

**High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Conclude the Asian and Pacific
Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002
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**Country Report on the achievements of the government
measures for persons with disabilities during the Asian
and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002**

Japan

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I. General Statement

In 1980 the Government established a Headquarters for Promoting the International Year for Disabled Persons presided over by the Prime Minister as well as a special committee of academic experts and persons with disabilities. The government also performed a series of studies on future measures for persons with disabilities, and in 1982 formulated a first basic plan for Japan or the “Long Term Programme for Government Measures for Disabled Persons” (referred to as the “Long Term Programme” hereinafter).

This program was positioned as an action plan for the 1981 International Year for Disabled Persons, the main theme of which was “full participation and equality”. Through promotion of measures, based on the “Long Term Programme”, the policy for persons with disabilities in our country made steady progress in the areas of health, medical care, welfare, education and employment.

In 1987 a Priority Policy Programme for the second stage of the “Long Term Programme” was adopted to ensure comprehensive and effective promotion of measures for the welfare of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, in 1990 the so-called “Eight Welfare-related Legislation Revisions” were carried out and there was a substantial shift in welfare services from institution-centered services to in-home oriented services.

The “Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons” started in 1992, and in 1993 in Japan a “New Long-Term Programme for Government Measures for Disabled Persons” (referred to as “New Long-Term Programme” hereinafter) outlining the new policy direction for the next ten years was formulated in order to keep up with the changes in the socioeconomic environment surrounding persons with disabilities.

Here we would like to report briefly on the activities in the course of these ten years, as formulated in the “New Long-Term Programme,” which is the fundamental framework for promoting measures for persons with disabilities in Japan and in the “Government Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities,” which outlines the implementation of the priority measures in the “New Long-Term Programme.”

In 1993 the Disabled Persons Fundamental Law was established, based on the full-fledged revision of the “Fundamental Law for Countermeasures for the Mentally and Physically Disabled Persons” that is the law concerning basic policies for persons with disabilities.

1. Formulation of the “New Long-Term Programme for Government Measures for Disabled Persons”

The “New Long-Term Programme” is defined as a “basic plan for persons with disabilities” formulated under the Disabled Persons Fundamental Law and its goal is “full participation and equality” based on the philosophy of “Rehabilitation and Normalization with consideration to the human rights of persons with disabilities”. In order to achieve this goal the “New Long-Term Programme” presented some fundamental principles such as “establishment of identity and independence of persons with disabilities,” “creation of an all-inclusive society with the participation of persons with disabilities and those without disabilities, where all people are able to live a normal life in the same way as each other,” “measures responding to high degrees of disability and aging of persons with disabilities” and “measures corresponding to the “Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons.” Following these fundamental policies, the Government promotes measures supporting the independence and social participation of persons with disabilities. In addition, the fundamental principles outlined in the “New Long-Term Programme” are being adopted as common basic issues of all programmes for promoting measures for persons with disabilities, starting with the “Government Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities.”

In regards to a “barrier-free environment,” the “New Long-Term Programme” presented the concept of “Four Barriers,” defined as “physical barriers in transportation facilities and buildings, system barriers due to qualification limitations, culture and information barriers due to insufficiency in assistive devices such as braille system and sign language, and psychological barriers due to stereo-typed thinking that persons with disabilities need to be protected and supported.” These barriers exist in the social environment surrounding persons with disabilities, and the “New Long-Term Programme” states that the government is advancing various measures steadily toward the elimination of those barriers.

Awareness in regards to physical barriers has expanded way beyond the area of housing facilities to cover public buildings and facilities, public transportation facilities, private buildings as well as the modalities for urban planning. In order to advance the elimination of barriers in public buildings “Act on Buildings Accessible and Usable for the Elderly and Physically Disabled” was established in 1994; and in the area of transportation the “Transportation Accessibility Improvement Law” was established in 2000. These and other measures represented advancement of physically barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the government actively supports comprehensive and systematic urban development projects that are being implemented all over the country, with the view that urban planning should be changed to make it usable and accessible for persons with disabilities and to give them the opportunity for independence and active social participation.

The licensing system and the reasons for disqualification from National Examinations are pointed out as example of systemic barriers. Various qualifying tests have disqualification reasons and several of these are due to reason of disability. In order to eliminate this barrier, an overall review of the 63 systems that have disqualifying articles for persons with disabilities will be completed within the duration of the Plan.

In regards to the issue of culture and information barriers given in terms of communication difficulties due to visual and hearing impairments arose, measures such as providing information by sign language interpreters, audio-tapes and brailled books; ensuring of teletext broadcasting and subtitle broadcasting; establishing information service facilities for producing and lending video-tapes of TV programs followed by captions or sign language are well-advanced.

In regards to the issue of psychological barriers, measures for improvement of welfare education as well as intensive public awareness activities, mainly through Persons with Disabilities Day (December 9th) designated by the Disabled Persons Fundamental Law, are being implemented.

2. Formulation of the “Government Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities”

In 1995 the Government Headquarters for Promoting the Welfare of Disabled Persons, presided over by the Prime Minister, determined a “Government Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities – A Seven-Year Normalization Strategy,” which incorporates specific numerical targets.

The newly formulated plan specifies the policies of the “New Long-Term Programme” and positions the second-stage priority measures for achieving normalization. It is a seven-year plan ending in 2002 that will coincide with the last year of the New Long-Term Program.

The Plan has two major characteristics. The first one is that it incorporates specific policy goals by setting numerical targets. Some of these goals are the provision of group homes and welfare homes as living infrastructure that will allow persons with disabilities to live independently within communities, improvement of in-home nursing care services, construction of barrier-free sidewalks and stations with consideration of

persons with disabilities, and promotion of measures for social rehabilitation of persons with mental disabilities.

The second characteristic of the Plan is that it is a comprehensive and horizontal implementation of policies in line with the following seven viewpoints: (i) living together in communities, (ii) promoting independent participation in society, (iii) creating barrier free environment, (iv) aiming to improve quality of life (QOL,) (v) ensuring safe living, (vi) removing psychological barriers, (vii) promoting suitable international cooperation and exchanges.

II. The Achievements and Current Situation of Government Measures for Persons with Disabilities

1. Legislation Concerning Measures for Disabled Persons and Coordination Functions

a. Legislation

- Disabled Persons Fundamental Law

The Disabled Persons Fundamental Law came into effect after a full-fledged revision of the “Fundamental Law for Countermeasures for Mentally and Physically Disabled Persons” and establishes as its fundamental principles the right of all persons with disabilities to be treated with respect for their dignity and the provision of opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in social, economic, cultural and other areas of activity. The Disabled Persons Fundamental Law also stipulates the formulation of the “Basic Plan for Persons with Disabilities” and obliges the Government to submit annual reports to the Diet as well as stipulates the establishment of Persons with Disabilities Day. (1993)

- Revision of Disqualification Articles

In terms of qualification systems, the Law stipulates revision by the end of March 2003 of the 63 systems that have disqualification articles due to disability; revision of 57 systems are under way and should be completed by October 2002.

- *Law for Encouraging Businesses to Facilitate Disabled Persons' Use of Telecommunications and Broadcasting to Enhance Their Convenience*

This Law was enacted for the purpose of making it more convenient for physically challenged to use communications and broadcast services, and to contribute to balanced development in an information age. (1993)

- *The Law on Partial Amendments of the Broadcast Law and Cable Television Broadcast Law*

Regulations are established which require that efforts be made to simplify the licensing system regarding programs with captions or descriptions in order to increase the number of such programs as much as possible.

- *Amendment to the Civil Code*

The Civil Code was amended to introduce the system of guardianship, curatorship and assistance in place of the incompetency system and to enable notary deed wills to be made by means of sign language. (1999)

- *Law concerning Mental Health and Welfare for Mentally Disabled Persons*

The former Law concerning Mental Health was amended to promote welfare for persons with intellectual disability and to improve public mental health through health care and welfare services.

- *Law for Employment Promotion, etc., of persons with disabilities*

To promote self-support in vocational life of persons with disabilities, an amendment was made in 1994 to expand the system of supplying subsidies for the preparation of a working environment, and to enable the designation of the "Employment

Support Centers for Persons with disabilities.” In 1997 the regulation of the employment rate of persons with disabilities was extended to include persons with intellectual disabilities, and in 2002 “Work and Life Support Centers for Persons with Disabilities” were designated, and the “Job Coaching Program” was also created.

- Psychiatric Social Workers Law and Law for Speech Therapists

Governmental qualifications were created for workers who engage in consulting and assisting the social integration of persons with mental disabilities and for practitioners of speech therapy, etc., for persons with speaking or hearing difficulties (1997).

- The Law on Partial Amendments of the Social Welfare Law for the Promotion of Social Welfare

Several amendments were made to the basic common system of social welfare for social welfare projects, corporations, or admission systems: (i) to build a social welfare system that satisfies users; (ii) to improve the quality of services; (iii) to augment and activate social welfare projects; and (iv) to promote community welfare (2000).

- Law on Assistance Dogs for Persons with Physical Disabilities

This law was enacted for the purpose of assuring the training of guide dogs, service dogs and hearing dogs, as well as to promote access to various facilities (2002).

- Law Concerning the Promotion of Research and Development and Diffusion of Social Welfare Equipment

This law was enacted to promote research, development and diffusion of social welfare equipment in order to encourage greater independence for elderly and handicapped people, and to reduce the burden of people caring for them (1993).

- Act on Buildings Accessible and Usable for the Elderly and Physically Disabled

This law is enacted for the purpose of promoting measures for securing a barrier-free environment in buildings that will be utilized by unspecified large numbers of persons, and was amended in 2002 to strengthen the promotion of a barrier-free environment.

- Transportation Accessibility Improvement Law

This law was enacted to make it obligatory that new passenger facilities and rolling stock etc. should be barrier-free, and to stipulate concentrated and integrated accessibility improvement measures in Improvement Priority Areas (2000).

b. Coordination Functions

The Government established the “Headquarters for Promoting the Welfare of Disabled Persons” and is tackling political challenges in areas such as medical care and welfare, securing of employment, education and living environment, ensuring close bilateral ties between related governmental agencies on establishing a system for resolving problematic issues, as well as on comprehensive and effective promotion of policy.

Ever since the “Headquarters for Promoting the Welfare of Disabled Persons,” headed by the Prime Minister and comprising of administrative vice ministers from government ministries and agencies as members, was established in 1982, it has been making decisions on various important issues in regard to measures for persons with disabilities. Among its important decisions in the past ten years, the following could be pointed out: formulation of the “New Long-Term Programme for Government Measures for Disabled Persons” (1993) and of the “Government Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities (A Seven-Year Normalization Strategy)” (1995) as well as the establishment

of the “Week for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities” (1995) and determining a “Policy for Revision of Disqualifying Articles in Regards to Persons with Disabilities.”

In 2001 the old Headquarters was abolished due to the reorganization of the machinery of the central government and a new “Headquarters for Promoting the Welfare of Disabled Persons,” headed by the Prime Minister and comprising all state ministers, was established within the Cabinet.

As the secretariat of the “Headquarters for Promoting the Welfare of Disabled Persons” the Cabinet Office is responsible for pre-coordination of the opinions of each ministry and agency in regard to issues for deliberation at the meetings of the Headquarters as well as for formulating and pursuing basic plans regarding measures for persons with disabilities and for submitting annual reports to the Diet.

In order to form governmental decisions, the opinions and knowledge of a wide-range of knowledgeable experts are incorporated through deliberation councils and informal gatherings. In order to formulate and implement a policy that reflects as much as possible the opinions of persons with disabilities themselves and their families, as well as the views of organizations and individuals engaged in welfare projects for persons with disabilities, the Cabinet Office holds informal meetings as needed with related governmental officials. In addition, each government ministry and agency implementing measures for persons with disabilities makes effective use of the function of deliberation councils, so as to actively incorporate the knowledge and opinions of organizations dealing with issues of persons with disabilities upon formulating legislation, deliberating important issues such as establishment and revisions of related laws, and implementing specific policies.

2. Care and Education for Children with Disabilities at Early Stage

(1) Early Stage Care

In order to bring up children with disabilities properly, we should offer adequate care, for example, medical rehabilitation, guidance and training as early as possible. Children with disabilities need such care to reduce their disabilities, improve their basic abilities in daily life, live independently and participate in society.

Public health center and municipalities have a regular mental and physical check-ups system at the age of 3 months, 18 months, and 3 years, in order to detect and provide appropriate care for disabilities as early as possible. This kind of health screening system in Japan has achieved excellent results.

Care facilities for children with disabilities are homes for children with visual, aural and speaking disabilities, physical disabilities and intellectual disabilities. Each facility offers medical and special care.

We have provided General Day Care Centers for Children with Mental and Physical Disabilities to offer early diagnosis and care for children with disabilities and act as central care facilities in the community. Day Care Centers for Children established by municipalities are also expected to take on the role of the Developmental Support Center for children with various types of handicap in the community.

We have established systems to support children with disabilities and their family members because the way that the children are treated by their family strongly influences the care process. Child guidance centers and public health centers offer the necessary counseling and guidance to children with disabilities and their family members.

The private sector are supporting care services for children with disabilities and their family members in the community, i.e. counseling, compiling care plans and coordinating services with other agencies, based on the children's needs and their families' needs.

(2) Education

The Government guarantees an appropriate education for each child, regardless of the nature or severity of their disability, in all areas of the country.

There are only 147 children (as of 1 May 2001) who, through parental or guardians' request, are acknowledged as being difficult to attend schools because of severe physical or mental health problems, and whose obligation to attend school is therefore postponed or exempted. This figure represents only 0.001% of all school age children. Accordingly, in Japan education for all children is being provided regardless of the nature or severity of the disability.

Responding to the individual educational needs of each child with disabilities, Japan provides education in various schools such as primary schools, secondary schools, and special schools for children with disabilities. The ratio of students who are enrolled in such special schools stands at 0.443%, compared to all children enrolled in compulsory education. This ratio is lower than the ratio in Western countries.

As to curricula, in order to provide an appropriate education that responds to the individual educational needs of each child, in each primary, secondary school and special school, appropriate curricula can be flexibly organized, based on the condition of the disability.

Given recent IT improvements, education with advanced IT equipments is also being implemented in schools to meet the educational needs of children with disabilities, for various types of disabilities.

Moreover, various joint activities between children with disabilities and others in various situations such as in kindergarten, elementary school, secondary school or local society are made so that children can grow up with a deeper understanding and recognition of each other's situation.

As stated above, in order to develop the capabilities of the children with disabilities to the maximum extent possible and cultivate their ability to participate independently in all aspects of society, Japan provides carefully tailored education for individual educational needs by preparing fundamental elements for education for children with disabilities, such as teaching staff with special knowledge and experience and facilities and equipment that consider educational needs from the perspective of their disabilities in primary and secondary schools and special schools.

3. Infrastructure Improvement for Facilitating Independent Life

(1) Improving Accessibility in the Living Environment

It is widely recognized that it is important to improve the accessibility of whole towns for persons with disabilities so that they can live independently and participate in society. Therefore, we are promoting improvement of accessibility to housing, buildings, public transportation, and the pedestrian environment etc. The aim is to form a seamlessly accessible route from the home through transportation to the city center so that everyone including persons with disabilities can live and participate in the society safely and comfortably.

In addition, in order to build a foundation for barrier-free urban development, basic plans are designed reflecting the result of actual on-site investigation by the persons with disabilities themselves, and based on the plans, the necessary improvements are implemented on existing public facilities and amenities.

a. Housing and Buildings

Concerning the improvement of accessibility in housing, we are providing public housing that has been designed and has equipment suitable for persons with disabilities and meets the needs of the frail and elderly, etc., as a minimum standard. We are also promoting improvement in the accessibility to private housing by utilizing the Government Housing Loan Corporation. In order to develop housing with service provision for daily living of disabled, we are promoting combined development of public housing etc. and welfare facilities etc.

Concerning the improvement of accessibility in buildings, the “Act on Buildings Accessible and Usable for the Elderly and Physically Disabled” was enacted in 1994. For buildings for the general public such as theaters, department stores, etc., we have formulated standards on passageways and stairs for ease of use by persons with disabilities, etc., and we are giving advice to architects and constructors in accordance with this act. In addition to this, the act was revised in 2002 so that specified buildings for certain use and of a certain size should be accessible in order to further promote the improvement of accessibility. Buildings that are confirmed under the provisions of the act as of superior quality are eligible for subsidies, tax incentives and financing on facilities such as elevators suitable for persons with disabilities and wide passageways, thus providing incentives for improvements to accessibility. The act is also applicable to government buildings and in 1997 the Architectural Design Standard for Government Buildings was revised to further promote detailed improvements in accessibility.

b. Public Transportation System, Walking Area, etc.

Concerning the improvement of accessibility to public transportation and in the pedestrian environment, the Transportation Accessibility Improvement Law was enacted in 2000. The law requires that newly built passenger facilities such as stations and newly purchased trains, etc., should be accessible. We are promoting concentrated and integrated accessibility improvements of passenger facilities, roads, station squares, etc., in priority areas for improvement surrounding passenger facilities, such as stations, in accordance with the law. We have formulated guidelines suitable for persons with disabilities to promote improvements in accessibility to public transportation and in the pedestrian environment: “Accessibility Guideline for Public Transportation Passenger Facilities” (2001) for stations, tramcar stops, bus terminals, ferry terminals, airports; “Accessibility Guideline for Public Transportation Rolling Stock, etc.,” (2001) for rolling stock, tramcars, buses, vessels, and airplanes; and “Guideline for Accessibility Improvement of Road and Related Facilities” (2001), etc.

c. Parks

Concerning the improvement of accessibility to parks and waterfront areas, we have formulated the “Guideline for Universal Design in Parks ” (1999) and are promoting development of park facilities that are accessible for persons with disabilities. We are also promoting improvements in accessibility to waterfront areas such as rivers, streams, seashore areas and green spaces in ports and marinas.

(2) Promotion of Independent Life

a. Counseling and Supporting Life

To promote independence and social participation of persons with disabilities, it is important to enrich social services, but also to support persons with disabilities to choose

and use those services. Since 1997, the Government has established a model project on a care management system for persons with disabilities. On and after 2003, the Government will start a real project on care management system for persons with disabilities to strengthen the system for counseling to support community life.

Since 2002, “Centers of Persons with Autism and Learning Disabilities” has been established to support the community life of such persons.

In the same year, a project for the dispatch of home-helpers was started in order to promote independence and social participation of persons with mental disabilities.

b. Support on Information

Since 2001, the barrier-free project on information for persons with disabilities has been established to promote barrier-free access to information through utilization of computers.

Since 2002, a project on training and dispatch of computer-volunteers has begun, in order to consult with persons with disabilities who use computers.

c. Research on Development of Welfare Equipment

The Law Concerning the Promotion of Research and Development and Diffusion of Social Welfare Equipment was enacted in 1993, and developments for the practical application of welfare equipment are supported with funds and information.

New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization is carrying out research and development regarding welfare equipments as well as subsidizing enterprises which develop them, and the Organization collects, analyses and provides information for development and promotion of welfare equipments.

Research on development of assistive devices was promoted by opening the “Laboratory for Assistive Devices for Elderly with Disabilities” and the “2nd Laboratory of the Evaluation Center for the Disabled ” at the Research Institute of the National Rehabilitation Center for the Disabled. In addition, research on standardization of evaluation methods on strength of prostheses, artificial limbs and walking aids was conducted at the Institute.

Moreover, research on assistive devices and on standardization of assistive devices was conducted at the “Association for Technical Aids.”

d. Sports Activities of Persons with Disabilities

Sports activities for persons with disabilities have been promoted since the Tokyo Paralympics in 1964. The National Sports Games for Physically Disabled Persons has been annually held since 1965. The National Sports Games for Mentally Retarded Persons also commenced in 1992. At present, there are many kinds of sports games in Japan, and these activities are facilitating independence and social participation of persons with disabilities. They also contribute to enhance public awareness concerning persons with disabilities.

The “Winter Paralympics Games,” in Nagano were held in March 1998 and were the first Winter Paralympics Games in Asia. “The INAS-FID Football Championships 2002 Japan” were held in Tokyo and Yokohama in August 2002. In addition, the “2002 World Wheelchair Basketball Championships Kitakyushu” were held in Kitakyushu-City in August 2002. These Games have promoted welfare for persons with disabilities inside Japan as well as mutual understanding and international cooperation among the participating countries.

The purpose of training programs for sport instructors for persons with disabilities is to establish sport instruction guidelines that take into consideration the characteristics of persons with disabilities and improve their training abilities.

e. Security of Income

In addition to the implementation of substantial improvements to disability pension benefits in FY 1994, in FY 1995, 1998 and 1999 automatic price adjustment was implemented in accordance with the price index of the year before.

However, because of the economic situation in which prices of the previous year fell, disability pension benefits remained unchanged, as stipulated by the special act, in FY 1998, 2000, 2001 and 2002.

The limit of individual income restriction for the Disability Basic Pension, which is provided for persons with disabilities whose disabilities existed before reaching 20 years of age, is raised every August in proportion to the growth of each person's income. In addition, in August 1997, a partial suspension system was added through the introduction of two-step incremental limitations on income restrictions.

4. Vocational Training and Employment

a. Comprehensive Assistance

As for vocational integration, work preparation training services to job seekers with disabilities are provided free of charge; research is being implemented on vocational integration services tailored to persons with diverse disabilities; and specialists in vocational integration have been trained.

In addition, juridical entities including those designated as “Employment Support Centers for Persons with Disabilities” have carried out comprehensive consultation and support services to persons with disabilities who have great difficulty in being employed at a municipal level since 1994. These services have ranged from employment to support in settling down in a working environment. In addition, with the increase of persons with intellectual or mental disabilities who want to work and need assistance in finding a job and adapting to a work environment, in 2002 social welfare corporations, including “Work and Life Support Centers for Persons with Disabilities,” have started supporting these persons comprehensively in an integrated manner in both work and daily life at local level.

In order to promote the employment of persons with severe disabilities, from 1991 to 1998, a project team was organized, comprising local parties in various fields related to persons with disabilities, such as prefectural administrative bodies for education, welfare, and skills development, etc., and organizations for persons with disabilities. With cooperation from corporations who had experience of employing persons with disabilities, case studies were compiled of employment of persons with severe disabilities in order to disseminate information about good examples.

To promote employment of persons with severe disabilities, since 1993, we have encouraged joint capital contributions by local public bodies and private enterprises (the third sector approach) to enable the utilization of the private sector’s dynamism and know-how.

b. Vocational Aptitude Development

Japan has long been promoting the employment of persons with disabilities, obliging all employers to employ a fixed quota of persons with disabilities or more under the “Employment Quota System for Persons with Disabilities.”

In such circumstances, the government initiated a “Vocational Aptitude Development Support Program” from 1992 to 2001. This program aimed to promote persons with severe disabilities to acquire basic work habits and adjust themselves to the working environment. The program was conducted at the workplace, where persons with severe disabilities would engage in specific and practical work, with vocational and technical support and support for integration. This program evolved into the “Job Coaching Program” in 2002. In this program, “Job Coaches” are sent to the workplaces where persons with intellectual or mental disabilities who have difficulty in smooth communication with others work, and give detailed personnel assistance, not only during employment, but at other times also.

To promote opportunities for general employment of persons with disabilities, and promote the transition of persons with disabilities to general employment, since 2001 we have encouraged short-term (three-month) trial employment in the “Program of Creating Employment Opportunities for the Persons with Disabilities”.

Also since 2001, the government has implemented a “Model Program on Promoting Employment of Persons with Mental Disabilities Through Group Working” under which a group of people with mental disabilities works for a specified number of days at a center, which is active in supporting life in the community for persons with mental disabilities, and is linked to work experience.

Since 2001 the conditions concerning the number of disabled personnel has been eased for small-scale companies and firms in order that they can acquire cooperative status. To support stabilizing their operation, a part of operating expenses have been subsidized by the National Treasury since 2001.

c. Job Consultation Support

In addition to prior services at the Public Employment Security Offices and Vocational Center for the disabled, we carry out following programs.

In “Program on Jobs Guidance for Persons with Mental Disabilities”, which started in 1998, Public Employment Security Office officials would visit medical facilities, health centers, and mental health and welfare centers to demonstrate their practical knowledge and know-how, and support persons with mental disabilities who are eager to get a job but are poorly prepared to find employment.

In the “Program on Promotion of Vocational Independence of Persons with Disabilities”, to promote vocational independence of persons with disabilities, the Government provides families of persons with disabilities and people working for medical, health or welfare institution with information about employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, as well as consult them on vocational independence of persons with disabilities (persons with intellectual disabilities: 1998-, persons with physical or mental disabilities: 2002-)

d. Human Resources Development

The Government has been reviewing its training courses and curriculum as well as renewing equipment responding to the needs of employers, while taking into consideration each disability’s characteristics and degree at the Human Resources Development Center for the Disabled.

In addition, there are some study sessions for trainers who take charge of vocational training for persons with disabilities, and they also meet to exchange devices for and means of working on vocational training for persons with disabilities at polytechnic colleges, etc.

Moreover, as for persons with disabilities who are able to take vocational training with persons without disabilities, the Government promotes acceptance of these persons into general public human resources development facilities along with improving accessibility of facilities and equipment for persons with disabilities.

5. Access to Information and Communications and IT

Much hope is held for advances in information technology (IT) to bring about major changes in society, contribute to the economic prosperity of Japan, and enrich the lives of Japanese citizens.

However, a "digital divide" has arisen in regard to the use of IT due to age and physical condition. To bring about a barrier-free information environment that gives all citizens the benefits of IT innovations, an important challenge is promotion of the use of telecommunications by the elderly and physically challenged.

The government is promoting the development and diffusion of easy-to-use equipment and services, local centers where people can use IT, the expansion of broadcast programs for the elderly and persons with disabilities, and improved accessibility to the Internet and telecommunications equipment with the goal of creating a barrier-free information environment that makes it easy for everyone to use telecommunications, including the elderly and persons with disabilities.

a. Promoting the Development and Diffusion of Easy-to-use Equipment and Services for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities

Since April 1997, partial subsidies have started to be granted to private companies engaged in research and development in communications and broadcast services for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

In April 2001, subsidies started to be granted to entities providing information and communications services to persons with disabilities and to those developing new types of services. Specific targets for these subsidies are: (i) telephone relay services for people with hearing impairments; and (ii) Internet Braille conversion services for people with visual impairments.

For persons with hearing impairments, a system to generate sign language animation from text started to be developed in 1997. And in 2001, a system to provide sign language animation information through personal digital assistance (PDA) started to be developed.

b. Setting up Regional Centers for the use of IT (Setting up Centers for IT Life Enrichment and Contact Support)

The government has been providing support since April 1998 to local public entities, etc. that are building centers to provide easy-to-use information and communication systems for the elderly and persons with disabilities in order to expand the employment opportunities for the elderly and persons with disabilities and enable them to become independent through utilizing such systems.

These centers will receive orders from public agencies, private companies, and related groups to create websites, digitize conference materials, and convert texts into Braille, for example, and carry out the work using telecommunications equipment designed for persons with disabilities, Braille printers, large keyboards, and so on.

c. The Expansion of Broadcasting Programs for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities

In order to provide equal access opportunities to information through broadcasting, the government amended the Broadcasting Law in 1997 and formulated and announced

“diffusion targets for subtitled television programs” that aim to oblige broadcasters to produce subtitles by setting targets for subtitling of all programs that can be subtitled by the end of 2007.

To promote the diffusion of subtitled programming, the government provides the following types of support to expand broadcasts targeting the elderly and persons with disabilities.

To promote the diffusion of programming for aged person and persons with disabilities, subsidies are provided to produce programs with subtitles or descriptions, and research and development is being carried out with the goal of developing technologies to create systems able to automatically subtitle nearly all recorded programs in a short time, including the use of a voice recognition system.

d. Improved Accessibility to the Internet and Telecommunications Equipment

In 1995, a Guideline for Accessibility to Information Processing Equipment was formulated, covering the specifications of keyboard and easy-to-see contents and display, etc. (Guideline was revised in 2000.)

In 1998, Guidelines for Accessibility to Telecommunications Equipment and Equipment for Individual with Disabilities was formulated, explaining the functions required to facilitate the use of telecommunications services by the elderly and persons with disabilities. In specific guidance that was implemented based on the Guidelines, a symbol is now placed on products that are designed to be accessible.

The government is currently developing a system for reviewing and improving the accessibility of websites, in order that the elderly and persons with disabilities can easily access to websites and understand the content.

6. Self-Help Groups

In order to promote activities organized by self-help groups, we have subsidized projects of counseling and guidance to people with disabilities since 1995. The main task of this project is to educate leaders of self-help groups who provide counseling and guidance to persons with disabilities.

Also since 1996, we have subsidized projects to support persons with disabilities' daily life in community. One of the important projects is named "peer-counseling" in which person with disabilities become counselors to support other person with disabilities.

In order to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, the government has established a human rights help-line in each prefecture since 1998.

In 1996, we established a fund for the elderly and persons with disabilities to improve persons with disabilities' well-being, and in 1998 to support persons with disabilities' sports activities. Based on such funds we have subsidized self-help groups (including non-governmental organizations) which conduct a variety of such activities.

III. Review Toward a New Long-Term Programme for Government Measures on Disabled Persons

The “New Long-Term Programme” will end its term in March 2003, so the “Headquarters for Promoting the Welfare of Disabled Persons,” headed by the Prime Minister decided to formulate a “New Fundamental Programme for Disabled Persons” by the end of the year 2002, which is to be implemented from April 2003, and to formulate a “New Governmental Plan for Persons with Disabilities” that will outline the implementation of the priority measures of the New Long Term Programme.

The New Long Term Programme will determine the fundamental directions of measures for persons with disabilities in Japan for the next ten years. “Round-table conference on the New Fundamental Programme for Disabled Persons” is held under the presidency of the Chief Cabinet Secretary, and the hearings and study of opinions is performed with the participation of persons with disabilities and their families as well as people engaged in welfare activities for persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, government ministries and agencies engaged with implementing measures for persons with disabilities have created review teams for each area of the measures (education and fostering, employment and work, welfare and medical care, creation of barrier-free building and transportation facilities, information and communication and international cooperation), and are cooperating with each other in order to formulate a comprehensive and effective programme.

IV. Reference Materials

1. Current Status of Persons and Children with Disabilities

(Unit: 10,000 persons)

Classification	Total	Number Living at Home	Number Admitted to Facilities
Persons and Children with Physical Disabilities	351.6	332.7	18.9
Children with Physical Disabilities (Under 18 years)	9.0	8.2	0.8
Adults with Physical Disabilities (18 years and over)	342.6	324.5	18.1
Persons and Children with Intellectual Disabilities	45.9	32.9	13
Children with Intellectual Disabilities (Under 18 years)	10.3	9.4	0.9
Adults with Intellectual Disabilities (18 years and over)	34.2	22.1	12.1
Age unknown	1.4	1.4	0
Persons with mental disabilities	204	170	34.0

2. Number of Children Attending Schools for the Blind, Deaf and Other Special Schools

(Figures are as of 1 May 2001. Unit: Persons)

Schools for the Blind	Schools for the Deaf	Schools for Other Disabled Children	Special Education Schools		Total
			Elementary School	Junior-High School	
4,001	6,829	81,242	52,551	24,689	169,312

3. Current Situation of Employment for Persons with Disabilities

(1) Current Situation of Employment for Persons with Disabilities in the General Private Sector by Business Size

(Figures are as of 1 June 2001)

Classification	Number of Businesses	Regular Employees	Numbers of Disabled Persons			Real Employment Ratio $C \div \times 100$	Legally Stipulated Employment Ratio not Reached
			A. Workers with Severe Disabilities (Regular)	B. Disabled Workers other than those with Severe Disabilities (Regular)	C. Total $A \times 2 + B$		
Persons	Businesses	Persons	Persons	Persons	Persons	%	%
56-99	21,756 (21,602)	1,598,239 (1,589,474)	6,136 (6,159)	13,762 (14,007)	26,034 (26,325)	1.63 (1.66)	53.3 (52.3)
100-299	27,823 (27,604)	4,062,950 (4,040,856)	13,061 (13,105)	29,097 (30,235)	55,219 (56,445)	1.36 (1.4)	54.8 (53.9)
300-499	5,385 (5,332)	1,795,280 (1,793,243)	6,462 (6,184)	12,448 (12,580)	25,372 (24,948)	1.41 (1.39)	61.8 (63.2)
500-999	3,597 (3,534)	2,207,254 (2,162,254)	8,511 (8,377)	15,208 (14,763)	32,230 (31,517)	1.46 (1.46)	66.6 (67.5)
1,000-	2,554 (2,579)	7,272,333 (7,328,888)	32,123 (31,711)	49,769 (50,179)	114,015 (113,601)	1.57 (1.55)	73.4 (74.5)
Totals	61,115 (60,651)	16,936,056 (16,914,715)	66,293 (65,536)	120,284 (121,764)	252,870 (252,836)	1.49 (1.49)	56.3 (55.7)

(Note) 1. By law, a worker with severe physical or intellectual disabilities is counted as two persons in statistics; consequently the figures in column A have been doubled counted.

2. Figures in parentheses are as of 1 June 2000.

(2) Current Situation of Employment for Disabled Persons in National and Local Public Bodies

(Figures are as of 1 June 2001)

Classification	Numbers of Employees (not including exempt employees)	Numbers of Disabled Persons			Real Employment Ratio $C \div \quad \times 100$
		A. Persons with Severe Disabilities (Regular)	B. Disabled Workers other than those with Severe Disabilities (Regular)	C. Total $A \times 2 + B$	
	persons	persons	persons	persons	%
National Institutions	522,561 (546,570)	1,636 (1,780)	7,923 (8,187)	11,195 (11,747)	2.14 (2.15)
Prefectural Institutions	329,837 (334,698)	1,917 (1,917)	4,244 (4,290)	8,078 (8,124)	2.45 (2.43)
Municipal Institutions	879,762 (883,852)	5,242 (5,146)	11,128 (11,261)	21,612 (21,553)	2.46 (2.44)
Boards of Education	581,361 (592,668)	1,889 (1,926)	3,318 (3,387)	7,096 (7,239)	1.22 (1.22)
Total	2,313,521 (2,357,788)	10,684 (10,769)	26,613 (27,125)	47,981 (48,663)	2.07 (2.06)

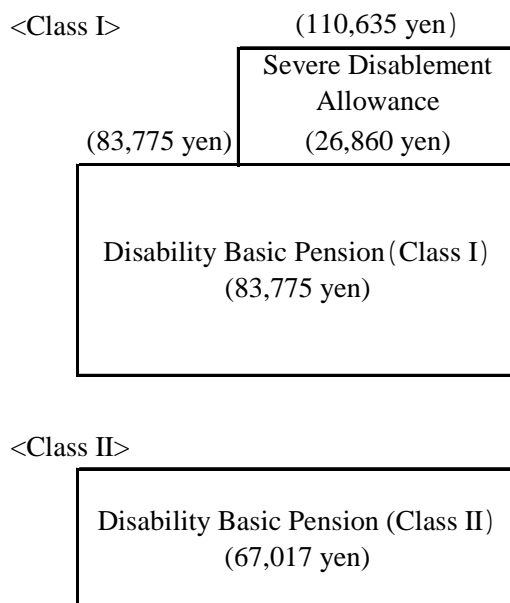
(Note) 1. Numbers of workers with severe physical or intellectual disabilities in column A have been double counted.

2. The employment rate stipulated in the Law for Employment Promotion, etc., of Persons with Disabilities for national and local public bodies is 2.1%, and for boards of education the rate is 2.0%.

3. Figures in parentheses are as of 1 June 2000.

4. Security of Income for Persons with Disabilities

People aged 20 years and over



People under the age of 20

