



# Cultivating a Socially and Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment: A Hong Kong and China Experience

---

**Mrs. Grace Chan, JP**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Asian Foundation for the Prevention of Blindness**  
**Hong Kong Blind Sports Association**

# 1. Introduction

---

Let's imagine if there are

- no guide paths on the roads/public places
- no screen doors on the platforms
- no audible traffic signals and
- no access to information technology,

# 1. Introduction

---

- **Will blind people be able to integrate into the society and lead an independent life?**

# 1. Introduction

---

- **The answer is NO!**
- **If the above situation exists, there will be less chances for blind people to have access to education and open employment.**

# 1. Introduction

---

- **To break the above barriers, the following social and psychological elements have to be addressed:**

# 1.1 Psychological Aspect

---

**There are some psychological process that the blind people will have to go through and overcome:**

- **a) Acceptance – To go through the process of acceptance of the fact that they have become blind**

# 1.1 Psychological Aspect

---

- **b) Adaptation – To adapt to the new life and to learn daily living skills**
- **c) Appreciation – To appreciate the support from the community , family members and friends**
- **d) Living with Disabilities – To learn how to live with vision loss**

# 1.2 Social Aspect

---

## 1.2.1 Social Discourse

**In the society, the general public used to think that ;**

- **it was bad luck to be hit by the cane of a blind person;**

# 1.2 Social Aspect

---

## 1.2.1 Social Discourse

- I think it is necessary to promote the public cause to remove the above invisible social stigma and obstacles.
- The public should be educated that it would not cause them bad luck when hit by the cane of a blind person.

# 1.2 Social Aspect

---

## 1.2.1 Social Discourse

- We should understand that blind people are given choices to engage in certain types of jobs.
- For instance, massage is one of the choices. Blind people are trained to be professional masseurs.

# 1.2 Social Aspect

---

## 1.2.1 Social Discourse

- **A Chinese blind masseur practicing in Canada is regarded by her patients as the “Healing Hands”.**

## 1.2 Social Policies

---

- **Government should formulate policies to create a barrier -free society for all**
- **NGOs should provide the professional advice and support to government to realize the said policies.**

## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

---

### ■ 2.1 Government Support

- 2.1.1 Public Awareness Programs –  
Through public education funding

## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

### ■ 2.1 Government Support

- 2.1.2 Barrier-Free Public Housing Estate
- To invest HK\$100 million (US\$12.5million) to improve the barrier-free facilities in Public Housing Estates.



## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

---

### ■ 2.1 Government Support

- 2.1.3 Transport for All – The Transport Department has installed audible traffic signals to all traffic lights in Hong Kong so as to create a Transport for All environment.

# II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

## ■ 2.1 Government Support



## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

---

### ■ 2.1 Government Support

- 2.1.4 Public Announcement System in Public Transport System – Government has encouraged all public transport operators in Hong Kong to install public announcement system in buses and MTRs.

## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

- **2.1 Government Support**
- **2.1.5 Design Manual – Mandatory Requirements for Barrier-Free Facilities in new buildings**



## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

---

### ■ 2.2 NGOs Support

- 2.2.1 Public Awareness Programs –  
To launch public education programs in shopping centres through exhibition, games, etc.

# II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

## ■ 2.2 NGOs Support



## Public Awareness Programs

## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

---

### ■ 2.2 NGOs Support

- 2.2.2 Barrier-Free Facilities – To provide professional advice to Housing Department's architects in designing tactile maps, tactile guide paths, etc.

## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

### ■ 2.2.2 Barrier-Free Facilities



**Tactile maps in Public Housing Estate**

## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

---

### ■ 2.2.3 Transport for All –

To provide professional advice to the Transport Department together with blind representatives as to the voice level and direction of loud speakers' installation to suit the blind people's needs.

## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

---

### ■ 2.2.4

- To introduce New Technology invented by a company in China to facilitate blind people access more information on Public Transport for the bus routes, time to arrive, etc. by use of a remote control.

## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

---

- **2.2.5 To promote IT Training & ICT**
  - **Computer Training Courses**
  - **Scan to Light Project**
  - **Establishment of the First Tele-Digital Library in 2006**
  - **Establishment of the First Information Accessibility Centre for the Blind in 2006**

## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

- 2.2.5 To promote IT Training & ICT
- Computer Training Courses



## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

- 2.2.5 To promote IT Training & ICT
- Scan to Light Project



## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

- 2.2.5 To promote IT Training & ICT
- Establishment of the First Tele-Digital Library in 2006



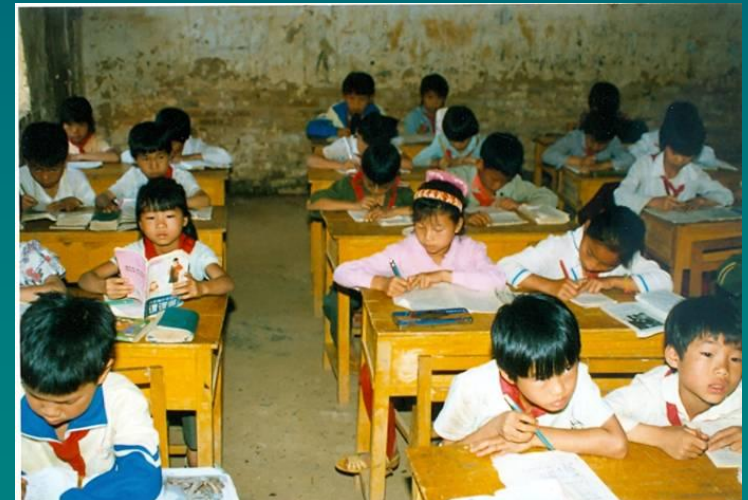
## II) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment

- 2.2.5 To promote IT Training & ICT
- Establishment of the First Information Accessibility Centre for the Blind in 2006



### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

- For those blind children and blind youth living in China, it would be even more difficult for them to integrate into society as most of them live in villages and remote areas.



### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

- To achieve this goal, it will require the assistance and support from 4 parties:

Government

NGOs

Family Members

Blind People

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- Here I would like to share with you my experience on cultivating a socially and psychologically enabling environment for people with visual impairment in China.

# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

## ■ 3.1

- **Promotion and Implementation of Orientation and Mobility Training programmes in China To Facilitate Independence**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **Orientation and Mobility Training, an essential skill for independent living and integration for people with visual impairment, was introduced to China in the late 1989 when Mr. Tom Blair, an Australian Orientation and Mobility Trainer, conducted the first known orientation and mobility training course.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **The author publicized and promoted this important training in the 1990s, when the author offered to the China Disabled Persons Federation and the China Ministry of Education to organize the said training courses to rehabilitation personnel and teachers working with people with visual impairment.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

- As a result, we have organised six O&M Instructors Training Courses in China in different cities from 1991 to 2005.



# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

**They include:**

- **Beijing (1991)**
- **Guangzhou (1993)**
- **Shanghai (1994)**
- **Qingdao (1998 and 2005) and**
- **Macau (1999).**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **About 200 Orientation and Mobility Instructors were trained and many of them have become Senior Orientation and Mobility Trainers and conducted O&M training in their own provinces and schools.**

# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience



## O&M Instructors Training Courses

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **At the same time, the author made repeated recommendation to relevant Officials of the China Ministry of Education to include Orientation and Mobility Training in the formal training curriculum of the Schools for the Blind.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- In 1998, the China Ministry of Education formally included O&M training in its new blind school curriculum.
- From then on, O&M Training becomes one of the essential skills that people with visual impairment in China will acquire during their educational process.

# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

## ■ 3.2

**Establishment of Education Resource Centre**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

**The Education Resource Centres (ERC) are located in Schools for the Blind in China. The ERCs are equipped with electronic Braille production devices, advanced talking book production equipment and adaptive equipment.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **The purposes are :**
  - i) To provide Braille reading material & talking books;**
  - ii) To provide adaptive equipment and low vision devices and**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- The purposes are :

- iii) To provide training on use of information technology for education of children with visual impairment studying in integrated classes and blind schools. The centre also serves as a training centre for teachers teaching visually impaired children in integrated classes.

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- The purposes are :
  - iii) With the establishment of the ERCs, children with visual impairment enrolling in integrated education in rural areas can receive the necessary braille reading material and talking books in time. They can study at the same pace with their sighted counterparts.

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **The first Education Resource Centre (ERC) was set up in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in 1997, with generous support from the late Mr. Y.C. Ho.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **Currently, there are 4 Education Resource Centres serving primary and secondary school visually impaired students, located respectively in:**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **Nanning of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region**
- **Guiyang of the Guizhou Province**
- **Qingdao of the Shangdong Province**
- **Nanjing of the Jiangsu Province.**

# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience



# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience



Resources Centres in China



### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **An education resource centre for people with visual impairment is located in Guangzhou Municipality to provide support to the general visually impaired population.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **A National Tertiary Education Resource Centre was established at Chang Chun University in the Jilin Province in 2004 to support integrated education for visually impaired students.**

# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience



Facilities of Resources Centre



# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience



**Facilities of Resources Centre**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

- The Chang Chun University became the first University in China that accepts enrolment of students with visual impairment into its regular programmes.



### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **Currently, the University has accepted visually impaired students enrolling in its Department of Education and Psychology.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **Apart from providing the necessary Braille and talking book material, and essential information technology training, the ERC also expands educational opportunities for students with visual impairment at all academic levels.**

# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **3.3**
- **Increased Primary Level Education Opportunities**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- It is estimated that there are around 100,000 visually impaired children in China. Most of them were living in rural areas far away from schools for the blind that are located in major cities.

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **Integrated education in rural primary schools is the only educational opportunity available to most of them. With the establishment of the ERCs, the training opportunities available for related teachers, integrated education places in rural villages are greatly increased.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- In the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, for example, number of visually impaired children enrolling in mainstream increased by three fold, from around 170 to over 550.

# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **3.4**

- **Expanded Senior High School Education**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **With the establishment of the ERCs, the related blind schools started to organize senior high school classes, and implemented integrated education at the senior high school level.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- A fine example is the Nanjing School for the Blind. The school is able to implement integrated education at the senior high school level in 2006 after establishment of the ERCs in 2005.

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

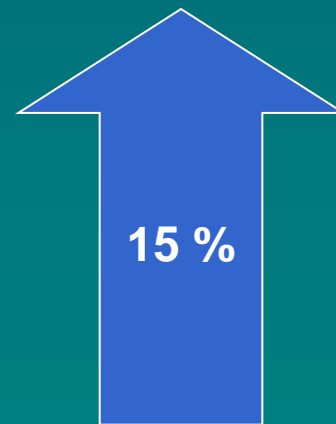
---

- **The Nanjing School for the Blind is also planning to start its own senior high school programme to allow more students to receive senior high school education and education at the tertiary level.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

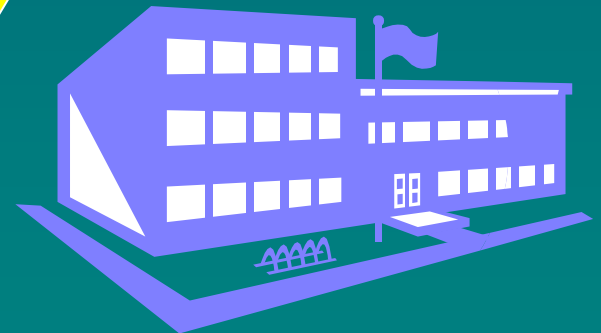
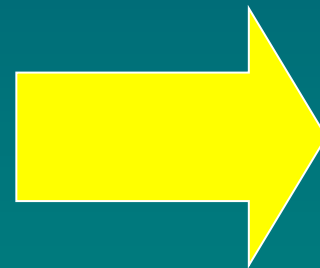
- **Academic results of students at the Qingdao School for the Blind, one of the few schools that offered senior high school programmes, have improved significantly by more than 15% since establishment of the ERC in 2005.**



### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

- As a result, in 2007, for example, 100% of its high school graduates are able to go on with tertiary education.

100 %  
High School Graduates



# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **3.5**
- **Increased Tertiary Educational Opportunities**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **With establishment of the National Tertiary Education Resource Centre in Chang Chun University in 2004, students with visual impairment now have the opportunity to pursue education and career beyond the traditional Chinese Medicine , Massage and Piano Tuning.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- The University experimented accepting students in the Department of Special Education in 2005, and opened its Department of Psychology and Foreign Language to students with visual impairment in 2007.

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

- This is a great breakthrough in China and it is my dream that in a few years time, there will be visually impaired psychologists, educators, economists and lawyers in China.

Psychologists

Educators

Economists

Lawyers

# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **3.6**

- **Popular Use of Information Technology**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **Extensive use of Information Technology is key to expanded opportunities for people with visual impairment. Over the past two decades, the author has been active in promoting use of affordable information technology in education and general access to information in China.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- Past efforts included organizing the first Leadership Training course for People with Visual Impairment in Beijing, China in 1998, Information Technology Training Camp for students with visual impairment in Qingdao in 2004 and 2005 ( in cooperation with ICEVI),

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **The First IT Training Course for Teachers of Blind Schools in Qingdao in 2007 and**
- **To encourage the China Braille Publishing House to develop the Braille interface software (Sunshine) to facilitate blind people to have access to information.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- In the above projects, the high cost of Braille display remain the deterring factor in popular utilization of information technology.

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- In the past few years, the author has focused on use of existing technology to enhance access to information technology by people with visual impairment.
- Some of the recent initiatives included:

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

i) Distribution of free speech synthesizing software in cooperation with commercial software company that would enable people with visual impairment access screen displays, and thus use of computer in all walks of life,

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- ii) Simple modification of existing scanners to read printed material to enable people with visual impairment to access printed material, and

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

**iii) Promotion of loaning computers for students in integrated classes to take class notes and access related information on line.**

# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **3.7**
- **Popular Use of Scanners**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

**Scanners equipped with Optical Character Reading software are an inexpensive means to enable people with visual impairment access to printed material.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

The author have embarked the “Scan to Light” project in Hong Kong in 2007 to distribute Scanners free of charge to people with visual impairment, and provide training to them on usage of the equipment.

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

**The result was encouraging, and participants expressed that they could read books and other printed material independently.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience



**Read books and other printed material independently**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

**The same concept was brought to the Nanjing School for the Blind. The HKSB supported the school to buy appropriate scanners at the ERCs, and provide training to the visually impaired students.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

**The response was overwhelming and plans are made to donate scanners to people with visual impairment in Nanjing Municipality.**

# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

- **3.8**
- **Distribution of Free Speech Synthesizing Software**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

**The Chinese Speech Synthesizing Software, developed by IBM Hong Kong, was distributed free to the Hong Kong Society for the Blind for further distribution to people with visual impairment and related organizations.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

**Using this software, people with visual impairment, after training, can access information displayed on the screen, and use information technology for education, socialization, and info-tainment.**

# III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience



### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

**In 2007, we have helped to install the software at the Chang Chun University National Tertiary Education Resource Centre and the Education Resource Centre at the Nanjing School for the Blind, and trained their related personnel and students on use of the software.**

### III) Creating a Socially & Psychologically Enabling Environment for People with Visual Impairment – China Experience

---

**Students were able to use the software after simple training. It was very exciting to witness the joyous moment when visually impaired students surfing the internet and acquiring information as needed.**

## IV) Conclusion

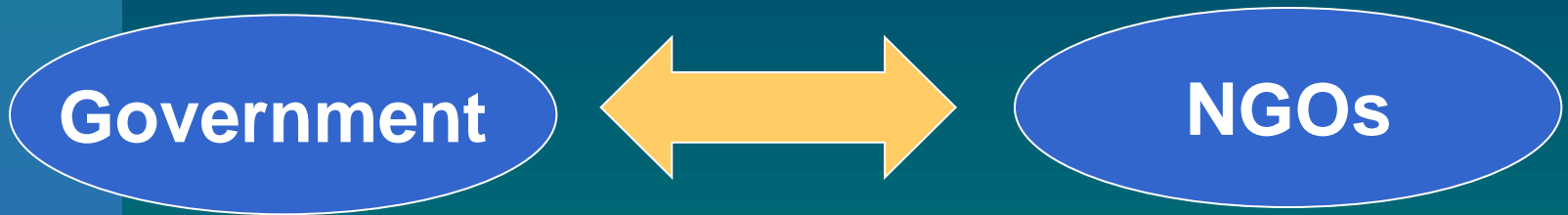
---

**In the past 20 years, the author has witnessed the great improvement of blind people in their daily living skills, educational and employment opportunities.**

## IV) Conclusion

---

- **Joint efforts :**



**in cultivating a socially and psychologically enabling environment for people with visual impairment in Hong Kong and China.**



**Thank you**

**Please contact me at :**

**grace@afpb.hk**