

Hong Kong as an international city is noted for qualities of different kinds. Being named as one of the most densely populated urban jungle, Hong Kong is by any standard lacking open space, both built and natural, for its over 6.5 millions of people. Our environment is not entirely friendly, particularly so to people of all ages who have mobility challenges. Given all the constraints, geographical, physical and financial, the Government and people of Hong Kong have put in significant efforts over the past three decades in crafting a barrier free society. Indeed, Hong Kong is proud to be one of the first several cities in the Asia and Pacific Region that have a barrier free legislation for over two decades and with satisfactory implementation impacts.

Barrier free legislation for built environment requires compliance with a set of minimum standards only. Our aim is to develop inclusive, friendly designs and practices that would enhance full participation and quality life for all people in our society. To do so, we need the proactive initiative and contribution of all concerned professionals. The research publications and awareness campaigns of the Architectural Services Department have set an excellent model. In fact, the efforts of the Department have already been recognized when its previous research publication on universal design inside buildings was awarded the Hong Kong Institute Of Architects Annual Award — Special Architectural Award (Architectural Research) in 2004.

Building on its past successes, the Department conducted a further research on open space, and published the *Universal Accessibility for External Areas, Open Spaces and Green Spaces*. This publication arrives at the historic time when disability

concerned sectors all over the world are celebrating the adoption of the International Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by the United Nations in December 2006. The UN Convention devotes an entire article, Article 9 on Accessibility, which requires States Parties to “take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas.”

The UN Special Rapporteur on Disability, while celebrating the adoption of the Convention, in her report on monitoring of the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities to the United Nations Commission on Social Development in February 2007, expressed her disappointment that since adoption of the Standard Rules by the UN, “67 countries have not yet implemented any accessibility programmes. In 62 countries the outdoor environment remains inaccessible to persons with disabilities.”

The research outputs on good practices on barrier free and universal design guidelines and practices on external areas, open spaces and green spaces from the Architectural Services Department will benefit not only Hong Kong, but also peoples of all nations in the world.

This Publication is very reader friendly, provides comprehensive and in-depth analysis and should rightly deserve the widest distribution to all sectors in our society.

Joseph Kwok

Chairman, Rehabilitation Advisory Committee

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