

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Project Title:** A Study of Low-Income Mainland-Hong Kong Cross-Border Families

**Reference No.:** R-20 17/18-106r

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### Objectives:

- (1) To explore the everyday challenges of low-income Mainland parent(s) and their children in Hong Kong;
- (2) To understand the education opportunities of low-income Hong Kong-born Mainland children in Hong Kong; and
- (3) To inform government policies relating to impoverished Mainland parents and their children

### Method

Data are drawn from home visits and in-depth semi-structured individual interviews. Twenty-eight undergraduate and postgraduate student researchers were recruited to conduct monthly home visits, under the supervision of the PI and Co-Is, to 28 low-income Mainland-Hong Kong cross-border families. From January to May, 2018, five home visits to each family and one in-depth semi-structured pair-interview (parent and the child) per family were conducted. With the consent of informants, interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed for analysis using the constant comparative method.

### Key Findings

#### *Reasons for Giving Birth and Staying in Hong Kong*

1. For various reasons, parents gave birth in Hong Kong to evade China's one-child policy. One common reason was that the traditional Chinese patriarchal norms in the Mainland produced pressures from in-laws, husband, or even the mother herself to have at least one son. Another reason was unintended pregnancy.
2. Parents received inaccurate information about Hong Kong's migration and education policies, leading them to underestimate the challenges they would face in Hong Kong.

### Regarding Challenges Facing Parents

1. Cross-border families are most challenged in areas of income, housing, school place for children, visa, family separation, and social support.
2. They feel they are excluded from any government social provision in Hong Kong.
3. Their sense of belonging to Hong Kong is discouraged by the difficult livelihood and the general negative social ethos in Hong Kong against Mainlanders.

### Regarding Educational Opportunities of their Children

1. Parents feel they can offer little support for their children partly because of their lack of knowledge on the local educational system and partly because of their low education level.
2. They also report that their children are sometimes excluded from social support because of their lack of permanent resident status.
3. In many cases, tensions between parents and children build up as children's academic performance does not meet the parents' expectations, and parents are not able to provide schoolwork assistance.

## **Policy Suggestions**

### *Access to Social Services and Resources*

We suggest that the Government and other social service providers should revisit their related policies to make sure no eligible children are denied access to resources on grounds of the residency status of their parents.

### Social Security

We suggest reverting the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme application to the pre-2008 policy to allow Hong Kong-born Mainland children under the age of 18 to apply on an individual basis.

### Visa and Period of Stay

We suggest that the "One-year Multiple Entry Permit" should cover all cross-border parents who need to stay and take care of their children in Hong Kong, regardless whether their spouses are Hong Kong permanent residents or not.

### Household Registration (Hukou)

We suggest implementing a proper mechanism for parents to voluntarily exchange their children's Hong Kong permanent resident status with Mainland hukou.

*Special Employment Permission*

We suggest that the Hong Kong government should consider granting conditional temporary work permission to parents of low-income cross-border families.

*Promotion of Equal Opportunities and Elimination of Discrimination*

We suggest that the Government should conduct comprehensive public consultation and research on discrimination on grounds of residency status to address the discrimination widely experienced by cross-border families.

