekers

The lack of official documentation of asylum seeking and refugee children hinders their ability to get a fulfilling and complete education. This begins when they enter primary school. The South China Morning Post reported that a daughter of a Filipino mother and a Pakistani father was unable to attend primary school until she was 8-years-old. The difficulty of placing her in school was because of a lack of a birth certificate, which is the reason that many refugee parents “struggle to give an education to their children, even though many of them were born in Hong Kong”⁴² (SCMP).

These challenges continue as they go through their studies. In our direct interview, a 16-year-old refugee originating from Egypt shared that her lack of documentation prevented her from checking out books from public libraries and furthering her education, a right that all local children have. She also explained that refugee children also face the additional challenge of learning Chinese, a subject that is compulsory for students in public schools. Hence, demonstrating the lack of nuanced learning opportunities in the local school system that cater for different international students and their linguistic needs. As a result, these children are required to sit through the rigorous DSE Chinese curriculum, putting them at a significant disadvantage in public exams and decreasing their competitiveness in university applications in comparison to local children.

These education difficulties follow refugee children beyond their primary and secondary years and into levels of higher education as well. Though most Hong Kong students apply to local universities through the JUPAS system, refugee children applying to higher education are required to apply as an international student through the Non-JUPAS application system even though they have gone through the local DSE curriculum. This puts them in a very disadvantaged position and their equal opportunities in education is in question.

Moreover, refugees in Hong Kong do not have the right to work unless given special permission by the Immigration Department (Justice Centre Hong Kong). Hence, parents face financial burdens when trying to support their children's journey towards higher education. The higher application cost required by the non-JUPAS system, though one-off, is not realistically achievable by many families, increasing the barrier for obtaining education. However, even if these children are able to apply to universities there is no guarantee that they will be able to go. According to the 18-year-old refugee girl originating from Sri Lanka, when applying to universities outside of Hong Kong, “we need to ask Immigration for permission” and “we need to find a sponsor” to help pay for higher education school fees.

⁴²Carvalho, R., & Carvalho, R. (2015, July 11). HK parents of refugee children face hurdles to get them an education. South China Morning Post. <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/education-community/article/1837307/hk-parents-refugee-children-face-hurdles-get-them>

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