

**CENTRAL POLICY UNIT  
HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE  
REGION**

**A CONSULTANCY STUDY ON THE NEEDS AND  
INTEGRATION INTO LOCAL COMMUNITIES  
OF HONG KONG PEOPLE LIVING IN  
SHENZHEN, DONGGUAN AND GUANGZHOU**

**THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY  
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# **Executive Summary**

## **Objectives of the Consultancy Study**

This study aims to assist the Government in collecting information about and analyzing the needs and help-seeking patterns of Hong Kong people living in Shenzhen, Dongguan and Guangzhou as well as the extent to which they have integrated into the local communities, and to recommend strategies and responses for the Government's consideration.

## **Basic findings**

### *Needs and help seeking patterns:*

For people in retirement, the most acute problem is rapidly rising cost of living. The central government and local authorities in the PRD are determined to raise wages rapidly and the rising income of the local population in the PRD cities will certainly mean a continuous escalation of living costs. Compounded with the rise of RMB against the Hong Kong dollar, Hong Kong people living on their savings in PRD find their wealth depleting much more rapidly than they had planned.

The problem is made worse by the lack of access to local social welfare and public services as Hong Kong people living in these PRD cities are not registered local residents there. Without personal social insurance accounts for medical, unemployment, retirement benefits, or an old age certificate that gives fee reduction or exemption on public transport, people without an income or on a low income live an insecure life. As a result they minimize their expenses on transportation and social activities which further hinders social and cultural integration.

People who are economically active usually hold managerial positions in the PRD cities and their income offers a relatively better quality of life. The problems that they face mostly relate to family matters, especially schooling for their children. They also get into trouble when they require medical care.

When they need assistance, most contact their friends and relatives who are also living in the PRD cities. For certain specific issues, they consult the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions, which has offices in these PRD

cities, or less frequently the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Guangdong Province.

*Integration into the local communities:*

The study found that cultural adaptation and social integration is not a crucial factor in determining residential choice in Mainland China in comparison to other factors such as costs of living and the convenience of work and better career prospects. People in retirement do not venture out into the neighbourhood or society-at-large and beyond as much as economically and socially more active people of a younger age. The ease of transportation allows them to maintain social networks and family relationships at a larger spatial scale. The increase in relocation of retirees will also create an advantage of agglomeration for the emergence of enclaves/communities (not just in the form of institutional set-ups for the aged) of Hong Kong retirees and their relatives and friends in the PRD region. This will reduce the stress of cultural adaptation and the need for social integration.

For Hong Kong people working in Shenzhen (and to a lesser extent Dongguan also), the compression of distance and time between Hong Kong and Shenzhen will make them feel more at home in Shenzhen. Many of the government-sponsored services in Hong Kong that Hong Kong residents are eligible for can be accessed easily from Shenzhen. They can also maintain and participate actively in their existing social network in Hong Kong. Moving to Shenzhen might be the same as moving into a different district in Hong Kong, in particular a new district that does not have adequate public services provided by the SAR Government. The issues of cultural adaptation and social integration will become less visible and important for them.

The study found the acculturation strategy most adopted is separation. The separation of their work, education and even social lives away from the residing neighbourhoods and communities will be detrimental to any possible assimilation and integration, although this would prevent marginalization.

**Policy Recommendations**

To divert demand by setting up identical facilities and services in Shenzhen or elsewhere in the PRD region would have a serious impact on the public service sector of Hong Kong. It would also be detrimental to the promotion of social integration. The Hong Kong SAR Government should consider the inclusion of the PRD region into Hong Kong in its policy considerations or vice versa in the form of a PRD metropolitan region and shift

the public policy philosophy of Hong Kong from territorially bound to that of people-centered portability. With these considerations in mind, the SAR Government should:

1. Facilitate physically able residents in the PRD region to use existing facilities and services in Hong Kong by making cross-boundary transport convenient and inexpensive;
2. Reduce the special charge premium imposed on railway transport to Shenzhen and beyond;
3. Set up transit points or information/referral offices at strategic locations in the PRD regions, partly to replace or supplement existing limited services of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions, and partly to increase the knowledge of and accessibility to services offered by the SAR Government either in the PRD or in Hong Kong. For an interim strategy, the SAR Government could provide resources to the existing offices of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions in the PRD to improve their services for Hong Kong residents there;
4. Operate GPS-based information and referral services in cooperation with local telecommunication carriers in the region to assist Hong Kong residents in the process of integration into the local communities;
5. Work closely with the Guangdong Provincial Government and PRD city administrations to increase the accessibility of Hong Kong residents to services (including but not limited to retirement and old age benefits, medical, education and housing benefits for both economically active and inactive people) provided locally as far as permitted by national policies and regulation on a national treatment basis;
6. Remove or at least reduce the restrictions it has imposed on the operation of publicly funded or subsidized NGOs and social services organizations and encourage them to deliver their services to Hong Kong residents and their families living and working in the PRD region;
7. Change the restrictions on the benefits of the Normal Old Age Allowance by regarding the PRD cities as equivalent to the domestic territory of Hong Kong so that living in the PRD cities is similar to continue living in Hong Kong; and
8. Set up clinics and schools in the PRD cities. These services should not be exclusively for Hong Kong residents, but rather cater also for Mainland

residents on a cost recovery basis. They should not be a replacement of services offered in Hong Kong but a supplement.