

## EO Files (September 2016)

### “THINGS WE DO, PEOPLE WE MEET – Reflections in Brief”

#### Superhuman achievements

*Alfred Chan says people with disabilities are capable of extraordinary feats in sport and life, just like anyone else, and a truly equal society is one that helps them realise their potential*

In the midst of the cheers and glory of the Rio Olympics, a friend forwarded to me the trailer for the Paralympic Games, produced by British broadcaster Channel 4, which completely blew my mind.

In the three-minute video, titled [\*We are the Superhumans\*](#), we see individuals with disabilities doing extraordinary things. The message is clear: people with disabilities can achieve no less, at times even more, than their able-bodied counterparts in all areas, including competitive sports.

Many would agree that sport as an industry in Hong Kong is underdeveloped and undervalued. According to a study on sport for people with disabilities in Hong Kong, commissioned by the Home Affairs Bureau and published last month, limited venues, difficulties in accessing them and a dearth of coaches with specific experience are among the major challenges. There is also limited financial support from the government for organisations to promote sport for those with disabilities – a meagre HK\$ 28 million in 2016-17 – when there are nearly 580,000 people with disabilities and another 71,000 to 101,000 with intellectual disabilities in Hong Kong.

The crux of the problem is a general lack of social awareness of the needs and rights of people with disabilities and the prevalent idea that their achievements are not as great as those of able-bodied people. Just compare the hype around the Hong Kong team in the Olympics and the half-hearted enthusiasm the public has for our Paralympic team, which has in fact won 120 medals in the 11 Games it has competed in.

The UN deems sport a fundamental right for all. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities highlights that they should not only be free from discrimination, but also be able to enjoy full and effective participation and inclusion in society, which, it goes without saying, includes sport and recreation.

In addition to their right to sport, we have been actively advocating for the rights of people with disabilities in areas like education, employment and access to facilities and services by means of research, policy advocacy and public education programmes.

What we hope to see is the full integration of people with disabilities into society so that they can lead a dignified life and realise their potential.

At the end of the day, the best way to achieve equality for all is to remind the privileged to take to heart the interests and needs of the less privileged. The able-bodied need to start reforming their mentality and embracing equal opportunity values.

**Professor Alfred C.M. Chan**  
**Chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Commission**

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