

A 30-year journey of public education and community mobilization in making an inclusive and rights-based society: the experiences of The Hong Kong Joint Council for People with Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

The Hong Kong Joint Council for People with Disabilities (the Joint Council) was established in 1964 and is the umbrella body of non-governmental organizations for and of persons with disabilities. The aims of the Joint Council are to promote the coordination and improvement of services and facilities for persons with disabilities, participate in policy review and formulation, conduct public education and develop new rehabilitation programmes. The organization has been organizing various programmes to promote rights of people with disabilities, inclusive environment, equal opportunity for people with disabilities etc. International Day of Disabled Persons In 1992, the United Nations declared 3 December as the International Day of Disabled Persons (IDDP) to celebrate the achievements and contributions of people with disabilities and to promote their integration into the community. Since 1993, the Joint Council has been organizing various society-wide celebrations of the IDDP. The main theme of the IDDP would change to promote different aims including inclusive education, employment opportunity for PWD, barrier-design and accessibility, arts and sports development for PWD etc. Main events are co-organized by local authorities, private companies and media. Programmes would include public acknowledgement of disability friendly employers, transport companies, government departments, etc. To promote public mobilization, transport companies and sports and arts facilities offer 1-day free travel for people with disabilities and their accompanying carers to enhance full participation of PWD in the community and to help promote social integration. The Ocean Park offered 8,000 free admission tickets for people with their carers to enjoy the amusement facilities in the park; and Hong Kong Disneyland offer similar free 5000 admission tickets. Inclusive Environment Recognition Scheme To recognize disability friendly and fully accessible buildings in the community, the Joint Council organizes the Inclusive Environment Recognition Scheme. It aims to encourage property developers, architecture industry, property management companies and property owners to build up an inclusive environment. The project has been supported by the Architectural Services Department, Buildings Department, RI ICTA Commission, Hong Kong Institute of Architects, Hong Kong Institution of Engineers, Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors, and Hong Kong Housing Authority. Buildings nominated for the Scheme Award would undergo an on-site inspection conducted by a team of qualified people with disabilities. The Awards presentations are held in prestigious platforms with wide media coverage. The Joint Council has been promoting disability inclusive and rights-based society through all sectors involvement and sustainable participation. The annual events have becoming a key part of community wide and local culture.