

Hong Kong's retrofitting programme

Hong Kong has established programmes that heavily invest in making existing premises and facilities accessible, supported by awareness-raising campaigns within departments and accessibility officers that give assistance to persons with disabilities.

ACCESS CO-ORDINATOR & OFFICER SCHEME AND BARRIER-FREE ACCESS & FACILITIES RETROFITTING PROGRAMME

Year of existence:	2010
Country/region of origin:	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China
Beneficiaries targeted:	All persons with disabilities
Responsible body:	Labour and Welfare Bureau
Stakeholders:	Public sector

FACTS & FIGURES

- 90% of the 3,500 premises covered have been retrofitted.
- 205 public walkways investigated and consequently 32 lift/ramp retrofitting works completed.
- 81 Access Co-ordinators/ 3600 Access Officers appointed.
- 675 staff participated in the Sign Language programme.

IN BRIEF

Together, Hong Kong's programmes: Access Co-ordinator & Access Officer Scheme and the Barrier-free Access & Facilities Retrofitting Programme of 2010 facilitated Government-wide collaborative efforts in enhancing the accessibility of public premises and facilities, sped up progress in upgrading facilities in existing premises and facilities, established a focal point in each policy bureau and department and in each venue to manage accessibility issues, and identified areas for improvement.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

Commitment

Hong Kong invested 167 million USD in retrofitting. Access Co-ordinators are paid by the relevant departments. In addition, the company The Link, which manages shopping malls in public housing estates, pledged to invest 26 million USD in upgrading.

Reporting

From 2011, quarterly progress reports are submitted to the Legislative Council, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Rehabilitation Committee. The Annexes include the implementation status for each premise.

Communication

Together, the Access Co-ordinator and the Access Officer establish a communication platform between Government departments and venues and the public.

HISTORY

Since Hong Kong introduced its first Design Manual: Access for the Disabled in 1984, significant progress has been made in measures to improve accessibility to the built environment for persons with disabilities. Yet, persons with disabilities continue to face a multitude of barriers. Using the Final Draft Design Manual: Barrier Free Access 2006 as a benchmark, the Equal Opportunities Commission conducted an investigation to ascertain the status regarding the accessibility of public premises. In 2010, the Commission issued its Formal Investigation Report on Accessibility in Publicly Accessible Premises, which included recommendations for the improvement of the accessibility, connectivity and interface of those premises. After a Task Force led by the Labour and Welfare Bureau analysed the premises managed by Government, the Housing Authority and others, it launched the Access Co-ordinator & Access Officer Scheme and the Barrier-free Access & Facilities Retrofitting Programme in 2010.

*«Broad in scope, well-funded and properly organised, the Access Co-ordinator Scheme and the Retrofitting Programme have considerably advanced accessibility of premises and facilities in Hong Kong.»
(Kam-yuen Allen Chan, Hong Kong Federation of Handicapped Youth, Hong Kong, China)*

KEY FEATURES

The ultimate objective of Hong Kong's Access Co-ordinator & Access Officer Scheme and Barrier-free Access & Facilities Retrofitting Programme is to establish a barrier-free environment. After the relevant Government departments completed their assessments on premises and facilities, a Task Force led by the Labour and Welfare Bureau developed a consolidated schedule for the retrofitting works covering 3,500 existing government premises and facilities, as well as around 240 public housing estates, at a total cost of 167 million USD. Premises and facilities covered include clinics, food markets, museums, tribunals, sports centres, and bus terminals. The Access Co-ordinator & Access Officer Scheme followed the model of the existing Gender Focal Points. An Access Coordinator is in charge of coordinating and raising staff awareness on accessibility issues within a policy bureau and department. An Access Officer gives persons with disabilities on-site assistance in each venue, conducts regular audit checks, takes timely follow-up actions and handles public enquiries and complaints.

IMPLEMENTATION

From 2011, quarterly progress reports were submitted to the Legislative Council and the Equal Opportunities Commission and uploaded to the website of the Labour and Welfare Bureau. For each premise or facility covered, the status of implementation can be found in detailed Annexes to the Progress Report. In carrying out works, consultations are conducted among groups of persons with disabilities and advisory bodies.

For Access Co-ordinators and Access Officers a webbased-training package is available in the government intranet and a Cyber Learning Centre Plus exist. In addition, a series of training seminars has been organized.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

One obstacle is still how best to deal with heritage and preservation orders. The policy is a soft law: if people do not comply, there is no punishment (there are also no plans for a bill yet). There are some problems with attitudinal barriers, e.g. toilets used as storage rooms, etc. and therefore disabled people's organisations are planning a public campaign.



To ensure that the design of barrier-free facilities meets their needs, works departments arranged site visits with organisations of persons with disabilities to elicit their feedback. (© Labour and Welfare Bureau, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, The People's Republic of China)

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