

5 February 2014

English translation of the Apple Daily article on kindergarten support

<http://vfnw.org/2014/02/06/apple-daily-lack-of-assistance-for-kindergarten-children/>

Refugees faced life-threatening danger and were forced to leave their homes. While they escaped to Hong Kong, they can survive with no respect. But the most painful to them is that their children cannot go to the kindergarten. Ibrahim, who is from Togo, have been stuck in Hong Kong for more than nine years. He is not allowed to work while he is waiting for his refugee's claim result. He receives \$3,600 every month from the government assistance for living. However, he cannot afford to pay \$4000 expenditure on kindergarten's fees and transportation cost. He accused that the government on one hand allow their children to study here but on the other hand they have not provided enough assistance. This is not fair. He urges the government to review this policy.

Vision First Executive Director Cosmo Beatson estimated that there are around 220 age-eligible for kindergarten 'little refugee'. Part of the refugees will take the risk to be an illegal worker in order to get the money to support their children. Cosmo said that the claimants are protected by the [Torture Convention as well as UN Convention on the rights of a child]. They cannot be refouled. They are legal residence while they are waiting for their refugee's result. Their children should receive equal educational opportunities. He says, "*The Government has the obligation to educate these children*".

The Education Bureau said the kindergarten attendance is not compulsory. The Bureau has not provided space for the local and non-local student. But if the Immigration Department does not object, refugees can study here. The mode of application is the same as local student.

Also, the Student Financial Assistance Agency aims to help the Hong Kong student with an ID card. But if necessary, they will also offer help to the asylum seekers based on humanitarian reason.