

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government



Report on

The Implementation of the

Agenda for Action for the

Asian & Pacific Decade Of

**Disabled Persons
(1993 - 2002)**

IN HONG KONG, CHINA

Report on the Implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993 - 2002) in Hong Kong, China

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INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on the major achievements and priority areas for improvement in the implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993 – 2002) in Hong Kong, China. The report in the format suggested by UN ESCAP is prepared by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSARG) in consultation with the Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in the Rehabilitation sector in Hong Kong through the Joint Council for the Physically and Mentally Disabled. The report has been endorsed by the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee which is the principal body advising the HKSARG on matters pertaining to disability.

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Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993 - 2002) in Hong Kong, China**

PART I

ACHIEVEMENTS

Report on the Implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993 - 2002) in Hong Kong, China

A) National Co-ordination

1. In 1995, the Government revamped the then Rehabilitation Development Co-ordinating Committee (RDCC) by revising its terms of reference and adding more people with disabilities and community representatives to the membership with a view to strengthening co-ordination. The RDCC was also retitled as the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC) which advises the government on important policies concerning people with disabilities. There are three sub-committees under the auspices of RAC to deal with access, employment and public education. The RAC and its three sub-committees have a wide representation from government, public bodies, NGOs, people with disabilities, parents organizations, self-help groups and local personalities.
2. We have also put in place an executive structure to co-ordinate matters pertaining to people with disabilities. The Commissioner for Rehabilitation is responsible to the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food for the formulation of overall policy on rehabilitation, and for co-ordinating the planning and allocation of resources for provision of rehabilitation services by government departments and NGOs.
3. In 1998, we issued the Rehabilitation Programme Plan (RPP) which set out the current and projected provision of rehabilitation services run by government departments, statutory bodies and over 90 NGOs. The RPP is reviewed and updated regularly and involves extensive consultation with relevant government and non-government bodies. Priorities for action and issues of concern are identified.
4. The majority of NGOs representing or working for people with disabilities are members of the Joint Council for Physically and Mentally Disabled/Hong Kong Council of Social Service. The Joint Council is a coordinating body working closely with the Government in the planning and development of rehabilitation services, and facilitating consultation and communication between the government and non-government sectors.
5. Since 1993, territory-wide activities have been organized annually in Hong Kong in celebration of the International Day of Disabled Persons. Continued efforts in spreading the theme of "A Society for All", including using a network of 18 core groups formed under or linked with the respective District Councils, have helped promote a positive image of people with disabilities amongst the general public.

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B) Legislation

1. To ensure equal opportunities for people with disabilities so as to facilitate their integration into the community to the fullest extent possible, the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) was enacted and brought into full operation in 1996. At the same time, the Government set up an independent statutory body called the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) to protect the rights of people with disabilities by enforcing the DDO.
2. The Mental Health Ordinance was amended in 1997 with a view to strengthening legal safeguards for the well-being of mentally incapacitated persons (MIPs) under the Ordinance. An independent Guardianship Board was established in February 1999 to appoint guardians for MIPs.
3. To reduce the incidence of disability, we have developed legislation for road safety, the safe design and use of buildings, and occupational safety. The relevant legislation includes the Road Traffic Ordinance, Buildings Ordinance, the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance and the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance.
4. Social security is provided by the Government to meet the basic needs of the disadvantaged including the disabled. For people with disabilities who encounter financial difficulties in meeting their basic needs, they may apply for financial assistance under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme which is provided on a means-tested basis. For severely disabled persons, they may apply for a non-means-tested flat-rate disability allowance under the Social Security Allowance (SSA) Scheme. A higher disability allowance equivalent to twice the amount of normal disability allowance is payable to severely disabled persons requiring constant attendance from others in their daily life but not receiving such care in a government or subvented residential institution or a medical institution under the Hospital Authority. In 2001/02, there were over 87 000 people with disabilities receiving financial assistance under the CSSA Scheme and another 103 000 people with disabilities receiving payments under the SSA Scheme. The total expenditure was HK\$5.6 billion (US\$718 million)* in 2001/02.

* Unless otherwise stated, a conversion rate of US\$1 : HK\$7.8 is applied

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C) Information

1. A territory-wide survey was conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2000 to collect information on persons with disabilities and chronic diseases. Apart from the number and prevalence rate of persons with selected types of disability and chronic diseases, the survey also collected information on the social and economic characteristics of these persons.
2. The Agenda for Action and the revised targets have been translated into Chinese and uploaded onto the Government web sites. Various Government Bureaux and Departments are examining the policies and activities under their purviews.
3. The Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB) maintains a Central Registry for Rehabilitation (CRR) for the collection and compilation of information on people with disabilities with a view to providing statistics to other government bureaux/departments and NGOs for the planning and delivery of rehabilitation services and research purposes. Registration with the CRR is on a voluntary basis. Since January 1999, the CRR has issued registration cards to registrants upon application. The registration card is evidence of the registrant's disability status. Although the registration card is not a privileged card, some service providers and shoppers may choose to accept it as proof of identity when offering people with disabilities certain privileges.

D) Public Awareness

1. Under the steer of a Sub-committee set up under the RAC, an inter-sectoral approach has been adopted in launching publicity programmes and activities including seminars, exhibitions, road shows etc to promote a positive image of people with disabilities. A Mental Health Month is held in October each year to promote public awareness and acceptance of people with mental problems. In addition, an annual celebration of the International Day of Disabled Persons has been organized jointly by the Government and NGOs since 1993. In addition, we have produced a number of TV shows and announcements of public interests on the talent and abilities of people with disabilities since 1994. Since the beginning of the Decade period, we have spent HK\$61 million (US\$7.8 million) on these publicity programmes.

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2. The Government has devised policies to encourage and facilitate students with disabilities to receive 'main stream' education. In July 2001, a "Code of Practice on Education" was introduced under the DDO to provide guidelines and advice to students with disabilities and providers of the education service.
3. To commemorate the successful conclusion of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons in December 2002, the Government will jointly organize a series of promotional activities. Amongst these activities, the Post Office will issue a special souvenir cover and postmark. A large scale tree-planting event participated by both people with disabilities and abled bodies together with other high profile promotion programmes will also be held. A sum of HK\$1.5 million (US\$0.19 million) has been earmarked to fund these activities.
4. Our disabled athletes have actively participated in international competitions and have achieved outstanding results. To support their pursuit for sporting excellence, the Government has provided HK\$50 million (US\$6.4 million) to set up the Hong Kong Paralympians Fund. The Fund disburses grants to various programmes with a view to providing support to disabled athletes during all stages of their sporting career and thereafter.
5. To promote the employment of people with disabilities, the Labour Department conducts publicity activities on a regular basis to enhance the understanding of employers and the public about the working abilities of disabled people. These activities include annual awards to outstanding disabled employees and enlightened employers, exhibitions, seminars and radio programmes.

E) Accessibility and Communication

1. Under the Buildings Ordinance, certain types of new buildings are required to provide proper access and facilities to people with disabilities. In 1997, we introduced the "Design Manual Barrier Free Access 1997" setting out the design requirements for providing proper access to and appropriate facilities in a building for, persons with disabilities.

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2. Both the Government and public transport operators are committed to improving the accessibility of various transport facilities to people with disabilities. A “Working Group on Access to Public Transport by People with Disabilities” was set up in 1993 to regularly monitor the implementation of the programme. Members comprise Government officials, public transport operators, and representatives of disability groups. Over the past few years, substantial improvements have been achieved in introducing ‘barrier-free’ facilities provided by trains, trams, buses, taxis, public light buses and ferries. A phased programme is being carried out by franchised bus operators to ensure that all new buses are accessible to people with disabilities.
3. Since 2000, the Government has launched a series of measures to promote access to and use of, information technology by people with disabilities. Under these initiatives, computers will be procured and installed in rehabilitation units to provide free internet access and general computer training, benefiting 15 000 people with disabilities. Special facilities for visually impaired persons, such as Power Braille, Braille printers and voice synthesizers are made available at designated cyber points in the community. In addition, in collaboration with the IT industry and relevant NGOs, we have developed a set of web accessibility guidelines with reference to international standards to facilitate the access of the blind and the visually impaired. The guidelines will be enforced in all Government websites in 2002. We will also encourage government-related organisations to adopt the guidelines and collaborate with IT professionals to promote its adoption in private sector websites.

F) Education

1. In 2001, the EOC issued a “Code of Practice on Education” under the DDO. The Code is an aid to the providers and recipients of education services. For the providers, the Code helps them understand what may or may not constitute an unlawful act under the DDO. For recipients, it helps them to understand their rights and obligations under the law. The Code also gives practical guidelines on how to comply with the legal requirements.
2. In Hong Kong, early intervention programmes are provided for disabled children starting from birth. Parents are encouraged to actively participate in the programmes. Specialised child care centre and integrated programmes in regular pre-schools are available for disabled children of various severity aged between 2 and 6 years old.

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Since the beginning of the Decade, the provision of pre-school services has increased by 44%. In 2001-02, we provide about 4 700 pre-school places for children with disabilities.

3. All children who are residents of Hong Kong, including those with disabilities are entitled to nine years' free and universal basic education up to the junior secondary level. Thereafter, they either continue their studies in mainstream schools or receive vocational training.
4. Under the Government policy of 'Integrated Education', students with disabilities are provided with ample opportunities to study in 'mainstream' schools. The Education Department has earmarked resources to provide support and assistance to schools and training to teachers in meeting the special needs of students with disabilities. In the 2001/02 school year, about 1 800 students with disabilities are studying in mainstream primary and secondary schools and supported by various support services.
5. Students with disabilities can pursue post-secondary education along side their peers. Tertiary institutions in Hong Kong adopt an open and equitable admission mechanism, providing equal opportunities to students with disabilities.

G) Training and Employment

1. A Sub-Committee on Employment has been set up under the auspices of the RAC to advise the Government on employment matters of people with disabilities. Membership of this Sub-Committee comprises government officials, representatives from business sector, public bodies, NGOs and people with disabilities. Through the Skill Centres run by the Vocational Training Council and NGOs, we provide vocational training to people with disabilities. Since the beginning of the Decade, provision has increased by 50% to over 1 250 places in 2001-02. In 2001, over 80% of graduates from the Skills Centres found jobs in the open market. In 2001-02, the total expenditure on Skills Centres was HK\$143.5 million. (US\$18.4 million)
2. In 1997, the EOC issued a "Code of Practice on Employment" in accordance with the DDO. This Code is designed to help employees with a disability, their colleagues, employers and other concerned parties understand their responsibilities under the DDO.

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The Code also provides guidance on the procedures and systems that can help to prevent disability discrimination and to deal with unlawful acts in employment.

3. In 2001, the Government established a “Marketing Consultancy Office” on a permanent basis, enhancing the employment opportunities for people with disabilities through innovative, effective and efficient business development and marketing approaches and by working in close collaboration with NGOs and business sector organizations.
4. With subvention from the Government, NGOs operate sheltered workshops (SW) and supported employment (SE) services for people with disabilities, to provide them with job opportunities. The objective is to enhance their independency and encourage their self-reliance. In 2001/02, there are 7 500 SW places and 1 800 SE places, which when compared with the provision in 1992/93 represents an increase of 71% and over sixty fold respectively.
5. Throughout the Decade, the Labour Department has provided free recruitment services to employers and free employment assistance to job seekers with a disability. The objective is to assist persons with a disability to secure jobs in the open market that best suit their abilities, skills, qualifications and experience, with the ultimate aim of integrating them into the community and helping them to be financially independent. Special placement schemes, including the Trial Placement Scheme for People with Disabilities, are being implemented to enhance the employment opportunities of people with disabilities. In 2001, the Labour Department succeeded in helping 2 300 people with disabilities to secure employment.

H) Prevention of Causes of Disabilities

1. Through the on-going efforts of the Department of Health and other departments and agencies, we have launched a series of public education campaigns on anti-smoking, healthy eating and regular exercise etc. In 1998, the Healthy Living Campaign was launched. In 2000, the Healthy Ageing Campaign was launched to promote active and healthy ageing using the life course approach, targeting not only at the current generation of older people but future elderly as well. The campaign will run for 3 years.

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2. All babies born in major hospitals in Hong Kong are offered neonatal screening for glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency and congenital hypothyroidism. A comprehensive immunization programme is provided to all children in Hong Kong protecting them against nine common childhood infections including poliomyelitis, tuberculosis, rubella and hepatitis B. Health screening programmes for infants and young children, students, women and elderly are also available.
3. The Hospital Authority has identified 6 priority health areas for attention. These include cancer, cerebrovascular disease, ischaemic heart disease, end stage renal failure, chronic lung disease and diabetes mellitus. Strategies and programmes have been developed for secondary prevention and to maintain the health condition of patients. Early intervention programmes for the detection, assessment and treatment of patients with mental illness have also been established. Extensive patient and carer education are provided through direct training by healthcare professionals. In addition, the number of patient resource centres has increased from 8 in 1994/95 to 37 in 2001/02. Apart from providing healthcare information and support to patients and carers, these centres also promote self-care and self-help among discharged patients, facilitate formulation of self-help groups and community linkage.

I) Rehabilitation Services

1. A comprehensive range of rehabilitation services is provided to people with disabilities in accordance with their needs. Since 1992-93, the total rehabilitation expenditure has increased by over three-fold to HK\$15.1 billion in 2001-02. (US\$1.94 billion)
2. During the Decade, non-government bodies and private sector also contributed significantly in terms of funding support to the provision of rehabilitation services in Hong Kong. Key examples include the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust and the Community Chest which donated about HK\$1.1 billion (US\$0.14 billion) and HK\$0.4 billion (US\$0.05 billion) respectively to various programmes and projects for care and rehabilitation of people with disabilities between 1992-93 and 2001-02.
3. Following the successful launch of a pilot project, the Government has since 1997 subvented the Community Rehabilitation Network which works in collaboration with over 30 hospitals, 60 community and self-help organizations as well as government

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departments to provide community based rehabilitation programmes for chronically ill persons. In 2001-02, a total subvention of HK\$22.5 million (US\$2.88 million) was granted to the NGO concerned to operate the network.

4. In 2001/02, we embarked on a number of new initiatives to strengthen community-based support given to people with disabilities, their parents and families. Through re-engineering of existing services and injection of extra financial resources, more integrated after-care services are provided to the disabled living in the family. These services include social networking, personal and family counselling, experience-sharing, respite and occasional child care, home-based training and mutual support among families with disabled members.

J) Assistive Devices

1. We have put in place a system whereby people with disabilities are given assistance and support in acquiring assistive devices. People with disabilities requiring assistive devices can apply for financial assistance from both the Government (Disability Allowance) or other NGOs (grant or interest free loan). In Hong Kong, there are several specialist centres run by NGOs providing information about various assistive devices and counselling service free of charge. Some of these centres also provide repair and maintenance services. Usually people with disabilities can purchase their necessary assistive devices such as wheelchairs, hearing and visual aids from retail outlets.
2. Being a free port, Hong Kong does not levy any duty on the import or export of assistive devices for people with disabilities. Procedures relating to the import or export of such devices, like any other merchandise, are simple and straightforward.
3. Through an NGO, the Government provides subvented consultative services to people with disabilities on modifications to existing living or working environments and appropriate building designs, to suit specific needs.

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K) Self-help Organisations

1. Representatives of self-help groups including disabled persons, chronically ill and parents' associations sit on the RAC which advises the Government on all policies concerning people with disabilities.
2. The Community Rehabilitation Network which became fully funded by the Government in 1997, supports and facilitates the formation of self-help groups.
3. In 2001, the Government launched an initiative to enhance community support for people with disabilities. Under this initiative, HK\$6 million (US\$0.77 million) was provided as financial support to self-help organizations.
4. In addition, we have witnessed the establishment of a number of self-help organisations in Hong Kong over the past decade. Examples include the Association of Women with Disabilities advocating for the rights and well-being of women with disabilities, the Chosen Power being the first self-help group of people with mental handicap in Hong Kong, and the Amity Mutual Help Group for ex-mentally ill patients.

L) Regional Cooperation

1. As a staunch supporter of UN ESCAP and the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region hosted the Conference of the Campaign for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons in 1998.
2. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region takes an active part in international collaboration programmes which aim to promote the well being of people with disabilities. Government officials and NGO representatives have participated actively in the various conferences and programmes run by the UN ESCAP on disability matters.
3. Since 1993, the Joint Council for the Physically and Mentally Disabled and other NGOs in Hong Kong have actively participated in the annual Campaigns and related activities organized by the Regional NGO Network for Promotion of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (RNN) to echo the UN ESCAP movement.

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4. The First NGO Summit of international rehabilitation and disability organizations to promote the introduction of an UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities was held in Beijing in 2000 and was well attended by representatives of NGOs in Hong Kong.

5. Many NGOs in Hong Kong have supported and facilitated the development of rehabilitation programmes for people with disabilities in Mainland China over the past decade. In particular, the WHO project in which more than 2 000 personnel involved in community-based rehabilitation were trained.

PART II

PRIORITY ACTIVITIES NECESSARY TO FULFILL THE AGENDA FOR ACTION BY THE CONCLUSION OF THE DECADE

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A) National Co-ordination

1. To further enhance and broaden representation of people with disabilities in the membership of Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC) and its Sub-committees.
2. To devise a revised planning mechanism so as to ensure that appropriate rehabilitation services are provided to people with disabilities in a prompt and cost-effective manner.

B) Legislation

1. To introduce amendments to the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) having regard to the recommendations put forward by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) in its recent review of the Ordinance.
2. The Government will examine the operation of the legislation pertaining to the Guardianship Board (GB) which was established in 1999 to provide improved legal safeguards for mentally disordered and mentally handicapped persons aged 18 or above. The GB is empowered to receive and determine guardianship applications, make and review guardianship orders, as well as to give directions to guardians.
3. The Government has proposed to provide statutory exemption for the making of specialised format of printed works by non-profit-making bodies for visually impaired persons, as part of its current review of the Copyright Ordinance.

C) Information

1. On the basis of the survey on people with disabilities and chronic diseases in 2000, we intend to conduct a similar survey with a view to validating the findings of the initial survey, and to collect data for possible trend analysis.
2. The Government will consider the desirability and feasibility of attaching certain privileges to the registration card under the CRR. This will require consultation with and co-operation from, the private sector.

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D) Public Awareness

1. In the coming years, the Government will continue to encourage and support NGOs to mount publicity programmes and educational activities to promote a "Society for All" in helping people with disabilities achieve full integration and participation in the community. The Government will continue to provide resources for these public education programmes.
2. In view of the success of our disabled athletes in the pursuit of sporting excellence, the RAC will actively consider the establishment of a scheme to promote arts and culture among people with disabilities in Hong Kong. This scheme will need support and assistance from the Government, NGOs and charitable organisations.

E) Accessibility and Communication

1. We will conduct a comprehensive review of the "Design Manual Barrier Free Access 1997" in 2002/03.
2. We will expedite modification work to ensure that drop kerb pavements are provided at all road crossings by 2006.
3. We will expedite the installation of audible signals in all traffic lights at pedestrian crossings by 2004.
4. The Government will continue to work towards providing a barrier free environment for people with disabilities in Hong Kong. Efforts will be made towards the promotion and education of the public about the importance of making Hong Kong a barrier free city.
5. The Government has pledged to include caption or sign language in all its TV programmes. Commercial TV service providers have been encouraged to adopt similar measures as far as practicable.
6. The Government has secured the cooperation of franchised operators of different modes of public transport to extend the provision of accessible facilities for people with disabilities in a progressive manner.

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F) Education

1. In the coming years, the Government will continue to provide and improve the provision of pre-school services for children with a disability, by increasing the number of places and shortening the waiting list for such services. At the same time, we will strive to provide school aged children with disabilities adequate opportunities to receive education in either special schools or through the integration programme in ordinary schools.
2. The Government is committed to promoting integrated education for students with disabilities in the coming years. Schools are encouraged to adopt a whole-school approach to supporting the students with special educational needs. These schools, under the leadership of the school head, establish a school integration policy, create an inclusive environment and mobilize school personnel to support these students. In the 2001/02 school year, 66 schools in Hong Kong have adopted this approach.

G) Training and Employment

1. The Government is committed to enhancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Apart from providing vocational training to people with disabilities who have the potential and ability to work in the open employment market, we also help them to find employment through the programmes run by the Social Welfare Department and subvented NGOs. These services include Skills Centre, Sheltered Workshop, Day Activity Centre, Training and Activity Centre and Supported Employment. In addition, the Government will continue to explore the feasibility of introducing new measures including the setting up of an employers' forum, development of the social firm concept etc.
2. In order to promote the self-reliance of people with disabilities and to elevate their self-esteem by becoming contributing members of the community, the following measures in enhancing the employment opportunities for people with disabilities will be implemented starting 2001/02:
 - (a) a three year on-the-job training programme benefiting 360 disabled persons each year;

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- (b) a new scheme in which NGOs are given financial grants to operate small businesses which would employ mainly disabled persons as employees.
3. To further upgrade the facilities and equipment in Skills Centres for people with disabilities, by injecting extra funding of about HK\$8 million (US\$1.03 million).
 4. The Government will continue to lead by example in providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the civil service. The guiding principle is that candidates with disabilities, if found suitable for particular vacancies, are given preference over other applicants in recruitment exercises. Appropriate degree of preference will also be given to employees with disabilities in staff retention exercises. As at April 2001, there were over 3 600 civil servants with disabilities, representing about 2% of the total strength of the civil service.

H) Prevention of Causes of Disabilities

1. As a further step to promote a smoke free culture in Hong Kong, the Government conducted a public consultation in mid 2001 on the introduction of legislation which aims to prohibit smoking in restaurants and other public indoor premises including schools and workplaces.
2. Recognising the importance of mental health, a Mental Health Month is held in October each year under the steer of a sub-committee under the RAC to promote public awareness and acceptance of people with mental problems. In parallel, the Department of Health conducts promotional and educational activities to raise awareness of the importance of mental health among the population in particular to reduce the stigma associated with mental disease. The Department of Health also provides education to health professionals and other caregivers to improve mental health care at the community level.

I) Rehabilitation Services

1. Starting in 2001/02, the Government will implement a number of initiatives designed to enhance existing community-based services to people with disabilities and their families.

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At the same time, integrated after-care services to disabled persons living with their families will also be strengthened. These will greatly benefit people with disabilities living in a home-based environment.

2. The EOC will continue to promote the elimination of discrimination and will take appropriate action against infringements of the DDO.
3. In formulating its rehabilitation policies and measures, the Government will continue to conduct research into relevant issues affecting the interests of people with disabilities in order to develop evidence-based policies.

J) Assistive Devices

1. The Government will continue to offer assistance to people with disabilities in obtaining assistive devices. The NGO sector will continue to play a significant role in providing information and counselling service on various assistive devices.
2. Through subvention and funding support, the Government will continue to encourage and facilitate local research into assistive technology and product development of assistive equipment for people with disabilities.

K) Self-help Organizations

1. The Government will assist self-help organisations to grow and enhance their roles in pursuing the interests of respective groups and actively contributing to the formulation of rehabilitation policies. It is anticipated that financial support from the Government will benefit 20 000 people with disabilities from 38 self-help organisations.
2. The Government will continue to facilitate the self-help organizations to reflect the views and concern of people with disabilities through financial support and by inviting their representatives to take part in the deliberation of the relevant advisory boards and committees.

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L) Regional Cooperation

1. In 2002, we will continue to play an active role in regional cooperation activities, in particular those related to the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons. The NGO sector in Hong Kong will also continue their active participation in regional rehabilitation activities.



A SOCIETY FOR ALL

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