

**Meeting of the Legislative Council  
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting  
on 10 November 2003**

**Government's Responses to Suggestions/Comments  
by IT Bodies and other Non-government Organizations  
on Building a Digitally Inclusive Society and Related Issues**

<b>Suggestions / Comments</b>		<b>Government's Responses</b>
<b>Hong Kong Blind Union</b>		
1	The Government should provide financial assistance to visually impaired persons (VIPs) to acquire computers and assistive tools so that they can also have such facilities at home.	<p>While resources do not permit the Government to provide financial assistance to all VIPs to purchase their own personal computers (PCs) and assistive tools, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has supported the following grants for acquiring computers and assistive tools for VIPs -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ In mid 2001, 30 social service units for VIPs were provided with computer facilities with Internet access with the support of the Lotteries Fund.</li> <li>■ In January 2003, upon SWD's recommendation, the Retina Hong Kong was granted \$300,000 from the fund "Round the World in 80 Ways" for the purchase of assistive tools for VIPs. These tools are put on loan for use by VIPs.</li> </ul>

		<p>■ In October 2003, SWD also recommended to the Board of Management of the Chinese Permanent Cemeteries to provide funding support of about \$180,000 to the Hong Kong Blind Union for the purchase of assistive tools which would be made available on loan to VIPs.</p> <p>Besides, SWD has set up a Central Fund for Personal Computers with injection of \$3 million (M) from the Lotteries Fund to provide financial assistance to people with disabilities, including VIPs, to purchase PCs and related accessories to enable them to work independently at home. As of February 2004, a total of \$2.321M from the Fund had been granted to 164 people with disabilities, of which 24 were VIPs, involving a grant of \$0.326M. There will be another round of invitation for applications in 2004-05.</p>
2	<p>The Government should work with the visually impaired groups and revise the promotional strategy for barrier-free websites.</p>	<p>The Government is committed to promoting accessibility to online and electronic services for all. We have been involving visually impaired groups as well as non-government organizations (NGOs) in formulating promotional strategy for barrier-free websites. Through the various promotional activities, awareness on the issue has been raised within the IT industry and the business sector. Please refer to the response to item 10 for more information on the promotional activities on barrier-free websites.</p>
3	<p>A lack of Cantonese voice synthesizer software for use by VIPs is another major obstacle for them when using computer. As such, the Government should heavily subsidize and promote the development of Cantonese voice synthesizer software and ensure that the software so developed will be made</p>	<p>There are three Cantonese screen reader development projects in progress, namely, Cantonese JAWS, a Cantonese screen reader based on Supernova (a reader originally developed in Europe), and a Cantonese screen reader developed by one of the members of Retina Hong Kong. The Cantonese screen reader developed by Retina Hong Kong's member can be downloaded from Retina Hong Kong's website since April 2004. The developers are working to improve their Cantonese screen readers under development.</p>

	<p>available to the visually impaired at affordable prices or even free of charge.</p>	<p>Since the Cantonese screen readers being developed still have room for improvement, Putonghua text-to-speech software has been installed in the computers at 4 NGOs, namely Hong Kong Society for the Blind, Hong Kong Blind Union, Retina Hong Kong and Ebenezer School for pilot run by the Home Affairs Department (HAD).</p> <p>In the third quarter of 2003, the Hong Kong Society for the Blind launched a Cantonese speech-enabled website which allows VIPs to access audio books via telephone or Internet-connected PC. The project was funded by the Lotteries Fund and is being managed by SWD.</p> <p>Besides, four Government departments, namely the Information Services Department (ISD), Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), SWD and Department of Health (DH) launched in March 2004 a pilot sound version of selected information on their websites to facilitate access to such information by VIPs. The information is available in Cantonese, Putonghua and English.</p>
4	<p>The industry should work towards the direction of developing client-based software, so that users can choose for themselves the information required to suit their needs.</p>	<p>The server-based text-to-speech device allows access to selected online information in speech form via telephone in addition to the Internet. It allows people with reading difficulty (i.e. the dyslexic), people who cannot afford PCs and Internet connection, and people who have difficulty in learning to use computers to access information online. However, the Government appreciates the advantage of client-based devices and will support the development of Chinese client-based screen reader.</p>
5	<p>The Government should implement a quality product trademark scheme. To tie in with the existing quality product trademark scheme, products whose</p>	<p>We are exploring this suggestion with the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, which is responsible for the Q-mark scheme.</p>

	design and user manual can cater for the special needs of the visually impaired should be awarded a trademark of quality.	
6	The design of ATMs still fails to provide audio leadthrough instructions for the visually impaired.	The Joint Equal Opportunities Commission-Hong Kong Association of Banks (HKAB) Working Group has developed further guidance on ATMs installation to make it easier for customers with physical disabilities to use ATMs. The HKAB issued a circular providing design guidelines to facilitate physical access to ATMs and requirements on display to members in April 2003. The circular also contains recommendations on advanced features (such as audio leadthrough) to enhance ATM accessibility for customers with disabilities. Banks are encouraged to take these recommendations into account, particularly when planning new ATMs.
7	The short messaging services of fixed line telephone and cordless telephone, the operation of digital video discs, as well as the new flashes that appear occasionally on TV screen should all have a sound version.	The provision of a sound version for these devices or services will have resource implication on the suppliers/service providers. It will be up to the suppliers/service providers to decide taking into account their operation and resources availability.
8	The “eBook service” should be introduced.	The eBook service (English eBooks) of Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL) is currently provided through the subscription of external service "NetLibrary". The HKPL have not been successful in identifying a suitable Chinese eBook system that can be deployed in providing Chinese eBook service via the Internet. Copyright is still a major concern in the development of Chinese eBooks in the market. LCSD is keeping in view the development and will work to enhance its eBook collection whenever possible.

9	<p>To ensure cost-effective use of resources and that the needs of the visually impaired are truly addressed, the visually impaired groups should be consulted when giving endorsement to research and development (R&amp;D) projects supported by Government departments or charitable organizations. The Government shall formulate clear policy and guidelines for all Government departments, public organizations and commercial enterprises to follow.</p>	<p>It has been a practice for Government departments to consult the relevant NGOs when approving digital inclusion projects catering for specific groups. For example, VIP groups have been consulted on the pilot project of a sound version of selected information on the web sites of four Government departments. Please see the response to item 3 for more information.</p> <p>We encourage the social service sector to consult their clients when conceiving new projects or initiatives. We also advise non-government agencies to consult service users in formulating their funding applications for programmes to bridge the digital divide. Representatives from NGOs (e.g. the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS)) also sit on various committees for the social welfare sector, such as the Joint Committee on Information Technology (JCIT), to give their opinions on the service users' needs in respect of the funding applications. Through these processes, the views of service users can be adequately reflected and incorporated when deliberating funding grants for new projects.</p>
10	<p>The Government should further promote barrier-free website design among the private sector and mandate the requirements in the procurement contracts for government electronic services and products, so that such services and products could be used by all users, including people with disabilities.</p>	<p>The Government is committed to promoting accessibility to online and electronic services for all, including people with disabilities. In this connection, web accessibility guidelines have been developed and a theme page on web accessibility has been set up in the Digital 21 website to share with the public tips and techniques in building barrier-free websites. All Government websites have to comply with the Government web accessibility guidelines, irrespective of whether their development and maintenance is done in-house or outsourced. We have also recommended universal design as one of the approaches to achieve the barrier-free objective. In particular, the SWD homepage has passed the Bobby test which is an objective tool to test web accessibility based on the guidelines set by the World Wide Web Consortium. The text-only version of the SWD homepage has been considered acceptable by the Hong Kong Blind Union before its launch.</p>

The Government has also introduced the following measures to enhance accessibility to the websites of private and public sector organizations:

- In March 2001, SWD issued a set of guidelines on improving web accessibility to all subvented NGOs. In September 2001, SWD also co-organised a seminar with the Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) for NGOs to introduce the design concepts and techniques on web accessibility for VIPs.
- Moreover, in October 2001, the JCIT for the social welfare sector tasked the Information Technology Resource Centre (ITRC) of HKCSS to provide assistance to NGOs to add alternative text to the graphics, links and multi-me

		<p>promoting web accessibility to the private sector during the past three years. For example, the “Seminar on Usability and Accessibility Considerations in Website Implementation” was organised in November 2003 to promote the barrier-free website design to the private sector and university/college students. ITSD also distributed a multimedia CD-Rom on barrier free website design during the seminar. Training sessions on barrier free website design were conducted in late February 2004 for webmasters from the private sector.</p>
<p><b>The Hong Kong Council of Social Service</b></p>		
11	<p>The objective of digital inclusion programmes should not be confined merely to increasing computer literacy within the population. In a broad sense, enabling all citizens to benefit from the development of information and communication technology (ICT) should be the ultimate purpose of digital inclusion programmes.</p>	<p>The Government has been working to harness the benefits of IT development for all citizens. This is the main objective of the updated Digital 21 Strategy published in March 2004. Increasing computer literacy in the population is one of the steps for achieving this goal. We have set out in the Strategy eight main areas of action so as to enable the entire community to benefit from IT development.</p>
12	<p>The digital gap is believed to be serious because in society with a higher computer penetration rate, the life chances of the computer illiterates will be more hampered, as compared to the more fortunate computer literate group.</p>	<p>The Government has been working to bridge the digital gap caused by economic disparity through the provision of the necessary infrastructures and facilities, enhancing accessibility to computer facilities, provision of training and education, etc. to the disadvantaged groups.</p>
13	<p>We would like to see the Government</p>	<p>The Government has introduced free IT awareness courses and provided</p>

	to take the lead in promoting an even more computer literate society. Affordable and universal access for all should be an explicit long-term policy objective.	computer facilities for free use by the public to help promote computer literacy. We have also been supporting computer recycling activities. As a result of the liberalization of the telecommunications market, access charges have decreased significantly and become more affordable - our mobile phone penetration rate stands at 106% in December 2003. Our Internet coverage also reaches the entire territory. We will continue to work on this front so as to enhance accessibility to ICT facilities for all.
14	Singapore has been implementing a National IT Literacy Program aiming at equipping citizens with basic information communication literacy by year 2010. We have a need in Hong Kong to establish specific and realistic computer literacy targets for different disadvantaged groups.	The suggestion of establishing specific computer literacy targets begs the questions of how the targets are to be set and how computer literacy is defined and assessed. We have therefore adopted the approach of raising IT awareness in the community on one hand and enhancing IT readiness of different target groups through provision of free IT awareness course on the other. We have witnessed a steady increase in IT usage during the past few years – the PC and Internet usage rates among people aged 10 and above have increased from 43% and 30% in 2000 to 56% and 52% in 2003 respectively.
15	More support in providing Internet access points in the community is needed. We suggest the Government should consider establishing at least one Community Cyber Centre (CCC) in each of the 18 districts for providing free public access to Internet and a focal point for district digital inclusion programme.	Our current resource constraint does not permit the establishment of a CCC in each of the 18 districts. We have taken the alternative approach of providing public computers with Internet access at community centres/halls, post offices, libraries, etc, in all 18 districts.
16	As for the computer recycling program, the Community Cyber Centre could form a base for collecting and	We have been working with NGOs in organizing computer recycling programmes. In addition to providing financial and other support to Project CompuAid previously, we have recently provided sponsorship to support the



	refurbishing used computers, for volunteers in the community to congregate and support each other, and for basic training to be delivered to beneficiary families.	Salvation Army in carrying out computer recycling activities. The Salvation Army will carry out the recycling activities and provide basic training for beneficiary families in its own premises.
17	The IT Awareness Programme should be expanded to a full-scale training program for basic computer literacy and information literacy, with more emphasis on problem solving and trouble-shooting skills.	The IT Awareness Programme (ITAP) started as a programme providing basic training on computer operations and the Internet. In the past few years, new topics have been introduced, such as basic Chinese input, simple word processing, website design and guidelines for parents to teach their children on the proper use of the Internet. New thematic topics on information security, digital certificates, and Smart ID Card have also been introduced to enhance the public's knowledge of these topics and to arouse the public's interest in the use of IT. We will consider including problem solving and trouble-shooting skills taking into account the demand of the users.
18	We look forward to support from the Government and the private sector to set up a community-based support service (e.g. the IT Easy Link) to address the special needs of persons who lack the ability to articulate their problems over the phone.	The IT Easy Link was launched as a one-year pilot scheme in July 2002 and has been extended for another year since July 2003. We will extend the service for one more year from July 2004 to June 2005. We are now considering whether to continue the service after June 2005 and if so, the service scope and mode, having regard to user demand and resource availability.
19	We suggest the Government should go one step further to encourage and support all public bodies and NGOs to have their websites and/or applications for public use converted to universally accessible. Universal accessibility	The Government has taken many measures to encourage and support the adoption of the web accessibility guidelines. The assessment criteria for funding applications depend on the nature and objective of the fund concerned. We will however encourage private and public sector bodies to make their web sites universally accessible.

	should also be the major criterion of evaluation for granting funds.	Please also see the response to item 10 for more information on the promotion of web accessibility.
20	Assistive technology, both in the area of hardware and software, should receive government financial support as a priority item, especially in the area of R&D.	<p>The Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) provides funding support to R&amp;D projects that can upgrade the innovation and technology base of Hong Kong. R&amp;D projects on assistive technology may apply to the Fund.</p> <p>Please also see the responses to items 3 and 4 for information on Government support for assistive technology and devices.</p>
21	The Government should relax the criterion for Government funds, in particular on the criteria that the funded projects should eventually be self-financed in special circumstances.	Given the budget constraint facing the Government and the need to make available funding for other projects, projects funded by the Government are normally expected to be self-financing in the longer term. NGOs are also encouraged to seek sponsorship from the private sector so as to ensure the sustainability of their projects.
22	The Government should extend its support to the disadvantaged groups (on top of people with disabilities) in establishing portal sites. A long term goal should not only be content-for-the-disadvantaged but also content-by-the-disadvantaged.	<p>Various Government departments have added new features to their websites or set up new websites to cater for the needs of different disadvantaged groups. The following are some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ In 2002, a simplified Chinese character version of all Government web pages was launched to facilitate browsing by new arrivals from the Mainland as well as Chinese communities in other parts of the world.</li> <li>■ New arrivals and low income groups can access the websites of HAD and SWD, as well as those hosted by NGOs, for information on community and social services.</li> <li>■ SWD manages the <a href="http://www.CyberAble.net">www.CyberAble.net</a> for disabled persons.</li> </ul>

		<p>In developing websites or features catering for the needs of specific groups, the concerned departments have consulted the target groups and incorporate their views where appropriate. The Government will continue with this practice when developing new websites or features catering for individual disadvantaged groups.</p> <p>We note that an NGO has set up a specific portal site for elders (<a href="http://www.cybersenior.org.hk">www.cybersenior.org.hk</a>). We encourage NGOs to develop websites for disadvantaged groups with contents developed by the latter, and are prepared to provide support in the establishment of such websites.</p>
23	<p>The Council is working on a Digital Solidarity Fund, an initiative that facilitates cross-sectoral partnership in the pursuit of a digitally inclusive society. The Council looks forward to the support of the Government, NGOs and general public in this initiative.</p>	<p>CITB is highly supportive of this initiative and has been working closely with HKCSS to establish the Fund and solicit contributions from the private sector.</p>
24	<p>A specialized commission should be established to follow up on Phase I of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and plan for the Phase II of the Summit.</p>	<p>CITB is responsible for the overall coordination of policies and strategies relating to building a digitally inclusive society in Hong Kong, with different departments responsible for implementation of initiatives and programmes serving the respective groups under their purview. We will continue with this mechanism in following up on the WSIS, which we believe is a more cost-effective and efficient mechanism than setting up another commission.</p>
25	<p>The Government should make use of the existing communication platforms with the Mainland or establish other</p>	<p>We will make use of our existing communication platforms with the Mainland should there be programmes of a cross-border nature.</p>

	platforms to facilitate cross-border efforts on the promotion of a just and inclusive information society at both the policy level and the practical level.	
26	The Government should facilitate and support relevant organizations to participate in the WSIS through keeping them informed of its involvement in the inter-governmental meetings and negotiation processes and providing them with funding and all relevant information related to the Summit. We also suggest the Government to report to the Legislative Council (LegCo) and the public at least half-yearly the progress and results of implementation of the local plan of actions.	The Central People's Government represents the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the inter-governmental meetings and negotiations relating to the WSIS. Representatives of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region participated in the Geneva phase of the WSIS as part of the PRC delegation. Relevant documents and information are available from the WSIS website. Due to resource constraint, we were unable to fund NGOs' participation in the WSIS. We will continue to report to LegCo regularly the progress of measures and new initiatives to build a digitally inclusive society in Hong Kong.
27	The Government shall at all times work closely with LegCo, civil society organizations and the private sector in the planning and implementation process in building an inclusive information society.	We will continue to work with LegCo, civil society organizations and the private sector closely in the planning and implementation of measures to build an inclusive information society.
28	The Government should support the establishment of portal sites for other disadvantaged groups in addition to	Please see the response to item 22.

	<p>what it had done for people with disabilities so that information specific to the interest of each group could be pooled together in a user-friendly manner.</p>	
<p><b>Retina Hong Kong</b></p>		
29	<p>Lack of Cantonese screen reading software, high price of software for the visually impaired, as well as inadequacy of web design in catering for the special needs of the visually impaired are the obstacles for the visually impaired to get access to IT.</p>	<p>We support the industry and the academia to develop assistive devices and software that help make IT accessible to VIPs. NGOs may apply to the Lotteries Fund for financial support for developing tools that are specially designed for VIPs. For R &amp;D projects on computer software and tools, the developers may apply to the ITF for funding.</p> <p>Please refer to the response to item 10 for information about the measures to enhance web accessibility for the visually impaired.</p>
30	<p>Notwithstanding a cut in public expenditure, the Government shall maintain a sufficient level of funding for various initiatives geared at building a digitally inclusive society, such as the Central Fund for Personal Computers, funding support for IT training programmes for people with disabilities, as well as the IT Easy Link telephone hotline service.</p>	<p>The Government will continue to allocate resources to programmes that aim to build a digitally inclusive society, having regard to our budget situation and the demand for particular services or measures. We will also look to contributions from the private sector.</p> <p>In 2004-05, SWD will invite a new round of applications to the Central Fund for Personal Computers. In addition, a sum of \$1.4 M has been earmarked for conducting IT awareness and training courses for people with disabilities, including VIPs.</p> <p>The Government will extend the IT Easy Link services for another year from July 2004, and will consider the longer term arrangement for the services beyond June 2005.</p>

31	<p>Regarding the resources deployed by the Government in promoting digital inclusion, no figures and information have ever been made public. To make the best use of resources and enhance accountability, we urge the CITB to disseminate such figures and information to LegCo, the industry and relevant organizations, e.g. those for the disabled, on a regular basis (say, every six months).</p>	<p>We have published the expenditures by various bureaux and departments on initiatives to bridge the digital divide in recent years in the information papers on this subject for the LegCo Panel on IT and Broadcasting and the booklet “Building a Digitally Inclusive Society” etc. These documents are publicly available.</p>
32	<p>When approving funding for projects related to building a digitally inclusive society, or supporting projects in their applications for charity funds, Government departments and the IT industry should widely consult the service users. The views of the service users should be taken seriously and adopted in the decision-making process.</p>	<p>Please see the response to item 9.</p>
33	<p>Cantonese voice synthesizer software should be made available at affordable prices. Although financial support is provided by the Government or charity funds, it is impossible to meet the needs of the majority of visually</p>	<p>The Government is supportive of the development of assistive technologies. Developers may apply to the ITF for funding support for R&amp;D projects in this area. Please also see the responses to items 3 and 20 for more information.</p>

	impaired persons. This will only result in a wider digital gap among the visually impaired caused by economic disparity.	
34	<p>The Government should set up a working group to collate information relating to the development of screen-reading software, find out the present development of Cantonese screen reading software, pool existing resources, enlist the participation of visually impaired groups, formulate proposals to develop cost-effective software, and work out a specific timetable for the above initiatives. The software so developed should be made available to the visually impaired persons free of charge (or on a cost recovery basis), with the intellectual property rights belonging to the Government. The source code of the software should be made public. A team comprising volunteers from the industry and visually impaired groups should be set up to undertake protection work and the continuous development of the software.</p>	<p>The Government has been working to facilitate the introduction of new technologies to address the special needs of the visually impaired. We consider that the present communication and collaboration channels among the Government, NGOs and the private sector are effective.</p> <p>The Government is also supportive of the use of open source software to facilitate development of the required screen-reading software by volunteers and visually impaired groups.</p> <p>Please also see the responses to items 3 and 20.</p>
35	The Government and the industry	Please see the response to item 4.

	should focus on developing “client-based” text-to-speech screen-reading software.	
36	The Government should augment the financial support or subsidy to VIPs under the existing mechanism, e.g. the Central Fund for Personal Computers, so as to help them purchase the necessary software and hardware.	Please see the response to item 1.
37	The Government should provide tax concession to VIPs for purchasing the necessary software and hardware. VIPs or those who support them financially should be granted salaries tax concession for the expenditure so incurred.	<p>The current salaries and profit tax regimes allow disabled taxpayers to claim depreciation allowances up to the entire amount of expenditures in purchasing computers and adaptive devices, and tax deductions for accessing the Internet in their normal course of employment or carrying on a trade/business with incomes or profits chargeable to salary or profit taxes.</p> <p>Separately, a Disabled Dependent Allowance of \$60,000 is also granted, under Salaries Tax, to individuals maintaining a dependent eligible under the Government Disability Allowance Scheme as a tax concession to facilitate the purchase of computer and adaptive devices and access to the Internet for people with disabilities.</p>
<b>Hong Kong Seniors IT Advocates</b>		
38	Digital divide cannot be solved just by providing free IT awareness courses. Moreover, some elderly are not serious about taking the computer courses. As the courses are free of	As NGOs have better outreaching capability and knowledge of the needs of the community groups served by them, we are looking into the possibility of providing funding to NGOs to design and deliver IT awareness courses to different community groups.



	<p>charge, they do not have to pay a fee and thus lack the spirit to learn. Therefore, the way forward and content of the IT awareness courses should be reviewed. The number of course participants should not be the only benchmark in reviewing the IT awareness programme.</p>	<p>The Government does regularly update the content of the IT awareness courses to ensure that the participants can be kept up-to-date in the information world. Please see the response to item 17 for more information.</p>
39	<p>The Government should implement civic education about the virtual information world, so as to make the public realize the value, culture, and communication mode of the information world.</p>	<p>We have been organizing various educational and promotional activities on the use and social aspects of IT, including TV and radio infotainment programmes, IT awareness programmes for students and parents, and district IT promotion activities, to educate the public about the virtual information world.</p> <p>Furthermore, attitude towards the use of IT is an important area of IT in education. This was highlighted in the guidelines for schools entitled “Information Technology Learning Targets” published in 2000 and “Basic Education Curriculum Guide Building on Strengths (Primary 1 to Secondary 3)” published in 2002. These publications cover students’ awareness of the legal, social and ethical responsibility in using IT and electronic information such as respect for intellectual property rights and privacy.</p> <p>To foster positive development of students’ attitude to using IT, a website on “Cyber Ethics for Students and Youth” was launched in August 2003. The target users include students, parents and teachers. It is a collaborative effort of various Government departments and experts from the community including the Hong Kong Police, the Television Entertainment and Licensing Authority, lawyers, psychologists, social workers, parents, teachers and students. The website addresses four important issues in using the Internet, viz. laws, ethics, psychology and information security.</p>

		In addition, teachers' training on cyber ethics will be provided in 2004.
40	The Government should promote in the direction of open source. The software, developed by the Government and used by the public, should be disseminated in the form of open source, with the relevant technical paper provided. Therefore, the community can participate and make contribution to the process.	ITSD has been working closely with open source software (OSS) suppliers to facilitate improvement to their products in meeting the needs of Government departments, business and the general community. For example, within the Government, ITSD promotes the use of OSS as a viable option where it meets service needs and offers value for money.
41	The Government should conduct studies and surveys on digital divide in Hong Kong, in order to find out the present situation of digital divide in Hong Kong in relation to the rapid development of an information society.	The Government has been conducting annual surveys on the use of IT in households and business establishments in Hong Kong. The household survey contains, among other things, analysis of the use of IT by individuals by gender, age, education and economic activity status, while the establishment survey contains analysis of the use of IT by the size and industry sector of establishments, etc. The survey results provide useful information on the current state of IT adoption in Hong Kong as well as reference to the formulation of policy and initiatives to further promote IT adoption in the business sector and general community.
42	The Government should not replace the existing services by e-government services.	The Government will rationalize different channels of service delivery. This involves understanding our customers' needs and providing services tailored to their needs through the most cost-effective channels. The needs of disadvantaged groups will be duly considered.

<b>Hong Kong Society for the Blind</b>		
43	The Government should continue to provide financial support to rehabilitation institutions to organize elementary and advanced IT awareness courses for VIPs so as to enhance their IT knowledge.	In 2003-04, SWD earmarked \$1.55 M to provide the IT Awareness & Training Programme to about 6 000 people with disabilities, including VIPs. In 2004-05, \$1.4 M has been earmarked for the same programme. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and 26 NGOs are the agents for providing these training programmes.
44	Through the “IT Easy Link”, the Government provides IT support services to the public. The Government should also provide financial assistance to or cooperate with rehabilitation institutions to provide such support services (including software application as well as the maintenance of hardware and assistive devices) to VIPs according to their specific needs.	SWD has supported grants for NGOs operating rehabilitation services to provide IT support to people with disabilities. At rehabilitation centres where PCs with free Internet connection services are provided, VIPs may seek assistance from the centre staff if necessary. These rehabilitation centres can make use of the services of the ITRC of the HKCSS (such as consultative services, training and application of IT), which has received grants from the Lotteries Fund for its 3-year operation since June 2001.  Please see the response to item 18 regarding IT Easy Link.
45	The Government should set up another fund to provide a 100% subsidy to people with disabilities to purchase computer equipment, assistive devices and assistive software, and to provide free internet services.	Please see the response to item 1.

46	<p>Assistive devices and software should be installed at public places and Government departments, such as the Labour Department, museums, etc., to promote equal access to facilities.</p>	<p>To enhance accessibility to IT facilities, the Government has provided assistive devices and software at public places and Government departments. The following are some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The Labour Department has established a Selective Placement Division (SPD) in 1980 to provide free recruitment service to employers and free employment service to job seekers with disabilities, including the visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically handicapped, chronically ill, mentally handicapped and ex-mentally ill. To enable the hearing impaired job-seekers to receive audio signals more clearly and facilitate their communication with SPD's placement staff, an assistive device known as "Induction Loop System" has been installed at all three branch offices of SPD. To facilitate visually impaired job-seekers to use computers and access the Internet, the three branch offices of SPD provide readily available PCs with the software "ZoomText" for screen reading (in English) and text magnification, as well as Internet connection to major associations for people with disabilities. Quarterly newsletters are also translated in Braille version to provide the visually impaired job-seekers with the latest information on employment and training opportunities.</li> <li>■ Audio-guide is available at museums, such as the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Hong Kong Museum of History, to narrate the key exhibit stories to VIPs.</li> <li>■ Assistive devices and software to support the visually impaired to access the Internet such as Braille display units and Cantonese &amp; English voice synthesizer software are available in selective libraries for public use.</li> <li>■ SWD has supported rehabilitation centres to install assistive devices and software in some PCs for the use by people with disabilities. This</li> </ul>
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		<p>approach is considered an effective means and the centres are convenient venues to provide disabled service users with access to IT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To encourage people with disabilities to use computer and access the Internet, SWD has provided PCs with assistive devices and Internet connection to major associations for people with disabilities including the Society for the Blind, the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Retina Hong Kong and the Ebenezer School.</li> </ul>
47	<p>It is difficult for VIPs to use computer facilities with touch screen design. IT facilities should deploy push-button operation design, which is more suitable for use by VIPs. Braille instruction and speech software should be installed, or speech input technology be developed. The design of the screen, such as colour contrast and font size, should take into account the needs of VIPs.</p>	<p>Please see the responses to items 3, 6, and 10 for information on the relevant measures.</p>
48	<p>The Government should step up its efforts to promote web accessibility design among the public and private sectors.</p>	<p>Please see the response to item 10.</p>
49	<p>It is necessary to ensure that screen-reading software used by VIPs should continue to be made available on upgraded platforms such</p>	<p>We will keep in view the development of screen-reading software and ensure the applicability of the existing ones in use at Cyberpoints.</p>

	as Window XP at various Cyberpoints.	
50	The Government should develop and install innovative Cantonese voice synthesizer software as soon as possible.	Please see the response to item 3.
51	The Government should speed up the study on the feasibility of providing text-to-speech service at Government websites and to further encourage both the public and private agencies to provide text-to-speech service at their websites.	<p>Four Government departments, namely, ISD, LCSD, SWD and DH, launched in March 2004 a pilot sound version (in Cantonese, Putonghua and English) of selected information on their websites. Subject to the outcome of the pilot run, the four departments will consider providing the sound version on a permanent basis.</p> <p>While the Government will encourage private and public sector bodies to provide text-to-speech service at their websites, the decision as to whether to provide text-to-speech services rests with the bodies concerned, having regard to cost and other considerations.</p>
52	The Government should provide IT technical support and human resources to help the visually impaired groups to organize IT sharing activities on a regular basis.	The ITRC of the HKCSS has received grants from the Lotteries Fund for its 3-year operation since June 2001. NGOs can submit to the Centre proposals for organizing exchange programmes, sharing sessions and workshops to enhance VIPs' knowledge of the use of IT.
<b>Hong Kong Information Technology Federation</b>		
53	Similar to what the Federation had done to help enhance the IT capability of small and medium enterprises	The Government has been collaborating with NGOs in organizing programmes to promote IT in the community. We also encourage the participation of the private sector. CITB is working with the social service sector and industry to

	(SMEs), more private-public partnership projects on building a digitally inclusive society should be carried out.	set up a Digital Solidarity Fund for supporting digital inclusion projects. Private sector companies have been invited to make contributions to the Fund.
<b>Innovation and Technology Association</b>		
54	Professional associations on ICT/IT should collaborate among themselves and pool their resources and experience. The involvement of multi-national corporations in providing the appropriate technology know-how was of great importance in bridging the digital divide.	We have been encouraging and collaborating with the private sector to organise activities to bridge the digital divide. CITB is also working with the social service sector and industry to set up a Digital Solidarity Fund for supporting digital inclusion projects. However, it is up to private sector companies to decide whether to share technical information about their products or technology know-how with others.
55	The number of computer training centres is growing in recent years. Sometimes, they have failed to address the role of training centres in the local economy or the need for locally relevant content. There is a need for a holistic approach to cover the range of issues to create effective and sustainable uses for technology that are integrated into local society.	The Government reviews and updates the course content of the IT awareness courses as well as the school curriculum regularly. We also encourage education and training institutions to update their course contents regularly to keep pace with IT development.
56	It is important for organizations hosting community ICT projects to take a holistic approach by meeting	The Government has been collaborating with ICT professional bodies, NGOs and private sector companies so as to pool their resources in organizing programmes to bridge the digital divide.

	the needs of their clients as comprehensively as possible. Collaboration of ICT professional associations should be encouraged to pool resources and experience.	
57	Policy principles adopted at the international level must be adapted to meet local needs.	It has always been a practice for the Government to take into consideration the local context when applying policy principles adopted at the international level to Hong Kong.
58	The community ICT development initiatives should run on a sustainable, replicable model and be grounded on the needs, interests, and participation of local residents.	The Government has been adopting this approach in formulating and implement programmes to bridge the digital divide.
59	The Government has often tried to meet the short term demands of their constituencies, but failed to provide a coherent long term plan for prosperity, or hindered the efforts of development initiatives and the private sector to address ICT disparities. More promotion to SMEs market is required.	In the updated Digital 21 Strategy published in March 2004, the Government has set out a sustainable, long-term strategy to promote IT development. The Government has also been providing various support measures to encourage and assist SMEs to adopt IT.
60	Apart from formulating policies and regulating the market, the Government should take steps to foster private innovation and to	In the updated Digital 21 Strategy published in March 2004, the Government has set out comprehensive programmes and measures to foster innovation and to address the IT manpower needs in the local community.



	ensure that trained IT manpower was available to meet market demands.	
<b>The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers</b>		
61	Although e-government and e-business have progressed a long way since 1998, their adoption by the general public is still not widespread. One of the hurdles inhibiting their universal adoption is the security issue, which could be addressed by the use of e-certificate.	The Government has been promoting public awareness of information security through publicity and public education measures such as producing infotainment radio programmes and setting up a one-stop portal, the INFOSEC website ( <a href="http://www.infosec.gov.hk">www.infosec.gov.hk</a> ), to disseminate information on information security. The Government has also been actively promoting the use of digital certificate. For example, the Hongkong Post Certification Authority started in June 2003 to offer smart identity card holders one-year free use of its digital certificates. This will create a critical mass of digital certificate holders, providing the incentive for the industry to develop further applications and services using digital certificates and a critical infrastructure for the further development of secure e-business.
62	Hong Kong should not lose momentum in funding information technology education and training.	The first Five-year Strategy on Information Technology in Education (ITEd) ending August 2003 has brought about tremendous change to the education scene in Hong Kong. The Government considers that ITEd development is an on-going process and is committed to sustaining it through policy support, resource provision as well as collaboration with the stakeholders concerned. The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) published in March 2004 a strategy paper on the way forward for a 2-month public consultation. EMB will finalize the strategy in July 2004 taking into account the public comments received.
63	The Electronic Transactions (Amendment) Bill 2003 should be passed early so that Hong Kong will	LegCo has completed scrutiny of the Bill and the legislative amendments are expected to be passed in June 2004.

	have the most up-to-date legislative framework for the secure conduct of e-business.	
<b>The Institution of Electrical Engineers</b>		
64	We should strengthen our community for the exploitation of opportunities and to build a “Green Hong Kong” in the Digital 21 IT world. More wireless LAN hubs should be installed in the most strategic locations in Hong Kong, thus bringing about LAN and Internet connection and hence associated services to most people.	Broadband already covers all commercial buildings and virtually all households. An ad hoc working group of the Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee has come up with a set of recommendations to promote wider adoption of wireless technologies and services. The Director of Information Technology Services is chairing a Task Force to follow up the recommendations in conjunction with the industry.
<b>Internet Professionals Association</b>		
65	The Government should establish Cyber Centres in all 18 districts with training facilities and broadband access.	Please see the response to item 15.
66	The Government should provide more resources to encourage and support NGOs in launching ICT awareness and training programmes for disadvantaged groups and set a target year to make Hong Kong a 100% digitally inclusive information	The Government will continue to support NGOs in launching ICT awareness and training programmes for disadvantaged groups, taking into account the demand and resource availability. As regards setting a target year to make Hong Kong a 100% digitally inclusive information society, there is as yet no commonly agreed view on what constitutes a 100% digitally inclusive society. We will however continue to launch programmes and initiatives to bridge the digital divide in Hong Kong.

	society.	
67	The web site www.esdlife.com is not within the pledges of the Government commitment on the compliance with the Government internal accessibility guidelines.	<p>The ESD website follows the accessibility guidelines set out in the “Guidelines on Dissemination of Information through Government Homepages” of the Government. The website has also gone through the Bobby priority 1 accessibility test, which is one of the best known accessibility checkers for testing web sites for the priority levels of accessibility set in the World Wide Web Consortium Guidelines for Accessibility.</p> <p>In addition, the ESD website has been tested by the Hong Kong Society for the Blind on its web accessibility and the result was satisfactory.</p>
68	The requirement for the compliance with Government internal web accessibility standard should apply to all future Government web related outsourcing and renewing contracts. The Government internal web accessibility standard should be regularly reviewed to stay in line with international standard.	All Government websites have to comply with the Government web accessibility guidelines, whether they are developed/maintained in-house or outsourced. The Government will review the guidelines regularly to ensure that they are in line with international standards.
69	The Government should support the R&D of assistive technology by setting assistive technology as one of the priorities in the application of the ITF.	Applications to the ITF are considered based on a set of transparent criteria which are published on the website of the Innovation and Technology Commission.
70	The Government should provide resources to support content	R&D projects on Chinese content enabling technology and applications may apply to the ITF.

	development for specific disadvantaged groups and support R&D of Chinese content enabling technology and application for translating and displaying online information into Chinese.	Please also see the response to item 22 for more information on websites targeted at specific disadvantaged groups supported by the Government.
<b>Hong Kong and Mainland Software Industry Cooperation Association Limited</b>		
71	For future expenditures, a study must be conducted to identify the mission of the investment on digital divide, taking into account the “clothing” approach and the STIR (study, tailor, implement and review) process.	The Government has been in close liaison with the relevant organizations to understand the needs of different disadvantaged groups when designing programmes to meet the needs of these groups. We will have to examine the implications of this proposal in consultation with the relevant parties if we are to pursue it.
72	Future training should focus more on programming, software development, digital products, and usage of “free software” with source code.	The bodies responsible for the delivery of publicly-funded IT training programmes constantly review the contents of their training programmes to ensure that they meet the needs of the community.
73	The Government should review and redefine the training so that more young people would learn to use IT and programming, hence strengthening the talent pool for a knowledge based economy.	Please see the response to item 72 regarding IT training.  Besides, IT related curricula at the senior secondary level (namely the former S4-5 Computer Studies and the former S4-5 Information Technology curricula) have been revised and amalgamated into the S4-5 Computer and Information Technology curriculum, providing a streamlined structure and greater flexibility for schools to offer the learning experiences appropriate to students' needs. The choice of the programming language used in the study of computer programming has also been opened up (i.e. schools may choose the

		programming language to be used) to allow students to have early exposure to the latest technologies. Joint projects or modules developed in collaboration with industrial organizations and schools have further enriched student horizons in IT skills, knowledge, applications and experiences.
74	Textbooks should go digital and educators should not be part of the digitally impaired sector. They should embrace digital technology in their daily teaching.	<p>All teachers have taken the necessary training on basic IT skills and are capable of using IT for interactive teaching and learning. However, while IT is a powerful tool to help learning and teaching, it is not a panacea or “cure all”. It is important that teachers should know when IT tools could and should be used to enhance the effectiveness of teaching.</p> <p>Besides, publishers have been encouraged to produce electronic learning resources to support learning and teaching. In recent years, they have produced a substantial amount of electronic materials on their websites or in CD-ROMs to supplement their published textbooks. EMB will continue to encourage publishers to digitize their resources.</p>
75	The Government should promote smart phones with Internet browser, which are cheaper than PCs and are essential to the daily life. Study should be conducted on how disadvantaged people could make use of them in enhancing their quality of life.	<p>Since the needs of individuals could vary greatly, we consider that we should leave it to the users themselves to select the most suitable combination of mobile phones and service packages that would best meet their needs. If they consider that smart phones with wireless Internet access are what they need to access the Internet, such phones and service packages are available in the market for them to choose from.</p> <p>We understand that some NGOs are exploring with mobile network operators the provision of mobile phone location based services for visually impaired customers. We encourage mobile operators to develop innovative services and applications that would meet the needs of different segments of the community.</p>
76	The Government should spend more	The Government has been facilitating the growth of the local IT industry

	to help the unemployed in the IT field.	through various means, which will in turn help create more jobs for the industry.
77	The usage of “free” software should be encouraged.	ITSD has been promoting the use of open source software (OSS) among Government bureaux and departments through showcases and trials for departments. To widen choice and maximize the potential for cost savings, the Government has also been promoting OSS development and adoption in the private sector through providing funding and other forms of support to projects that encourage the development of OSS and activities that promote adoption of OSS in the private sector. For example, the SME Development Fund has provided funding of \$890,000 for the setting up of a Linux Resource Centre in July 2003 to provide support services to SMEs in the adoption of OSS.
78	Services and products derived from government investments could be resold to the Mainland at a low price, which will help create a bi-directional flow of information. This should be taken into consideration when planning for the projects.	The Government is looking into the arrangements for opening up the intellectual property in the IT systems developed for the Government by contractors, so that the contractors can distribute such systems to other parties, thus creating more business opportunities for the local IT industry.
<b>Professional Information Security Association</b>		
79	The Government should spend more effort on educating SMEs and home users on information security and privacy.	ITSD has organized various public education and publicity programmes, including exhibitions and seminars, production and distribution of promotional and reference materials, establishment of a one-stop portal named INFOSEC ( <a href="http://www.infosec.gov.hk">www.infosec.gov.hk</a> ) to provide the public with information and resources on information security.
80	In schools, more resources should be	The Government is fully aware of the importance of maintaining information

	<p>given to IT security training to make the school network a secure one. Education on information security and privacy should also start from schools.</p>	<p>security in schools. In addition to the provision of technical support service personnel in schools, workshops as well as experience sharing seminars have been organized to enable teachers to be better acquainted with the issue.</p> <p>Besides, the importance of information security, intellectual property right, data privacy, etc. has been specially highlighted in the new S4-5 Computer and Information Technology curriculum. A topic on the social implications of computer and information technology has been incorporated in and forms 1/8 of the core part of the curriculum. Basic concepts related to these issues have also been introduced in the junior secondary computer curriculum.</p>
81	<p>More funding should be spent on supporting academic research and development in the area of security.</p>	<p>R&amp;D projects on information security may apply to the ITF for funding. The ITF has funded such projects before.</p>
82	<p>The Government should promote open source information security technologies and establish awards and funding for designated IT security program that the Government wants to push forwards.</p>	<p>ITSD has been promoting open source technology and OSS products, including the issue of security, both within the Government and the private sector. Please refer to the response to item 77 for information on the Government's initiatives to promote OSS.</p>
83	<p>The industry should make their products "security friendly".</p>	<p>While it is the responsibility of developers to ensure the security their products having regard to the nature and intended purposes of their products, the Government has been promoting awareness on information security among the public and businesses through various publicity and public education programmes.</p>
84	<p>Internet service providers (ISP) should be more proactive against large-scale</p>	<p>ITSD has taken proactive steps to combat threats related to IT security and computer viruses by continuously monitoring the development of IT security</p>

	worm attack, spam email and denial of service attacks. The Government and the Hong Kong Computer Emergency Response Team (HKCERT) should play a more proactive role in coordinating with Internet service providers (ISPs) to stop large scale worm attack.	related vulnerabilities, threats and computer viruses and providing alerts and technical assistance to bureaux and departments in handling information security incidents and computer virus attacks. ITSD has also set up the INFOSEC web site ( <a href="http://www.infosec.gov.hk">www.infosec.gov.hk</a> ) to raise public awareness and facilitate the public's access to various information security related resources and updates.  HKCERT has drawn up cooperation arrangements with ISPs to deal with virus and worm attacks under which HKCERT will disseminate alerts to the Hong Kong Internet Service Providers Association and major ISPs. For large-scale attacks, HKCERT will also make public announcements, collect incident reports from the major anti-virus vendors and keep track of the impact on computer users.
85	HKCERT should extend their scope of work to cover home users.	HKCERT serves as a central contact point and plays a coordinating role in the reporting of and response to computer security incidents. Both businesses and home users can make use of HKCERT's services.
86	SMEs should be guided to make use of the public key infrastructure (PKI) technology. Hongkong Post (HKP) should take a more proactive role and pilot companies should be invited to demonstrate success stories.	HKP has devoted great efforts in promoting the use of PKI technology in the business sector. For example, HKP conducts regular seminars and technical workshops for the business sector, including SMEs, to provide updates on the latest developments of PKI applications in the market and introduce the potential usage of digital certificate in business applications for various industries including banking and finance, insurance, traveling, e-merchants, and securities and stock trading. Moreover, HKP offers businesses, including SMEs, a free PKI development tool kit to facilitate fast and easy deployment of HKP's digital certificate (under the brand name e-Cert) in their applications. The development tool kit is also provided free to IT solution vendors and developers for them to bundle PKI into their IT solutions for their business customers.
87	The Government should take the lead	To facilitate the implementation of joined-up e-government services, ITSD has



	<p>in using XML and related security technologies in business-to-government, business-to-business, and government-to-government transactions.</p>	<p>promulgated the Interoperability Framework (IF) to support the Government's strategy of providing client-centric joined-up services by facilitating the interoperability of technical systems between bureaux and departments, as well as between Government systems and systems used by the public (including citizens and businesses).</p> <p>All new e-government infrastructure systems, new government-to-public (including businesses) systems, and new inter-bureau and department systems must be developed based on the IF.</p> <p>The IF is managed by the Interoperability Framework Co-ordination Group (IFCG) of ITSD. An XML Co-ordination Group (XMLCG) has been formed under the IFCG to develop strategies to facilitate more effective adoption of XML.</p>
<b>Hong Kong Linux Industry Association</b>		
88	<p>In the draft 2004 Digital 21 Strategy, the Government has put open source software as an alternative rather than a mandatory item. A migration strategy to Linux should be drawn up.</p>	<p>The Government's policy on procurement of software products is based on objective criteria, such as value for money, functionality, security, system compatibility and the availability of reliable technical support. There is no preference for brand name or technology. To widen product choice and maximize the potential for cost savings, the Government has been promoting OSS both within the Government and in the private sector. Please see the response to item 77 for information on the Government's initiatives to promote OSS.</p>
89	<p>Students should be taught on how to use other operating systems such as Linux in schools so as to widen the range of operating system software in</p>	<p>From a pedagogical point of view, it has always been emphasized that the skills and knowledge acquired in the curriculum should be generic.</p> <p>In the core part of the new S4-5 Computer and Information Technology</p>

	use in the market and to enhance the IT proficiency of young people.	<p>curriculum, it has been explicitly spelt out that “students should have exposure to a variety of operating systems...”. Students are to know the essential common features and some of the major differences among them. In the curriculum and assessment guide for the course, schools are also encouraged to use a variety of free or open source programs, on top of standard provisions, to enrich the exposure and experience of students. The Government believes that such learning and teaching will help better equip students as continuous IT users and lifelong learners.</p> <p>EMB has also provided numerous courses on open source to teachers. It will continue to promote the use of open source software and applications to the education sector.</p>
90	The Government should open up the source code and provide more information on the total cost of ownership (TCO).	<p>There are different ways to develop Government IT systems, involving software licence and intellectual property rights issues. Currently the Government does not see the need for opening up the source code of its IT systems.</p> <p>The TCO concept has been made known to Government bureaux and departments. ITSD has also identified TCO considerations and issues for open source software for the reference by bureaux and departments.</p>
<b>Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)</b>		
91	Any Government strategies in IT development should seek to target women and people with disabilities so that they will not be marginalized in the development of a digital society.	The Government is committed to building a digitally inclusive society in Hong Kong so that different sectors of the community can enjoy the benefits brought about by IT advancement. Our strategy includes, among other things, enhancing the IT readiness of and improving the accessibility to computer facilities and online services for the under-privileged groups, including people with disabilities and women. For example, HAD and SWD have organised free IT awareness courses targeted specifically at women and people with disabilities.

		Free public computers with assistive devices and software are available at various places for use by people with disabilities. SWD, in consultation with the HKCSS, also drew up the IT strategy for the welfare sector in 2001, with the objective to, amongst others, assist disadvantaged individuals in adopting IT.
92	The Government, as service provider and regulator, should formulate IT policies that ensure IT products and service provision are technically accessible by people with disabilities.	The Government has been working to ensure that its services are technically accessible by people with disabilities. Please see the response to item 46 for more information. The Government also encourages private and public sector bodies to make their services accessible to people with disabilities.
93	The survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) should be expanded to collect information and data on the present situation of how women and people with disabilities get access to IT.	<p>The annual household survey on the use of IT in Hong Kong conducted by C&amp;SD already covers IT adoption by women.</p> <p>As regards the suggestion of including IT adoption by people with disabilities in the annual household survey, given the low rates of individual types of disabilities in Hong Kong, the survey will not be able to produce reliable results showing how people with disabilities have access to IT. Also, the collection of data on people with disabilities is a complicated and sensitive task, which should be carried out by experienced interviewers with special training and skills, and should be a subject for dedicated, in-depth surveys (see paragraph below). We are therefore not inclined to include the use of IT by people with disabilities in the annual household survey.</p> <p>In 2000, C&amp;SD conducted a large-scale comprehensive survey on “Persons with disabilities and chronic diseases”, but the survey did not cover the use of IT. Consideration will be given to including questions on the use of IT in the next disability survey conducted by C&amp;SD. As the Government has recently initiated a plan to implement a new disability classification system in Hong Kong for policy formulation and service development, C&amp;SD’s tentative plan is</p>

		to conduct the next disability survey upon the full implementation of the new disability classification system, probably in 2007. Meanwhile, the Government will continue to maintain close contact with the disabled groups and their service agents to better understand and meet their needs if feasible.
94	When budgeting for IT tasks, the implications on people with disabilities and women (i.e. how they will be affected or benefited) should be examined.	When budgeting for IT projects, the Government will take into account the implications for people with disabilities and women, as well as the general community.
95	The community cyber point project should be extended to cover women centres and more centres for people with disabilities.	There are over 5300 public computers available for use by members of the community, regardless of gender, at community centres, rehabilitation centres and convenient locations such as post offices and libraries. These places are accessible to women as well. The community cyber point project has been extended to some rehabilitation centres as well. Subject to resource availability, we will continue to enhance the programme.
96	Steps should be taken to encourage the R&D of new and affordable assistive technology to ensure the technical accessibility of IT products for people with disabilities.	Please see the responses to items 3 and 20.
97	Standards should be set to ensure websites are universally accessible.	Please see the response to item 10.
98	The Government should establish an IT resource center or information network to provide assistance and	SWD has funded NGOs operating rehabilitation services to provide IT support to people with disabilities. For example, the HKCSS was provided with funding from the Lotteries Fund to establish the ITRC.

	advice to people with disabilities in using assistive technology.	
99	The Government needs to consider how to facilitate the low-income group or dependents (such as housewives) in using e-transactions.	The content of the free IT awareness courses targeted at the disadvantaged groups has been enriched to cover the use of e-transactions. Besides, smart card readers have been installed in 540 public computers at 180 locations to support the use of the digital certificates embedded on smart identity cards for secure e-business transactions and online government services.
100	The Government needs to conduct qualitative studies to understand how gender role affects girls and boys in pursuing IT studies so as to identify strategies to remove barriers.	From a pedagogical point of view, there is no difference between boys and girls in learning/using IT. However, the Government will keep in mind this issue and avoid the manifestation of IT gender barrier in schools.
101	Adequate IT expertise at school should be provided to support people with disabilities in learning to use and with IT.	At the end of August 2003, all schools including special schools have attained the targets of all teachers reaching the Basic Level of IT competency, 77% teachers at Intermediate Level, 27% teachers at Upper Intermediate Level and 6% at Advanced Level. All schools should now have sufficient teachers with knowledge to support learning with IT. The Government will continue to provide refresher training courses, seminars and workshops to keep teachers abreast of IT developments.