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Tel/Fax: 1-201-792-0334
E-mail: dingying@bjreview.com

Africa Bureau
Chief: Li Jianguo
Tel: 27-71-6132053
E-mail: casa201208@hotmail.com

General Editorial Office
Tel: 86-10-68996252
Fax: 86-10-68326628
English Edition
Tel: 86-10-68996250
Advertising Department
Tel: 86-10-68995807
E-mail: ad@bjreview.com.cn
Distribution Department
Tel: 86-10-68310644
E-mail: circulation@bjreview.com.cn

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Inclusiveness Prevails

After Team China topped the Rio Paralympic medal tally in September, iconic figure Zhang Haidi's assumption of a global role will add a new feather to the cap of the nation. Zhang, Chairperson of the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF), will take over the presidency of Rehabilitation International (RI) at the organization's world congress on October 25-27 in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Founded in 1922, RI is composed of persons with disabilities as well as service providers, government agencies, researchers and advocates working to improve the community's quality of life. With member organizations in more than 100 countries and regions, RI provides a forum for sharing experience and information.

Zhang rose to fame in China in the early 1980s. Despite being confined to bed for 10 years because of complications from polio, she educated herself, learning several foreign languages including English, Japanese, German and Esperanto, and became a published writer and translator. She went on to engage in disability advocacy. In her various public positions, including as member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body, she has campaigned for a more inclusive and accessible society for all.

Since being elected RI president in October 2014, the president-elect has spearheaded multiple initiatives. The RI Strategic Plan (2017-21) to be adopted in Edinburgh, for instance, aims to offer greater support to people with disabilities around the world with focuses on rehabilitation, human rights, poverty alleviation and inclusive development, a stronger RI network and the global effect of RI.

The Chinese Government sets great store by the inclusion of people with disabilities in the process of development. The first law on the protection of their rights and interests was put in place in the 1990s. Later, a series of regulations guaranteeing their rights in fields such as education and employment were enacted.

The government has also made efforts to improve basic public services and provide more vocational training and rehabilitation opportunities for individuals with disabilities so as to help them get better jobs, enjoy better lives and play more active roles.

In spite of the great strides it has made, China still lags behind many Western countries regarding disability services. This is largely due to a gap in economic development. With the growth of the Chinese economy, the gap will gradually be bridged.

The differences, however, leave ample room for cooperation. The CDPF, a member organization of RI, is committed to working in concert with its peers in other parts of the world with the shared goal of advancing the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities. ■

Serving People With Disabilities

Zhang Haidi, Chairperson, China Disabled Persons' Federation

In 1988, the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF) was founded. The living conditions of persons with disabilities in China have been greatly improved over the last 20 years. In 2008, I was elected chairperson of the CDPF, working for more than 85 million persons with disabilities.

I firmly believe that the human rights protection of persons with disabilities should and can start only by meeting their real needs. It is only when they have access to rehabilitation and convenient living conditions that human rights protection carries real weight.

As chairperson of the CDPF, one of my priorities is to go into urban and rural areas to get first-hand information about the real conditions and needs of persons with disabilities, especially at the grassroots level. My colleagues and I visited such families in poverty-stricken areas across China. Accordingly, we advised the government to formulate and revise its disability-related policies. In 2015, we made a special survey nationwide of 26 million registered persons with disabilities, and collected information about them and their needs. The data is of great significance for the government to conduct relevant research and develop targeted policies.

During this process, we gained further understanding of the urgency of poverty alleviation for persons with disabilities. Therefore, I recommended to the government to grant living allowances to poor persons with disabilities and nursing subsidies to those with severe disabilities. Last September, the Chinese Government laid out the Double Subsidy Scheme, which took effect on January 1, 2016. More than 20 million people with disabilities across the country are benefiting from it.

Over the years, in order to realize the goal of inclusive development for persons with disabilities, we assisted the Ministry of Education to develop facilitation measures for persons with disabilities to attend the national entrance examination. Candidates with visual impairments now have access to Braille and large-print test papers. Candidates with no upper limbs can use their own suitable tables and chairs, and those with cerebral palsy can apply for extended time. In 2015 alone, universities and colleges received 8,500 students with disabilities.

Rehabilitation is always our top priority. In recent years, rehabilitation centers have been built in more than 30 provinces, regions and cities across China. Due to a serious shortage of rehabilitation professionals, I proposed the government build up a China Rehabilitation University. I'm happy to inform you that the proposal has been incorporated into the 13th Five-Year Plan. We pay special attention to the rehabilitation of children with disabilities. We are carrying out "rescue of rehabilitation," designed to meet the urgent needs of infants and children under 6 years. This program has enabled many children with hearing impairments or cerebral palsy to rehabilitate, go to school and enjoy a happy childhood with their peers.

During the 22nd Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in Beijing in 2014, the CDPF hosted an event called Equal Access, Inclusive Development. The outcome document of the event called for the incorporation of the disability issue into the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In 2016, I proposed the UN establish a World Disability Organization because there are 1 billion persons with disabilities in the world.

The suffering and plight of persons with disabilities is beyond imagination. I have seen some patients with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis who were completely paralyzed and could only blink their eyes to show that they wanted to put an end to their lives as they had lost the ability of speech. I've also seen many autistic children and their parents. Some parents had to give up their jobs to take care of their kids. I hope I can do more to help them relieve their pain, address their difficulties and enable them to live a better life.

Later in October, I will take office in Edinburgh as president of Rehabilitation International. I will spare no efforts in serving persons with disabilities throughout the world. ■



A Champion Of Disability Rights

Contemporary icon Zhang Haidi set to make a difference for people with disabilities worldwide By Ji Jing

Zhang Haidi, Chairperson of the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF), will assume her new role as president of Rehabilitation International (RI) in late October at the RI World Congress in Edinburgh, Scotland. Zhang is the first Chinese woman to take up the post.

With a history of over 90 years, RI is a New York City-based global organization with a mission to advance the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities across the world. Lu Yong, CDPF Vice Chairperson, said Zhang's new role as president of RI shows international recognition of the results of China's protection of people with disabilities.

How has Zhang, a role model for young people in China during the 1980s, managed to realize her transformation to a global leader of empowerment of people with disabilities?

From humble beginnings

Zhang was born in east China's Shandong Province in 1955. At the age of 5, she suffered paraplegia due to a spinal cord disease. She therefore laid in bed for 10 years and had no friends. Zhang said those were the loneliest days in her life and that they taught her to be strong.

Although Zhang didn't attend school, she learned all the primary school and middle school subjects, including English, on her own. At the age of 10, her mother gave her a notebook so she could keep a diary. She recorded the knowledge she learned by herself as well as her aspirations. Zhang said she would not have become a writer later on had she not developed the habit of writing a diary in her teenage years.

She liked reading books, from which she learned how to overcome difficulties. Zhang also translated English novels into Chinese. In addition, she learned acupuncture and offered free treatment to patients.

In 1983, *China Youth Daily* published an article about Zhang's story, and other Chinese media outlets followed suit. Zhang subsequently became a household name. She was held up as a role model for young people across China for her strong will. At that time, Zhang received bags of letters every day. Some people even visited her home just to have a look at her.

However, Zhang chose to escape the limelight. She went on with her studies and received a master's degree in philosophy from Jilin University in 1993. It required a clear mind and courage to explore a new personal development path in the face of overwhelming honors.

Zhang's hard work has paid off. Since 1983, she has published works amounting to over 2 million characters in length. One of her novels, *Dream in a Wheelchair*, was published in Japan and South Korea and had been adapted into a film. Another of her novels, *The Topmost*, was recently published in English. Zhang was elected vice president of the Shandong Provincial Writers Association in 2002.

Disability advocate

In November 2008, Zhang became chairperson of the CDPF and embarked on a new journey. Her predecessor, Deng Pufang, is the winner of the 2003 UN Human Rights Prize, the first person with disabilities worldwide and the first Chinese person to have won the honor.

Like Deng, who is currently honorary chair

Zhang Haidi accompanies Peng Liyuan, wife of Chinese President Xi Jinping, on a visit to an orphanage in Beijing on May 15



of the CDPF, Zhang is committed to advancing the interests of those with disabilities. She has always attached great importance to the rehabilitation of people with disabilities and regards it as the key to improving their quality of life.

Zhang said most people with disabilities in China are in urgent need of rehabilitation, but service provisions presently fall far short of demand. Of the over 26 million citizens registered as having disabilities, less than 30 percent have access to rehabilitation services. The primary problem is the lack of professional rehabilitation workers. Such multi-domain

specialists who should be cultivated by specialized universities. Establishing a national university for cultivating rehabilitation workers was incorporated into the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20). Zhang believes such an institution will help alleviate the difficulties endured by people with disabilities.

Zhang is most concerned with the rehabilitation of children with disabilities. The most important period for rehabilitation is during childhood. Children with disabilities who have received effective rehabilitation therapy can gain or re-gain the abilities to learn, take part in

social activities and live independently.

The 13th Five-Year Plan has mapped out a goal of putting in place a rehabilitation assistance system for children with disabilities and realizing free surgical procedures, auxiliary equipment and rehabilitation therapy for children aged up to 6 who have visual or hearing impairments, speech disorders, other physical disabilities and mental deficiencies or autism. The realization of such a goal requires not only relentless effort from all levels of government, federations representing the interests of people

with disabilities, and rehabilitation centers, but also the participation and support of the whole of society.

Zhang has suggested multiple times that people with disabilities should be granted equal opportunities to take part in the national university entrance examination.

The Ministry of Education and the CDPF the jointly issued in April 2015 regulations aimed at protecting the rights and interests of people with disabilities sitting the exam. The measures include providing test papers in large



font sizes and in Braille as well as sign language interpreters. Such steps make a vast difference to students with disabilities taking the university entrance exam, and higher educational institutions admitted 8,500 such students in 2015.

Zhang said education is essential if people with disabilities are to realize equal participation and integrated development goals. During the 13th Five-Year Plan period, China will continue to improve the educational system for people with disabilities and develop special education in order to enable such people to have access to quality education. In particular, China will promote inclusive education to allow more children with disabilities to study in regular schools and grow up together with other children.

Zhang knows full well the importance of accessible facilities for people with disabilities. She said the construction of barrier-free infrastructure exemplifies humanitarian concern and benefits the whole of society. Such infrastructure is important to guarantee that people with disabilities, senior citizens and invalids can take part in social activities. Pushing forward the construction of such infrastructure is therefore important, and the Central Government issued a guideline for promoting barrier-free access in 2012.

RI created the International Symbol of Access, featuring a stylized image of a wheelchair, in 1969. It is said to be one of the most recognized signs in the world today.

China is seeking to complete the process of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2020. Zhang is concerned with whether people with disabilities can get out of poverty and become moderately prosperous in sync with other people.

Lifting people with disabilities out of poverty is a tough task. Currently, over 4 million such people live in extreme poverty in China. People with disabilities should not be left out on the path toward prosperity.

Zhang is pleased to see that the 13th Five-Year Plan has special sections devoted to people with disabilities. She said various measures should be introduced to solve the problems of people with disabilities in China, the number of whom totals 85 million, and accelerate their progress toward prosperity.

Zhang suggests leveraging big data to lift people with disabilities out of poverty. The CDPF will establish a large database to provide reference data for the nation's targeted poverty alleviation efforts. In the meantime, the organization will prompt the government and call on society at large to help people with disabilities. Zhang believes that with these efforts, the living standards of people with disabilities will significantly improve in five years.

Zhang Haidi visits children undergoing rehabilitation training at a comprehensive service center for people with disabilities in Xinmi, central China's Henan Province, on December 23, 2012

Global outreach

During Beijing's bid for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games, Zhang said in a speech on July 31, 2015 that although she had been wheelchair-bound since being paralyzed 55 years previously, her heart had always forged ahead.

"Paralympians are real heroes, and their spirit empowers the whole world. The 2008 Beijing Paralympics left a valuable legacy for people with disabilities. I sincerely hope the 2022 Winter Paralympic Games are held in Beijing," said Zhang.

After Beijing won the bid, Zhang was in tears. "I'm happy for China to win the Winter Olympics bid. A lot of brothers and sisters with disabilities will come to China to train for the games, and we will have more accessible facilities.

The whole nation will make a great endeavor to make the Winter Olympics and Paralympics a success and help people with disabilities live better lives," she said.

Zhang headed China's delegation for the 2016 Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. During the games, Team China won 107 gold, 81 silver and 51 bronze medals, broke 51 world records, and topped both the overall medal tally and the gold medal tally.

Zhang said the medals resulted from Chinese athletes' efforts and served to empower all people with disabilities in China.

Since becoming CDPF chairperson, Zhang has actively pushed for the organization's cooperation and exchanges with international organizations. The Central Government and the CDPF have advocated the inclusion of development of people with disabilities in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In order to acknowledge China's contribution to that cause, the UN invited the CDPF to co-design and issue a souvenir stamp with the theme of people with disabilities as part of celebrations for the international organization's 70th anniversary.

The topic "disabled people and economic development," proposed by China, has become a formal topic at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, and a CDPF representative was elected the first chairperson of the APEC Group of Friends on Disability Issues.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said inclusiveness is the key to the development of people with disabilities during the Global



Zhang Haidi visits the Shaanxi Provincial Rehabilitation Center for People With Disabilities in the province's capital, Xi'an, on February 9, 2015

Conference on Assistive Devices & Technology, which was held in conjunction with a high-level meeting on disability cooperation among Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) members that took place in Beijing on October 29, 2015.

Merkel added that cooperation on development of people with disabilities under the ASEM framework had opened up new areas of cooperation for China and Germany and had bright prospects. Germany is willing to strengthen cooperation and mutual learning with China on development of people with disabilities, explore new cooperation models, and help with the development of people with disabilities in China in order to enable the nation to become a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon highly commended China's efforts toward protecting the rights of people with disabilities and the nation's achievements in this regard to date during a conference held by the Chinese Government to mark the 10th anniversary of the passing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities in July. RI oversaw the adoption of the convention in 2006.

The future of RI with Zhang as president holds promise. Since she was elected in 2014, Zhang has attended multiple RI meetings and reviewed the performance of the organization with members of the Executive Committee. Together, they have launched new initiatives. For instance, an African fund has been established to help impoverished people with disabilities in African countries, especially women

and children.

In addition, as leader of the RI Strategic Plan (2017-21) drafting committee, Zhang played an essential role in the formulation of the plan, set to be adopted at the Edinburgh conference.

The plan aims to reinforce RI's leading role in promoting the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. Based on the vision and mission that all people with disabilities shall live in an inclusive world and enjoy active participation and full human rights, it proposes five focuses—rehabilitation, human rights, poverty alleviation and inclusive development, a stronger RI network, and the global effect of RI—to provide support to people with disabilities around the world.

"With joint efforts of individuals as well as international organizations, the goals can be fully achieved," said Li Xiaomei, Deputy Director of the International Affairs Department of the CDPF. "As a national member organization of RI, we believe the work of the CDPF can have positive effects on RI's future development."

The interaction between RI and the CDPF can strengthen mutual understanding and promote disability rights and interests in China and beyond, Li added.

"We will try to enable RI to continue contributing positively to the empowerment of people with disabilities worldwide," Zhang said. ■

No One Left Behind

China strives to promote the well-being of citizens with disabilities

By Zhang Zhiping & Wang Hairong

Yang Yuanwang exudes confidence. It's the confidence that stems from his transformation—from someone who needed help to someone who helps others.

Yang lives in Datang, a village in central China's Hunan Province. A few years ago, a workplace accident left him with a maimed left hand and he went into severe depression. Then he happened to take part in a free training in livestock breeding conducted by the Disabled Persons' Federation of Hongjiang City and it changed his life. He learned to raise chickens, ducks and pigs and later traveled out of town with the federation to learn how to keep swans.

In 2009, with the federation's help, Yang founded an animal husbandry cooperative with other villagers. The new cooperative initially leased a reservoir where it bred fish and set up a farm to rear poultry, goats, pigs and swans. It obtained low-interest loans available to persons with disabilities and the business gradually expanded. Today, more than 50 people are working in the cooperative, including several with disabilities.

Between 2011 and 2015, a total of 5.06 million people with disabilities moved out of poverty in China, according to the China

Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF). Also, 9.13 million people with disabilities received government or private assistance to find employment or other means of livelihood. In addition, 438,000 impoverished people with disabilities had their dilapidated houses renovated and 3.36 million received training in vocational skills.

Between 2012, when the government released the Outline for Development-Oriented Poverty Reduction for China's Rural Areas, a poverty reduction plan that will run till 2020, and last year, more than 6.8 million rural residents with disabilities had received state support.

Poverty alleviation

The Chinese Government has announced that by 2020, all the 70 million-plus people living below the national poverty standard will be lifted, including millions of citizens with disabilities.

CDPF statistics show that of China's 85 million people with disabilities, over 70 percent live in rural areas; one out of every five rural persons with disabilities lives below the current poverty line. This indicates that the indigence rate in this group is more than

twice the national average.

According to the national yardstick effective from 2011, those earning less than 2,300 yuan (\$343) annually vis-a-vis 2010 prices are considered to be impoverished.

On October 17, 2015, China's National Poverty Relief Day, CDPF Chairperson Zhang Haidi said alleviating the poverty of rural people with disabilities is directly related to the effectiveness of development-oriented poverty mitigation.

China attaches great importance to targeted poverty reduction. The national poverty alleviation program includes assistance measures for persons with disabilities. The government has said it will verify the status of indigent people with disabilities and designate persons to help such households.

From January 1, the government has started giving subsistence allowances to such persons as well as a nursing subsidy to those with severe disabilities. This is in line with the policies rolled out by the State Council, China's cabinet, in 2015 to increase welfare benefits for people with disabilities. These allowances benefit about 20 million people with disabilities, Zhang said at a press conference on August 31.

The government is also providing more vocational training opportunities and mortgage- and interest-free micro loans to persons with disabilities. Industrial bases have been created to provide more employment opportunities for them and an income support program has been created for people with disabilities who can't work.

Additionally, the private sector is encouraged to employ impoverished people with disabilities or run special projects to assist them.

Job promotions

Since 1990, the government requires employers to recruit a certain percentage of persons with disabilities. In September 2013, seven central government departments including the State Administration of Civil Service released a document urging employers to meet the requirement. Various local



President Xi Jinping visits a nursing home for people with disabilities in Tangshan, Hebei Province, on July 28

China Disabled Persons' Federation

Established in March 1988, the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF) is a national umbrella organization of and for persons with diverse disabilities. Its mission is to promote the full participation of persons with disabilities in society on an equal basis with others, ensure that persons with disabilities share in the material and cultural achievements of society, as well as foster humanitarianism in society.

Headquartered in Beijing, the CDPF performs three key functions: represent the common interests and safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities; provide comprehensive services to persons with disabilities; and, as commissioned by the Government of China, supervise the administration of disability-related affairs. The CDPF serves as the secretariat of the State Council Working Committee on Disability.

The CDPF enjoys special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council. It also represents China in, among others, the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons With Disabilities, 2013-2022, convened by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Deng Pufang is honorary chairperson of the CDPF, and Zhang Haidi is its chairperson.

governments also took measures to implement it.

A State Council regulation in 2015 says that except for small businesses less than 3 years old and hiring fewer than 20 people, employers failing to meet the requirement would be fined while those hiring more people with disabilities than required would be rewarded. Government departments, public institutions and state-owned enterprises

have been asked to take the lead in recruiting people with disabilities.

Shen Weiwei, a Shanghai resident with disabilities, is a civil servant with the Shanghai Municipal Science and Technology Commission. In December 2013, Shanghai opened some positions exclusively for people with disabilities and more than 400 applied. The following year, 18, including Shen, were hired.

"I took two civil service exams before but did not measure well against the able-bodied candidates," Shen said.

In 2015, the Beijing Municipal Government also reserved five jobs for persons with disabilities to be recruited through the annual civil service exam. The practice has also started in other places such as Chongqing and Tianjin municipalities, Fujian, Gansu, Guangdong, Henan, Hubei, Jiangsu,



Premier Li Keqiang and German Chancellor Angela Merkel visit an exhibition of assistive devices ahead of the Asia-Europe Meeting High-Level Meeting on Disability & Global Conference on Assistive Devices and Technology in Beijing on October 29, 2015

Jilin and Shaanxi provinces.

Improved public services

In addition to increasing social security benefits to meet the basic needs of impoverished people with disabilities, efforts have been made to expand basic public services such as medical and rehabilitation services and special education and housing, especially for rural residents with disabilities.

In recent years, more than 10 million people with disabilities have received rehabilitation services. Some with severe disabilities have received special care. More than 380 care homes, known as Warm Houses, have been set up in Beijing to provide day care for such people.

Nonetheless, the rehabilitation services are far from sufficient. CDPF's Zhang said in 2015, there were 26 million registered persons with disabilities. However, fewer than 30 percent received these services, mainly

due to lack of professional instructors and assistants.

There are only 70-odd undergraduate rehabilitation programs in China, producing no more than 8,000 trained graduates every year. Of them, nearly 70 percent have completed only the two-year course instead of the advanced four-year one. Zhang said this number is too low to meet the need for advanced rehabilitation services. The 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) envisions building a national-level rehabilitation university.

Eyes on education

China has more than 1.67 million children with disabilities aged 6 years and below. It is estimated that 200,000 babies with disabilities are born every year, which will add to the number. "Childhood is the most important stage of physical rehabilitation. So we must seize this period to create better conditions for children... [so that] they can go to school, get more oppor-

tunities and safeguard their future," Zhang said.

In the next five years, the government will invest nearly 5 billion yuan (\$746 million) to implement a rehabilitation program for children.

Educational facilities for students with disabilities are improving. Some are attending regular school while many have sat in the national college entrance examination, where special measures are taken to accommodate them.

In April 2014, the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the CDPF jointly issued a document saying more measures should be taken to accommodate examinees with disabilities, such as providing hearing aids, special desks and chairs and magnifying glasses. Examination times may also be extended for them. From the same year, visually impaired students were allowed to take the college entrance examination in Braille.

Last year, 8,500 students with disabilities



Wang Yong, State Councilor and Director of the State Council Working Committee for Persons with Disabilities, visits the China Rehabilitation Research Center for Deaf Children in Beijing on May 14

nationwide were admitted into regular universities, according to the CDPF.

Since 2010, the government has begun to offer assistance to all primary and middle school students with disabilities so that they don't drop out because of financial difficulties.

In 2014, the MOE and several other central government departments released a plan to ensure that every child with disabilities has access to education. Various localities nationwide have also made their own plans in this regard.

Since 2014, the government has sponsored the preschool education of more than 550,000 children with disabilities. The MOE is making policies to improve vocational education and popularize standard sign language and Braille across the country.

Investment in special education infrastructure has increased. At the end of 2014, China had about 2,000 special education schools with 395,000 students and 48,100 teachers.

Since 2008, central and local governments have spent 5.4 billion yuan (\$806 million) on building, renovating or expanding 1,182 special education schools. Between

2012 and 2015, the Central Government invested 3.2 billion yuan (\$478 million) to support the construction of infrastructure for special education major in universities and secondary and higher vocational schools. From 2013 to 2014, state funding for special education increased over sevenfold.

Social support for special education is also growing. In the four years leading to 2015, the China Foundation for Disabled Persons raised 20.6 million yuan (\$3.08 million) for special education, which helped 280,000 children and youths.

International cooperation

The Chinese Government is taking an active part in international disability-related affairs.

Under the joint efforts of China and other members of the international community, members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Asia-Europe Meeting are working together to develop undertakings for people with disabilities.

The 22nd APEC Economic Leaders' Week in Beijing in November 2014 saw 20 APEC economies launch a joint initiative to promote equal access for people with disabilities

and their inclusive development.

In September 2015, representatives from China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations attended a disability rehabilitation forum in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in south China. China has also participated in the formulation of disability-related goals in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and promoted inclusive development of people with disabilities.

China has implemented the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, taking legislative, administrative and other measures and amended its Law on the Protection of Disabled Persons.

It has also implemented six national development outlines for persons with disabilities, and released three national human rights action plans which include protection of the rights and interests of these persons.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon spoke highly of China's progress in protecting the rights and interests of persons with disabilities while attending a meeting marking the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Beijing on July 8. ■



The Fifth National Working Conference on disability takes place on September 26 in Beijing

Government Vows to Improve the Well-Being of People With Disabilities

The Fifth National Working Conference on Undertakings of People with Disabilities was held in Beijing on September 26. Wang Yong, State Councilor and Director of the State Council Working Committee for Persons with Disabilities, attended the meeting and delivered a speech. He emphasized the need to conscientiously implement the decisions made by the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and the State Council, strengthen policy support, and ensure persons with disabilities are able to access their fair share of prosperity within society.

Wang pointed out that the CPC Central Committee and the State Council pay close attention to work with persons with disabilities. During the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-15) period, social security and public service for persons with disabilities was continually strengthened, the livelihood and benefits of the disabled were improved, and the influence of the work on people with disabilities was greatly enhanced. This shows the achievements of the economic and social development of the nation.

Wang pledged to comprehensively carry out the planning framework of the 13th Five-Year Plan and improve the well-being of persons with disabilities. He also stated that the Central Government will take measures to eliminate poverty within the community for persons with disabilities and improve social security for them, combining general and specific benefaction in order to gradually enhance their social security level.

In addition, he said that the public service system including disability prevention, rehabilitation, education and barrier-free facilities will be strengthened. People with disabilities will be able to get access to more job training opportunities and business startups by persons with disabilities will be supported by the government. He called on the China Disabled Persons' Federation to play a leading role in organizing work on people with disabilities and urged society to take part in the cause in order to promote undertakings for persons with disabilities to a new level.

Report to the Fifth National Working Conference On Undertakings of People With Disabilities

Lu Yong, Deputy Director of the State Council Working Committee for Persons With Disabilities and Chairman of the CDPF Executive Council

Achievements During the 12th Five-Year Plan Period

► **The State Council issued opinions on accelerating the state of well-being of people with disabilities.** The State Council Working Committee for People With Disabilities conducted a real-name survey of the general service conditions and demands of people with disabilities.

► **A basic national welfare system has been established.** The State Council issued opinions on the establishment of a livelihood welfare system for poor persons with disabilities and the nursing welfare system for persons with severe disabilities. It has also established a basic welfare system framework at the national level for the first time. Hence, 20 million poor people and people with severe disabilities will benefit from it.

► **Basic public services have been promoted.** Several recovery projects were carried out so that they provided basic recovery services for more than 13.5 million people with disabilities. Also, they cut fees for services such as operations, affiliated device distribution and recovery training for more than 400,000 children with disabilities. Besides, they provided foster care services for more than 4.2 million people with disabilities. Moreover, they distributed 6.655 million pieces of related healthcare devices within five years.

► **The decision of the Central Government on tackling poverty has been implemented, which promotes the precise recognition of and assistance for impoverished people with disabilities in rural areas.** Practical technological training was provided to 4.1 million people with disabilities living in rural areas. It also distributed 4.85 billion yuan (\$721 million) as recovery and poverty alleviation loans. The decision has helped lift 5.88 million impoverished people with disabilities out of poverty.

► **Essential activities have been held successfully, and important anniversaries have been promoted.** Furthermore, people who overcome their disabilities and role models dedicated to helping persons with disabilities appear in all walks of life, which has fostered humanitarian action in others. Press coverage of the undertakings of persons with disabilities has also been enhanced, and relevant social media platforms have grown in popularity.

► **The Central Government's disability-**

related investments have reached 19.524 billion yuan (\$2.9 billion). Currently, there are 2,053 special education schools. Besides, 3,463 facilities have been set up for the recovery of, fostering and integrated service for people with disabilities. The government has also taken great efforts to purchase services to assist them. The association for Chinese assistance for people with disabilities has been established, and volunteering work and charity activities for them have been carried out extensively.

► **New areas for cooperation and communication have been explored.** The issue on the development of persons with disabilities has been successfully brought into the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, making up for the fact that this issue was not included in the 2000 UN Millennium Development Goals.

Tasks in the 13th Five-Year Plan

► **Improving the top-level design. We should improve related policies, regulations, institutional arrangements and regional supporting policies and regulations.** We should actively promote the formulation of the regulation on disability prevention and rehabilitation for persons with disabilities and the revision of the regulation on education for persons with disabilities, and enhancing legislation such as social security for persons with disabilities.

► **Promoting poverty alleviation.** Impoverished people with disabilities should be the focus group for precise poverty alleviation and registration measures. We should implement targeted policies and give precise assistance for them: Some of them will be guided by industrial development and employment transition; some will be settled down by relocation and ecological protection; some will be retrained via rehabilitation, education and training; and some of their fiscal stress will be alleviated through a decrease in educational expenses, medical treatment and rehabilitation.

► **Striving to improve public services.** We should make efforts to establish and enhance the basic public service network for the differently abled, connecting them through a nationwide network. We should make every effort to improve any shortage of services for them.

► **Striving to secure the rights of persons with disabilities.** We should establish a refer-

ral information system of laws, regulations and rules which directly relates to the legal rights of people with disabilities, and strengthen public awareness and supervision.

We should also carry out special projects that let them learn and practice laws, as well as legally investigate and punish illegal and criminal behavior which violates their legal rights.

► **Striving to enrich the spiritual and cultural lives of people with disabilities.** We should carry out public awareness services and inspire self-improvement, self-respect, self-confidence and self-reliance among them to encourage them to bravely meet their challenges and to realize their life goals.

► **Striving to combine power and resources.** We should make basic public services for people with disabilities a priority for the government's purchase of services, strengthen guidance and supervision, and make efforts to enlarge this movement.

► **Striving to enhance the security of people with disabilities.** We should improve the leadership system and mechanism in which the Party committee leadership, government responsibility, social participation and related organizations all play their functions. Governments and working committees for people with disabilities should also play a leading role and make proper arrangements.

► **Striving to explore new situations for cooperation and communication.** We should carry out the task concerning the development of people with disabilities in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and promote the perfection of the performance system in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We should foster the mechanism function of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the Asia-Europe Meeting, and promote communication and cooperation on the affairs of people with disabilities. We should actively participate in the work of international organizations such as Rehabilitation International.



End of Exclusion

Plan to bring down social barriers against people with disabilities By Zheng Gongcheng



A worker with paralysis makes quilts at a textile company in Anshun, Guizhou Province, in May

Early last year, a nationwide survey was conducted covering over 26 million people with disabilities. The extensive door-to-door questioning gave an invaluable insight into the challenges the respondents faced in terms of employment, education, housing and rehabilitation.

The survey gathered first-hand information about the community's living conditions as well as their concerns regarding social security and services in preparation for a national plan to mobilize resources and create a better life for them.

Subsequently, on August 3, the State Council, China's cabinet, released an outline on improving the lives of citizens with dis-

abilities and building a society suitable for the group during the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) period.

The government attaches great importance to involving all the 85 million Chinese with disabilities in the building of a moderately prosperous society. In his keynote speech at the Global Poverty Reduction and Development Forum in Beijing in October 2015, President Xi Jinping stressed that poverty reduction is part of China's overall development strategy. The drive to eradicate poverty would have special policies tailored for different groups, such as women and children, minority ethnic groups, and people with disabilities.

Xi reiterated this during his visit to Tangshan in north China's Hebei Province in July this year, saying that not a single one should be left behind in the pursuit of a better life.

A moderately prosperous society in all aspects would provide more welfare benefits to citizens with disabilities. In December 2014, a State Council Executive Meeting presided over by Premier Li Keqiang approved disability-support policies which have been included in the recently published outline.

At the meeting, Premier Li stressed that the cause of people with disabilities is related to social fairness and justice and is a fundamental part of socialism. "Our goal is to

Members of the Little Dolphin Choir, the world's first choir of children wearing artificial cochlea, and volunteers perform at a ceremony in Beijing on July 14, after they won the silver medal at 2016 World Choir Games in Russia



complete building a moderately prosperous society in all aspects by 2020, with no person with disabilities left out. We need to help them to lead richer and more dignified lives," Li said.

Poverty reduction

Poverty, though not the only difficulty for people with disabilities, is often the most pressing one which creates other problems. People with disabilities are liable to fall into long-term poverty with little means to escape.

People with disabilities need special social security guarantees and assistance in the fight against poverty. The outline says that while addressing poverty in rural areas, people with disabilities must be the primary recipients of social security and other services. The focus should be on families, especially single-parent families, with members with severe disabilities, as well as seniors and women and children with disabilities, as they are the most vulnerable group.

Citizens with disabilities often have distinctive needs. The outline states that by 2020, besides ensuring that the impoverished rural population has sufficient access to food, clothing, education, basic medical care and housing, there should be rehabilitation facilities and barrier-free residences for poverty-stricken rural families who have members with disabilities.

The outline also says that people with disabilities, besides being recipients of special care in the fight against poverty, can also be active in the battle, depending on their condition. By developing their special skills, it's possible for them to find work, earn money and shake off poverty themselves. In this way, they are also contributing to building a moderately prosperous society and winning widespread support and respect.

Social security

A well-developed social security system that guarantees the basic living standards for people with disabilities as well as economic sustainability has a positive impact in the short and long term. To keep improving the existing system, China's comprehensive national strength and the community of people with disabilities have to be taken into consideration.

The outline contains a framework of social welfare programs tailored for people with disabilities. A new legislation on social welfare for those living with disabilities will be drafted to provide the legal basis for disability-related social welfare guarantees. In addition, it puts forward detailed policies on social aid, welfare and security with specific programs targeting certain groups.

Participation in social life

Integration is both the objective and means of social development. In a moderately prosperous society, people with disabilities have their own dreams, apart from thoughts about basic necessities like sufficient food and clothing. They should be able to participate in economic, political, cultural and social activities as equal members of society. So it's crucial to remove all kinds of barriers and form effective support systems. This requires a higher level of social, professional and humane public services.

The outline contains policies and methods to facilitate the participation of people with disabilities in social life and to improve community-based rehabilitation, education and employment services for them. Personalized assistive devices for rehabilitation will be promoted. In addition, measures will be taken to enable regular schools to admit students with disabilities. Rights of people with disabilities to apply for civil service positions will be fully protected while various organizations will be encouraged to

employ such people.

Reform and innovation

Reform, a driving force for development, creates new opportunities to promote social fairness. To help people with disabilities lead a moderately prosperous life, mere poverty reduction programs, income increases, expanded social participation and personal development are not enough. There should be innovative mechanisms to improve their lives. Entire society should be encouraged to help them.

A highlight in the outline is the involvement of social forces and the market mechanism in developing disability-related solutions. The document prioritizes improving services for people with disabilities. For the first time, it specifies the major areas to be covered by these services—assistive devices and technology, rehabilitation nursing, institutional care, daily life assistance, and supply of barrier-free products. Industrial, technological and management innovation in these sectors is greatly encouraged, particularly those involving public procurement.

This reform is of great significance for integrating government and private resources to promote programs for people with disabilities. ■

The author is a member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and Dean of the China Disability Institute, Renmin University of China

Right on Target

Tailored measures improve the efficiency of poverty alleviation projects
By Chen Ran



Government workers of the Cangshan District of Fuzhou, Fujian Province, visit the home of a resident with disabilities (right) of a community in June

When Mureli Ajati opened the doors to his own home-based convenience store it was the fulfillment of a life-long dream. The 34-year-old resident of Manas County, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, who has polio, has used the location of his street-facing family home to his advantage.

This spring, Ajati, who lives with his mother and brother, was encouraged by the county's federation of people with disabilities to set up the store. He was impressed by the speed and efficiency with which the operating license and other business documentation was processed and delivered to his door.

Contact information of suppliers and how-to guidelines were also supplied and the motivated entrepreneur's operation is now running smoothly.

Targeted measures

Xie Yande, the newly appointed head of the federation, and his co-workers were instrumental in helping realize Ajati's dream. Since the beginning of 2014, some 200,000 staff members working at government institutions across Xinjiang have been assigned in groups to work in villages, some of which are poverty-stricken. The program forms part of a three-year-long campaign launched by the regional

government in the hope of improving people's livelihood.

A four-member team headed by Xie took up residence in Ajati's village on February 25. One of their top priorities since then has been poverty alleviation using targeted measures.

Unlike past experiences that heavily rely on outside donations and assistance, Xie's team focuses on finding solutions from

within. The members conducted door-to-door surveys, registering eight people with disabilities from seven impoverished households. Plans were then designed around the requirements of each person. Villagers with disabilities are encouraged to raise livestock or poultry, provide labor service or buy shares in local projects to increase incomes. In addition, Xie's team and local officials are pairing up with each targeted impoverished family to ensure full implementation of the plan.

Chicken breeding was one item on Xie's agenda, as some of the villagers living with disabilities wanted to convert their backyards into farms, but struggled to obtain funding. To date, Xie's team has provided chicks worth 17,000 yuan (\$2,500) to the needy households. "We have a shared belief that it's better to teach a man to fish than to give him a fish. Besides, we are making close friends with local villagers through various communications," said Xie.

Like Ajati, Yakufu Maysuti, who also lives with a disability, saw his dream reach fruition with government sponsorship. A native of Shanshan County, some 220 km away from Manas, Maysuti comes from a big family with scarce land resources, and the only income was from his son who did odd jobs around town. Earlier this year, he was given seven sheep for breeding along with the necessary funding and breeding information. Moreover, his family was relocated into newly built affordable housing twice as large as his previous shack. "I couldn't be happier with my life now," said Maysuti.

Policy support

Official data show that some 1.74 million people in Xinjiang have been lifted above the poverty line in the past five years. According to the Chinese Government, people in rural areas with a net income per capita of less than 2,300 yuan (\$343) annually going by 2010 prices are deemed to be living below the poverty line.

In addition to existing national policies concerning poverty alleviation and people with disabilities, the State Council, China's cabinet, unveiled a new aid project targeting more than 20 million poverty-stricken

A villager with disability in Bayan County, Heilongjiang Province, feeds rabbits on May 13. The man has around 200 rabbits thanks to the financial and technical support from the local government



people with severe disabilities on September 25, 2015, which became effective across the country on January 1.

Xinjiang still has 2.61 million people living below the poverty line. Some 332,400 people with severe disabilities could benefit from the aid project by receiving monthly living subsidies and home-nursing allowances.

"All the assigned government workers in poverty-stricken villages will not leave until local poverty eradication missions are complete," said Zhou Junlin, Chairman of Xinjiang Disabled Persons' Federation.

"As President Xi Jinping had said, 'We are trying our best to make sure that nobody will be left behind on the road to build a moderately prosperous society in all aspects by 2020.' That is our promise and also commitment," he added.

Proactive approach

No one has better understanding of the importance of helping lift people with disabilities out of poverty than Zhang Haidi, Chairperson of the China Disabled Persons' Federation.

A national role model of self-motivation, Zhang, 61, who became paraplegic at 5, has bitter-sweet memories since taking office in 2008.

At the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on October 3, Zhang said that during the past decade, people with disabilities in China have experienced changes in many areas. For instance, more legal documents are issued to better protect rights, driving licenses are accessible, seeing-eye dogs are allowed on public transportation and talented youth are admitted by normal colleges.

However, China's poverty rate in rural areas is double that of urban areas, as more

than 70 percent of 85 million people with disabilities across the country live in rural areas. Zhang said the obstacles for poverty-stricken people with disabilities include little access to rehabilitation, education, employment and funding.

Her view was echoed by Zhao Li, economics professor at Hainan Academy of Governance. Zhao said vocational training programs designed for people with disabilities, but capable of working, is a feasible solution running parallel with rehabilitation for poverty alleviation. Enterprises should play a key role in creating jobs for people with disabilities as part of their social responsibility.

Hadventure, a Beijing-based IT company, sets a good example in this regard. The company trained 30 people with disabilities in south China's Hainan Province to upgrade their typing skills. These staffs were then able to complete digital and hard copy data projects. "They did a great job, and their monthly salary could be more than 2,000 yuan (\$300)," said Cao Zhe, Manager of Hadventure.

Making good use of technology is also advocated by Zhang. Besides field surveys, compiling accurate demographics based on big data is a primary task of Zhang's organization to help enhance the efficiency of poverty eradication targeting people with disabilities. Currently, more than 4 million people with disabilities have been registered in the national poverty-stricken population database.

"Looking up to role models who lead a happy life through their own efforts helps building morale, strengthens self-confidence and cultivates self-motivation. I do believe that small changes from within could make a big difference," said Zhang. ■

Willing and Able

E-commerce unveils business opportunities for people with disabilities

By Xia Yuanyuan & Wang Hairong



People with disabilities are trained on how to open e-stores on Taobao

There was a time when Gao Mengwen felt her life was a cruel twist of fate. The 26-year-old native of Hangzhou, in east China's Zhejiang Province, has had cerebral palsy since birth and can move only via a wheelchair. One of her biggest fears for several years was how she could earn a living and not be a financial burden on others. It was technology that threw Gao a lifeline and today the newly motivated young woman, armed with a laptop and WiFi, has taken advantage of the giant e-

commerce platform Taobao to carve out a thriving business for herself.

And like Gao, e-commerce is creating more job opportunities for people with disabilities in China.

Dream to reality

Though Gao always knew she was different growing up, she never lost hope and studied hard at school. It was not until 2014, when she began job hunting, that the reality struck home.

"I couldn't find a job when I graduated from college," she said remembering the arduous routine of sending out hundreds of her resumes to companies without any reply. "I realized my physical condition is an obstacle. People with disabilities are looked at differently in the job market."

Impressed by the popularity of e-commerce, the idea to open a store on Taobao was born, and she decided to be her own boss. "I like the Internet because it is open,

convenient, and all are equal," she said.

Gao became an online store owner in 2014, focusing mainly on snacks and enjoying the convenience of working from the comfort of her home. Her disability does not restrict her from interacting with clients. "I can respond to customers' queries through Wangwang (an online chat software between sellers and buyers on Taobao to manage orders)." Her products are collected from her door daily for onward delivery countrywide.

To date, Gao has made more than 2,000 transactions online and her store has the "3-diamond" rating—given to trustworthy stores by Taobao. With an annual income now reaching 50,000 yuan (\$7,700), she is understandably proud of her independence.

Like Gao, an increasing number of people with physical disabilities in China are setting up e-commerce businesses, typically on Taobao. According to the Zhejiang Province Disabled Persons' Federation, the number of people with disabilities in the province who started businesses online had exceeded 10,000 by July, of them more than 6,000 are on Taobao.

Photos of graceful ladies dressed in elegant *qipao*, a traditional Chinese dress, in various colors, styles and textures are neatly arrayed in Cui Wanzhi's stores on e-commerce platforms T-mall and Taobao.

Few shoppers know that the store owner is a man who has achieved success in business despite his physical disabilities.

"I was born different. God loves me, so he took a bite of me. Although I stagger when walking and stammer when speaking, I own my company whose annual sales exceed 10 million yuan (\$1.5 million) and which is among the top 10 e-tailers [ranked by the Alibaba Group]," Cui said during a 2015 speech contest aired on Anhui Satellite TV. Cui made it through several rounds of public speaking in front of large TV audiences to win the second place.

When Cui was born, suffocation caused during labor affected his system, making his speech slurred and his legs weak.

Cui's father always encouraged him, saying, "Do not complain. Rely on yourself." Supported by his father, Cui decided to start his own business after graduation from university.

He peddled goods on the street and ran a bookstore and an Internet café before opening an online shop more than 10 years



Gao Zhilin, a man with disabilities in Langfang City in Hebei Province, edits his products' information in Taobao store

ago and creating his own clothing labels. Now his company employs over 500 people, and Cui offers training to people with disabilities.

Lai Fan, a resident of Dazhou, Sichuan Province, is in her late 30s. She opened her online shop, Tubandeng Sichuan Specialty Products, featuring chili paste, edible fungi, spicy peanuts and other local snacks, a few months ago.

"Delicious! The boss said she made it herself. After finishing this, I will buy again," a customer commented on the chili paste bought from Lai's store. Such comments make Lai happy.

Lai currently works as a graphic designer, and runs the shop in her spare time. While considering taking on a second job, she made a friend online who runs a Taobao store full time and is doing well.

"I went to the friend's place and spent a morning there learning how to operate an online store. Then I applied for a business license and launched the store," she said.

Lai has had albinism since she was young. The disease not only affected her hair and skin, but also left her visually impaired.

Despite the hardships, Lai has constantly sought a better life. She studied accounting in a technical secondary school. Then in the 1990s, she found her first job in a grain store. But she lost the job in 2003, as the company was not profitable.

She looked for work and was rejected numerous times before landing a job as a typist in a graphic design workshop. The salary was low, so Lai taught herself graphic design to improve her earning potential. Now, as a designer, her income exceeds that of her husband, who is employed in a steel company. The couple has two daughters, so Lai wanted to take on a second job to be able to improve their living standards.

"I am a new e-tailer, and there are not many products in my shop. I would like to get trained, particularly in marketing skills, so that I can run the store better," she said.

Weathering storms

Opening an online store is just the first step. Such ventures do not automatically generate profit, as the online business world is not risk free.



Cui Wanzhi speaks at an e-commerce conference in Fuyang, Anhui Province, on January 31, 2015

When Cui first opened his online store, it was not successful immediately. In 2007, he invested all his savings—approximately 200,000 yuan (\$29,800)—to buy clothes to sell. But sales were poor, so he could not recover his investment.

Although he suffered a heavy loss, he did not give up. The following year, he changed the business model and hired four tailors to make garments to order, so that there would be no inventory. Soon, the originally designed clothes became hot-selling items and brought in a hefty profit.

Riding on the e-commerce wave, his business soared. In 2010, he ranked among the Alibaba Group's top 30 e-tailers.

But as competition among e-stores became fiercer, his business plummeted in 2012. "A large number of traditional businesses swarmed into e-commerce. The

number of e-tailers exploded from tens of thousands to tens of millions," Cui said.

That year, his store suffered a loss of 4 million yuan (\$595,300), and Cui decided to switch from selling fashion clothes to selling traditional *qipao*. He created a new brand called Peacock's Love and has since regained his position as a top e-tailer.

But not all e-stores have managed to bounce back. Zhang Yuncheng, 36, who comes from the Wudalianchi Scenic Area in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, also runs an e-store with two of his brothers.

Both Zhang and one of his brothers have had progressive muscular atrophy since early childhood, which has left them

severely paralyzed. In 2002, Zhang published a book, titled *If I Could Walk for Three Days*. In 2004, they came to Beijing to undergo medical treatment, and they chose to stay in the capital.

In 2006, at the suggestion of their landlord, the three brothers opened an e-store, selling Zhang's book, paintings by his brother and other miscellaneous items such as clothes and cosmetics.

At one time, the e-store generated enough income to cover their living expenses in Beijing, and in 2007, they attended an e-tailers' conference hosted by the Alibaba Group, where they met the group's famous founder, Jack Ma.

But around 2010, income from the e-store dropped dramatically.

Fortunately, in 2008, the Taiwan-based Foxconn Technology Group had hired Zhang as an honorary employee. At that time, the company was troubled by a series of suicides by young workers. Zhang was invited to

speak to the employees and offer psychological counseling. Since then, the company covers the living expenses of Zhang and his brother. Zhang now resides in Weihai, Shandong Province, and provides content for Foxconn's website from time to time.

Some people with disabilities who have opened e-stores may still need assistance from relevant organizations, said Yang Jian, Vice President of Ali Research Institute. He said that as of June 2015, the registered sales of 80 percent of the shops on Taobao stood below 30,000 yuan (\$4,465). As profit margins tend to be low, many e-tailers do not make much money.

To help quicken the pace at which people with disabilities become part of China's moderately prosperous society, the government has started providing living allowances to those experiencing financial difficulties and a nursing subsidy to those with severe disabilities from January.

Growing opportunities

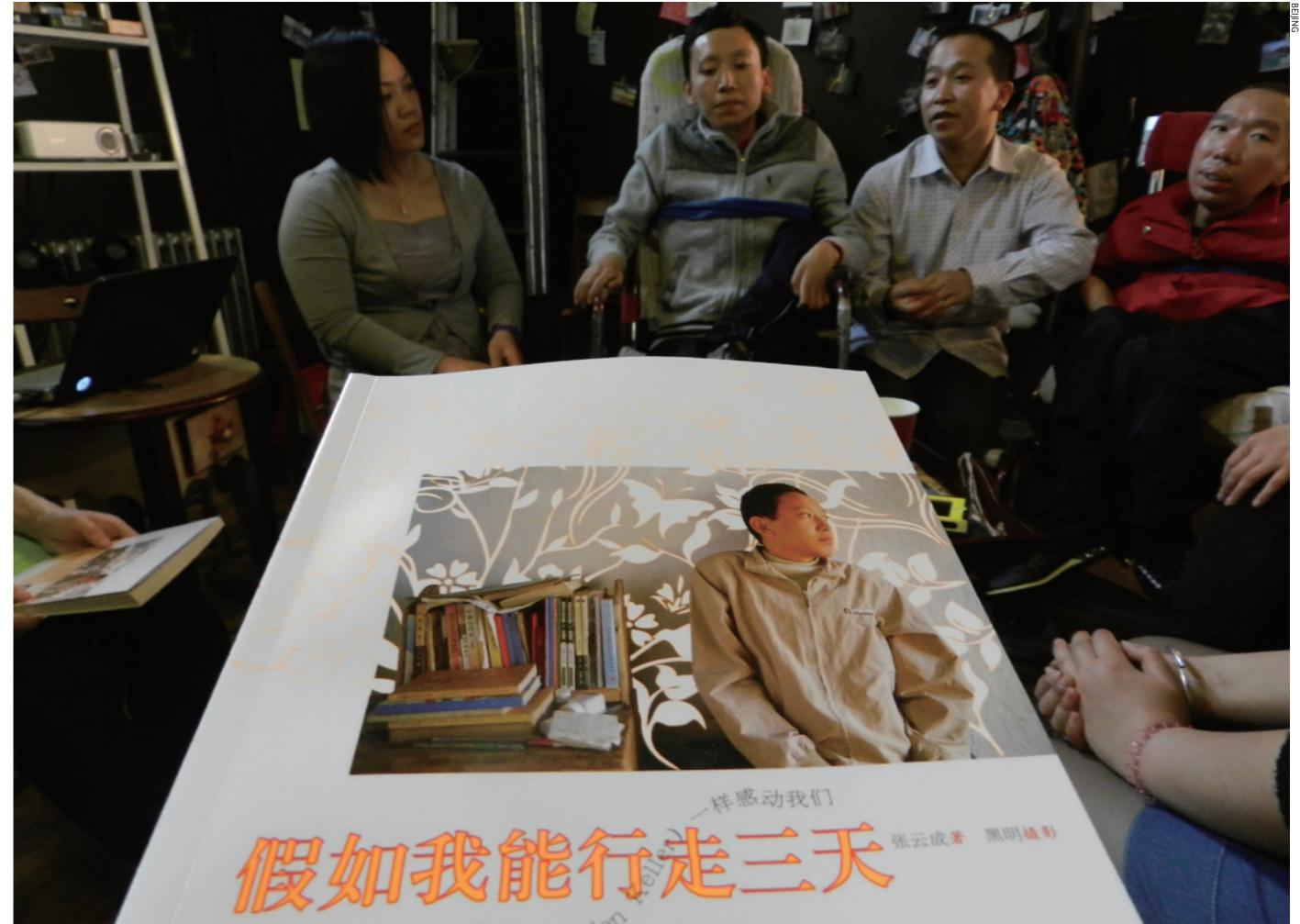
The growing interest of people living with disabilities in online employment is borne out by a report dating back to December 2015, by the Ali Research Institute. The report analyzes aspects of store owners and customers on Taobao. It shows that the Internet has created a growing number of job opportunities for people living with disabilities in China.

As of June 2015, a total of 316,000 people living with disabilities had opened online stores on Taobao.

Jin Jianhang, President of Alibaba, said the group is dedicated to cooperate with the CDPF and other organizations to establish an online barrier-free environment that allows people living with disabilities to enjoy equal rights on the Internet.

There are several forms of e-commerce entrepreneurial models for people living with disabilities. Like Gao Mengwen, a lot of people living with disabilities have opened their own stores on e-commerce platforms. They sell and deliver products from home with no need to go out.

Another model offered by Taobao is its job facilitation program for people living with disabilities launched in 2011, offering call-center jobs that allow handling customers' calls from home. For example, in July, Dazhou City, located in southwest China's Sichuan Province, supported by the Dazhou Disabled Person's Federation, carried out a cloud



Zhang Yuncheng (second left) talks with readers about his book *If I Could Walk for Three Days*, on April 15, 2012

customer service training program to help people with disabilities become Taobao customer service staff, who would offer online consultations from home. The program aims to train 1,000 people with disabilities in the next two years.

The Rural Taobao service center in Shandong Province is another business model with promise. In 2014, Xie Dikang opened a service center in Daling Village in suburban Jinan City. The 38-year-old was paralyzed in childhood. After doing odd jobs selling newspapers and other goods in Jinan, Xie, who walks on crutches, decided to start an e-commerce business. Together with a

group of friends, he built up his center to help local people buy products from the e-commerce platform and help people receive their goods. His highest monthly turnover for the service was over 30,000 yuan.

Social support

Official statistics show that China currently has 85 million people living with disabilities. The country is striving for a moderately prosperous society in all aspects by 2020. In this plan people with disabilities are regarded as key "participants, constructors and beneficiaries." Job creation is among the key efforts of the government to help people living with disabilities lead a better

life, and e-commerce opportunities are helping boost their employment rates.

On December 10, 2015, the CDPF and Alibaba cooperatively launched the Achieving Future program to promote employment for people living with disabilities in China. It will devote 300 million yuan (\$44.65 million) over the next five years for training for people living with disabilities along with the creation of 50,000 Internet-related job opportunities.

"The Internet is a gateway for many people living with disabilities to engage in society," said Zhang Haidi, Chairperson of the CDPF, adding that it encourages people living with disabilities to earn their own living. ■



Volunteers escort a visually impaired college entrance exam participant on June 7, 2015, in Hefei, east China's Anhui Province



A visually impaired student takes the college entrance exam in Yinchuan, northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, on June 7, 2015



Lai Jiajun (left), a visually impaired student, takes a photo with his father after finishing the national university entrance exam on June 8

Opening the Door To Opportunity

College entrance exams become more accessible to students with disabilities By Shen Yan

Upon receiving an admission letter from Wenzhou University on August 20, 2015, Zheng Rongquan, a 20-year-old visually impaired student, was filled with excitement. As the first such student to be recruited by a regular university in east China's Zhejiang Province, Zheng had high expectations for his upcoming college life. Wenzhou University told him it would try its best to help. And, although his world is characterized by darkness, Zheng felt a bright future lay ahead of him.

The year 2015 was special for students with disabilities. On the eve of the annual university entrance examination in early

June, the Ministry of Education and the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF) jointly issued regulations that require more assistance to be provided to examinees with visual or audio impairment or other physical disabilities. By taking into consideration the difficulties of such examinees, the document set detailed guidelines for their participation in the examination and thereby fully expressed respect for equality among people regardless of disability.

According to the regulations, test papers for examinees with physical disabilities, for example, are to be printed in larger characters or in Braille, and listening tests for

foreign languages are to be omitted as appropriate, while white canes, magnifying glasses, hearing aids and wheelchairs can be used. Exam takers with disabilities are to be allowed to enter examination halls ahead of others and can be given extra time to complete tests.

The Ministry of Education proposed in 2014 that test papers be provided in Braille and visually impaired examinees be allowed more time to complete tests. The policies, however, were not specific enough at the time, and only three visually impaired persons participated in the university entrance examination that year. In contrast, 46 such

persons applied for special allowances at the 2015 examination.

Li Dongmei, Deputy Director of the Department of Education and Employment at the CDPF, said that the Ministry of Education, the CDPF and relevant departments have paid close attention to the special needs of students with disabilities and have deliberated favorable policies to help them take regular college entrance exams for years. In the spirit of equality and fairness, the document released in 2015 aims to ensure equal access to higher education for people with disabilities, so as to create an environment for such students to live with dignity and further their personal development.

In order to help special-needs examinees register for the university entrance examination and subsequent recruitment, education authorities and federations representing the interests of people with disabilities now provide various kinds of assistance.

Through social media such as Weibo and WeChat, the Sichuan Educational Examinations Authority disseminates information concerning relevant favorable policies. And, the Guangxi Educational Examinations Authority has said if any student encounters difficulty, such as restric-

tions for certain academic programs, it will demand that the university explain the reasons and relocate the student to a program that he or she is capable of taking. When the university recruitment process finishes, it will be made clear whether any candidate has been rejected on the grounds of disability.

Wang Jingdan, a student with severe cerebral palsy from Sichuan Province, is unable to take care of herself. She applied to Beijing Normal University, Zhuhai, but the school intended to reject her, as she failed the physical examination. To help Wang fulfill her aspiration to attend university, education authorities together with the Sichuan Disabled Persons' Federation managed to persuade the university to admit Wang. The university also promised special assistance for her.

Three days before this year's university entrance examination, the Jilin Disabled Persons' Federation received requests from two students, Sheng Siyao and Gun Yishu, for disability certificates that would enable them to take advantage of the special measures while participating in the entrance examination. The federation worked against the clock to provide the two the certificates in time for the examination.

The Beijing Union University was

officially permitted to award master's degrees in clinical medicine to students with visual impairments in 2014. Of the 18 college graduates who applied for the course that year, four students gained acceptance, which was seen as a milestone for people with disabilities in higher education on the Chinese mainland.

By September 2015, a total of 5,359 students with disabilities had been admitted by regular higher education institutions across the nation for the 2015-16 academic year.

University application is much more difficult and complicated for students with special needs than for others, Li said. And, after entering college, they still have to face a series of challenging issues. Although the schools they enter have strong will to assist such students as much as possible, until very recently, the institutions had never recruited students with any form of disability, so they lack experience in accommodating special-needs students and making their college lives comfortable, Li added.

Hopefully, favorable policies supported by various institutions will make it much more straightforward in the coming years for students with disabilities to gain entrance to universities, where they will have an opportunity to carve out a much brighter future for themselves. ■



A teacher at the China Rehabilitation Research Center for Deaf Children plays games with students on March 2

The Sound of Hope

New opportunities arise for children with hearing impairments

By Yuan Yuan

Zhao Xie took her daughter back to Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region from Beijing during the summer vacation this year. The child, having stayed in Beijing for almost two years, is now 4 years old—but despite having a hearing impairment, she is almost ready to return to a normal life.

Zhao's daughter, Wang Yunuo, was diagnosed with a hearing impairment in November 2014.

"I felt like my world collapsed when we heard the diagnosis, and my husband felt the same way," Zhao said. "No one we knew had experienced something similar, and we couldn't imagine what it would mean for our daughter."

Even so, the family acted quickly upon hearing the news—20 days after the diagnosis, they gave their daughter a cochlear implant.

"I knew at that time that there were some charitable projects that provided free artificial cochlear systems," Zhao said. "But the application process takes some time and we were too desperate to wait."

It cost the family 280,000 yuan (\$43,110) for the operation, which they had to borrow from friends. But that was just the start of the whole rehabilitation process.

After excessive research, they finally decided to send their child to the Beijing-based China Rehabilitation Research Center for Deaf

Children (CRRCDC) for further training.

The CRRCDC, which is affiliated to the China Disabled Persons' Federation, was founded in 1983. It is so far the only national center engaged in hearing and speech rehabilitation in China, providing services for hearing-impaired children throughout the nation.

Ma Yanfang, who teaches auditory verbal therapy (AVT) at the center, has been working there for 12 years.

"When I started my work here in 2004, there were less than 100 children and the rehabilitation standards were not high. Cochlear implants were not as popular either," Ma said. "Now there are more than 200 kids here."

Parents are required to take classes together

with their children for several months if they are under the age of 3.

There are six levels of classes depending on the patients' ages. "For children with hearing impairments, the earlier they get rehabilitation training, the better the results can be," Ma said.

To help their disabled students' future involvement in ordinary schools, the CRRCDC also enrolls youths with no hearing problems.

The rehabilitation center is renowned throughout China, attracting numerous patients from around the country.

"Eighty percent of the parents in my class are not from Beijing," said Liu Minghe, a teacher at the center who has been working there for two years. "Most of the mothers have quit their jobs in order to stay in Beijing and care for their children."

Zhao, who used to be a mathematics teacher in an elementary school in Inner Mongolia, asked for a long leave of absence to keep her child company. She rented an apartment near the treatment center and is visited by her husband during the holidays.

"My husband earns about 3,000 yuan [\$460] a month, which is far from enough to cover our expenses in Beijing," Zhang said. "We have to turn to our parents for financial help."

For the first three months, Zhao took classes with her daughter every day, starting from 8:30 to 9:30 in the morning. After that, her daughter joined the center's ordinary classes, which start at 7:30. Zhao, therefore, gets up before 7 a.m. every day and picks up her daughter in the afternoon at 4:40.

Chen Haoliang, whose daughter Hao Feifei is in the same class with Wang, is luckier, as her husband works in Beijing and can stay with them.

Hao was diagnosed with a hearing impairment 17 months after birth and was sent to the center in March 2014 after receiving an audiphone.

"We took our child to all the comprehensive hospitals in Beijing and finally accepted that she wouldn't be able to recover a normal lifestyle," Chen said. Therefore, they ordered an audiphone for their daughter less than one month after the diagnosis.

Hao is now 4 years and 2 months old and can communicate fluently with people.

The world of sound

For parents, financial pressures often follow closely behind emotional stress.

Zhao is anxious about what her daughter may experience on returning back to Inner Mongolia. "In Beijing, she is surrounded with youths that have the same problem and therefore feels little difference, but in our hometown, she might be regarded as an abnormal child," Zhao said. "We worry it will have a negative effect on her."

Chen doesn't plan to send her daughter back to her hometown in Hebei Province due to the same concern, since she believes that larger cities such as Beijing are less prejudiced.

But enrolling into an ordinary elementary school in Beijing will be a problem. "My daughter doesn't have a Beijing *hukou*, or household registration, which makes it difficult to enroll her into a school in Beijing. Besides, her hearing problem can only add more difficulties to this," Chen said. "But we



A girl wearing a cochlear implant attends a class at the China Rehabilitation Research Center for Deaf Children in Beijing on March 2

will try our best. Before that, my daughter will stay at the center until she's 6 years old in order to get the best result that she can receive from the rehabilitation process."

Ordinary schools often foster concerns regarding the acceptance of children with hearing disabilities, according to Zhao, mostly because cochlear implants are expensive. This may have led to fears that some school activities such as P.E. lessons might cause unexpected damage to the instrument.

Parents such as Zhao also factor in other worries when considering what may happen to their children should they attend normal schools. "What would my daughter say to other students when they ask her why she has to wear something in her ear?" Zhao wondered. "I'll have to figure out an answer before it happens to her."

Similar self-conscious concerns are reflected throughout a number of parents whose children suffer from hearing disorders. "When

choosing the color of the implants, parents always choose black or gray, fearing that bright colors might be too obvious," said Wan Min, President of Beijing Hearing Society.

Wan was quite impressed while helping a hearing-impaired girl from Shenzhen decide on the color of the cochlear implant she wanted.

"We didn't let the father interrupt her choice, and the girl was very happy to choose bright orange," Wan said. "In many cases, it is the parents, not the kids, who worry about how others will judge them."

More aid needed

When asked by her daughter why she has to wear an audiphone while the other children don't, Chen replied, "It is the same as me wearing glasses while your father doesn't—I can't see clearly so I wear something to help, the same thing applies to your ears."

"It is still different though," Zhao said. "We can see people with glasses everywhere on the streets, while audiphones or cochlear implants are a rare sight."

Before joining the center, Liu studied pre-primary education. "Before I came here, I had no idea what teaching at the center would be like," Liu said. "Now, my friends always ask me whether I use sign language in class."

"The attention that society pays to this group is still not enough," Wan said.

Long Mo, Deputy Director of the CRRCDC, said that on average, there are about 20,000 children born with hearing impairments every year in China. With the relaxing of the family planning policy, the situation is likely to grow, according to Long.

"The government in the past decade has increased investment in the rehabilitation of hearing-impaired children," Long said. "During the 11th Five-Year Plan [2006-10] period, the government provided 1,970 cochlear implants and 9,000 audiphones for free. Furthermore, during the 12th Five-Year Plan [2011-15] period, the government offered 16,865 cochlear implants and 18,000 audiphones."

The CRRCDC is also planning to expand its operations and has selected a new location to do so. "It will host more kids in the future," Long said.

Kang Mengwen—who was the first Chinese person to receive a cochlear implant—offers hope to parents like Zhao and Chen. Kang entered a normal primary school and high school and later on went to the United States for further study.

"She is very confident and I hope my daughter can be like her," Chen said. "No matter what she does in the future, I just want her to be happy." ■

A Helping Hand

How local social workers help many to start anew By Ma Li

A woman with disabilities receives rehabilitation treatment at the Huixinyuan Community Center for People With Disabilities in Beijing



Every morning at 9 o'clock, Song Enlan, who works at the Huixinyuan Community in Xiaoguan Sub-District in Beijing's Chaoyang District, arrives at the sub-district's Warm Homeland Center for people with disabilities. Her daily routine starts by greeting her friends who come for recovery training. "I've been here for almost two years, and I feel fulfilled by helping them and seeing them making improvements every day." The 49-year-old Song has made her work in assisting persons with disabilities one of the most integral parts of her life.

There are currently 886 people with disabilities on record in Xiaoguan's Warm

Homeland—479 with physical disabilities, 122 with psychological problems, 72 who are mentally challenged, 55 who are hearing impaired, 94 who are visually impaired and 64 suffering from multiple disabilities. Some of the patients require a long time to recover after being treated in hospital. And the center provides the optimum environment for them to do this. The work of Song and her colleagues becomes essential.

Giving hope

You would never associate Wei Xing with disabilities if you hadn't seen her. "I'm really happy. I've

been here for almost two years and I feel like I've become another person. I hope to return to society as soon as possible and start anew." No one could imagine the pleasant woman has had severe psychological issues.

In 2000, Wei, who was then 25, moved with her then husband to the capital. "At that time, I had recently graduated from college and had a decent job before I went to Beijing. But I quit my job and came here with great hope to support my husband in his career."

Unfortunately, the reality was not as good as she had imagined. "The first problem was employment. I thought I could find a decent job in Beijing, but failed. I started to

People with disabilities at the Guoyuancun Community in Nantong, Jiangsu Province, receive baking training provided by the community management department in July



doubt my choice," Wei said. She added that being unable to find a satisfying job seriously affected her.

"My husband wanted a divorce after the child was born because he had begun a relationship with another woman." Quitting her job in her hometown and being abandoned by her husband completely destroyed her.

"After the divorce I stayed at home alone and became absentminded. Sometimes I couldn't tell whether it was day or night. I didn't want to go out and was afraid of seeing other people," Wei said, adding that she lived as a recluse in extreme anger and fear during those years.

Wei's psychological condition was discovered when a household survey on people with disabilities in the community was taken two years ago. The staff persuaded Wei to go outside her apartment and brought her to the center.

"At first, Wei just sat there and was unwilling to communicate with the trainers or other members. So we talked to her and encouraged her to sing, dance and play games in order to regain her confidence and shake off her introverted nature. She will only be able to start afresh if she becomes more extroverted," Song said.

Over the last two years, Wei gradually became more outgoing and active through psychological counseling and therapeutic intervention provided by the recovery trainers. "Now I only need to take some basic medicine. I'm hoping to rid myself of this some day, return to society and start a new life," Wei said.

Warm Homeland holds various recovery activities for the psychologically and mentally challenged. The center hires professional trainers and volunteers from Lead, a social organization, which holds all kinds of activities during the week: showing a film on Monday, a drawing class on Tuesday, organizing a choir on Wednesday, paper-cutting on Thursday and performing comedy on Friday.

Each month, trainers from Lead also take some of the attendees out to foster a greater connection with society and nature, such as trips to climb mountains and walking competitions in Beijing Olympic Park.

Specialized doctors conduct psychological recovery every month and give psychological counseling to those who need it. An expert is invited every season to give lectures on psychological recovery.

Sound recovery

"Happy lives are alike, while miserable lives are different," said Han Jun, a 52-year-old born with infantile paralysis. "A few years ago I was able to walk a little, but later on I couldn't walk anymore and my vision deteriorated."

Every time he goes to Warm Homeland, Han is taken by friends in his wheelchair. "In the past, I was able to walk around the neighborhood. But after it became difficult to do so, I stayed at home. I feel sorry for my mother who is now 75 years old and has to take care of a son with disability. My mother and I used to stare dully at each other day in day out. It was a desperate time back then."

In two years, he met new friends and gradually his mood improved. He also underwent regular treatment, which helped to strengthen weak limbs. "In the past when I was home, I felt my life was wasting away. But now, I read, write and draw with others, and life is full of fun."

Like Han, many others with physical disabilities in the neighborhood are getting better through treatment provided at Warm Homeland. The most critical thing is for them to attain recovery in their minds through service. Psychological recovery is often far more important than physical recovery.

Song said that the Xiaoguan Sub-District Office has signed a contract with the Third Affiliated Hospital of Beijing University of Chinese Medicine. Doctors are assigned by the recovery center of the hospital to provide professional services to people with disabilities in the local community regularly. For the 30 people with specific recovery demands, Xiaoguan has also established a home-based recovery training camp, providing them with one-on-one services. ■



Liu Lina (left) organizes a game for people with disabilities at the Futian community center in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, on May 13, observed as Day of Helping the Disabled in China

One Step Ahead

Shenzhen social workers pave the way for development of social care for people with disabilities By Ma Xiaowen

When Li Si was a child, Zhang Haidi, whose picture was printed in one of his primary school textbooks, was a role model symbolizing the qualities of cherishing life and striving for self-improvement. After he grew up, Li Si became a social worker, and for eight years now, he has been working to support people with disabilities in Shenzhen.

Li started his career in social services in 2008, the same year when Zhang became

president of the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF). The eight years since have been a golden period for the cause of people with disabilities in China, witnessing the successful staging of the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games, the Guangzhou Asian Paralympic Games and a pavilion for people with disabilities at the Shanghai Expo 2010.

Inspired by Zhang, numerous people have chosen to join in the cause of helping people

with disabilities by becoming social workers.

Shenzhen as a pioneer

According to the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), the social work profession facilitates social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for

diversity are central to social work.

"A social worker's main tasks may include a number of services such as case management—linking clients with agencies and programs that will meet their psychosocial needs, investigating and counseling," Li said, explaining his work. "Every job aims to achieve optimum psychosocial functioning."

Shenzhen is among the first group of cities in China to set up organizations to provide public social services. On October 25, 2007, the Shenzhen Government released guidelines for organizing social workers, which laid policy foundations for Shenzhen's social work sector, Li said.

The work of social work organizations is supported by the local federation for people with disabilities and the civil affairs bureau. According to the civil affairs bureau, Shenzhen signed contracts with its first batch of social workers in August, 2007, and started contracting social worker services in bulk in March 2008. In 2009, social work organizations began investigating demand for and analyzing the feasibility of social services specifically for people with disabilities. In 2013, a service program targeted at such people got underway.

Li said Shenzhen's social work sector developed quickly because the city realized the necessity of providing social services to enable people with disabilities. "We need to be aware that people with disabilities have multiple needs, not just limited to food and clothing"

Statistics from the Shenzhen Social Work Association show that the city, having started from scratch less than a decade ago, currently has 22 social service organizations and 230 social workers focused on persons with disabilities.

Voices from the front-line

Liu Lina is a social worker who assists patients with mental problems. After moving to Shenzhen in 2012, she joined Shenzhen Pengxing Social Service Institution, the mainland's first social service organization, which provided Shenzhen's initial batch of professional social workers in 2007. In 2013, Pengxing established a resource center for patients with mental problems and their families, also the first of its kind on the mainland, in Futian District. Liu has now been working at the center for almost four years.

Liu's motivation for taking the job comes from her belief that social work is not only a

profession dedicated to helping others, but also provides abundant space for personal development. "In my eyes, the spirit of social work is to make a difference to life", said Liu, "and the difference takes place in both the people I serve and myself."

Liu feels people with mental problems require social service assistance physically and psychologically because they need help with their daily needs as well as emotional support. Liu recalled one time when one of patients she served, a 20-year-old woman with mental disorder, locked herself in her room and refused to open the door.

"I was called by her mother, and we stayed [there] the whole afternoon. With patience and endeavor, [we got] the girl [to] open the door eventually. What touched me most was that when this happened, the girl and her mother chose to trust a social worker."

Liu's colleague, Hu Shuyan, said that social work calls for a certain attitude as well as particular skills. As the role primarily involves trying to influence others, social workers need to convey positive energy to people with mental illnesses in order to help them to recover. "Social workers' professionalism lies mainly in their emphasis on providing all-round services," she said.

Hou Xiansheng, a social worker with the Nanshan Disabled Persons' Federation, agreed with Hu, adding that instead of solving problems for people with disabilities, social workers should

"help them to help themselves."

Future development

Initially, social workers in Shenzhen were required to work for institutions such as local hospitals, schools, rehabilitation centers or disabled persons' federations. Later on, a more flexible position—the program social workers—came into being.

Nowadays, social service providers involve both social work organizations and program social workers delivering services in line with the various physical, mental and social needs of people with disabilities.

"The trend is changing from offering comprehensive services to services in specific projects or programs. In effect, it has already happened. We already have a team of [institutional] social workers and program social workers," said Li Si.

"We also hope Zhang Haidi can contribute more to promoting exchanges with institutions abroad, so we can adopt advanced ideas and techniques," Li said.

During an interview with Shenzhennews.com, Yi Songguo, a social work professor with Shenzhen University, said with the progress of society, social service organizations will take on part of the government's functions. The future of such organizations lies in developing specializations and improving their professionalism. ■



Volunteers walk hand in hand with mentally retarded people at a walking activity in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, on May 14

Canine Companions

China is looking to kick-start its burgeoning guide dog training centers

By Yuan Yuan



Ping Yali, a torch bearer at the 2008 Beijing Paralympics, walks into the National Stadium in Beijing with her guide dog Lucky at the opening ceremony on September 6, 2008

Wu Lei, a visually impaired piano tuner from southwest China's Guizhou Province, had been on the waiting list of the China Guide Dog Training Center for a year.

After applying for a guide dog in December 2012, Wu finally got a call from the training center a year later, asking him to participate in an adaption period with a dog. If he can get through the month with Mixiu, his potential guide dog, Wu will be the first person in Guizhou to have ever received one.

"I have been dreaming of having a guide dog for a long time," Wu said. "I can enjoy more freedom. I'm tired of having to bother my family to come with me every time I go out."

Compared to the other 324,000 people with visual disabilities in Guizhou that have never had access to guide dogs, Wu is lucky enough to be a potential owner.

This situation is not uncommon else-

where in the country. Statistics from the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF) show that there are 16 million people in China with visual disabilities, but there are less than 70 guide dogs for the whole country.

"According to international standards, there should be guide dogs for at least 1 percent of visually impaired people. That means we need 160,000 guide dogs, but we are long way from meeting this target," said You Qiufang, who works with the China Guide Dog Training Center based in northeastern city of Dalian, Liaoning Province.

Lonely efforts

The China Guide Dog Training Center, which was established in May 2006, is the first such facility in China.

Wang Jingyu, 49, the center's founder, spent nine years in Japan studying ethology, the scientific study of animal behavior, and obtained a Ph.D from Hiroshima University

in 2001, before he returned to China and taught at Dalian Medical University.

Known as "the father of Chinese guide dog training," Wang's idea to train guide dogs started in 2004 while he was watching the Paralympics in Athens. He saw that some of the visually impaired athletes from other countries had guide dogs. Wang decided to make an effort to rectify this for his country.

In October 2004, after a lot of research, Wang bought three Labrador retriever puppies. "Labradors and golden retrievers are considered to be the best breeds for guide dogs due to their mild temperament," Wang said. "Guide dogs cannot be too slow or too smart. They must be patient, stable, brave and determined so that they can remain calm during emergencies."

Wang taught and trained the puppies slowly and tenaciously. When they were only a year old, he sent them to the animal research center at Dalian Medical University for further training.

In May 2006, the CDPF granted authorization to the Dalian Disabled Persons' Federation and Dalian Medical University for establishing China's first guide dog training base.

Training a guide dog normally takes between 18 and 24 months at the China Guide Dog Training Center and only 20 to 30 percent of puppies trained will ultimately qualify as guide dogs. Those that are selected will be sent to a volunteer family for socialization, bonding and basic obedience training.

After another year, the dogs will return to the center for more intensive skills training. Eventually, they are introduced to their human companion and work together with them at the center for a month-long

A guide dog accompanies its owner at a subway station in Hangzhou, east China's Zhejiang Province



adaption period. If the two of them can get through this first month successfully, the dog will go home with its new owner and serve him or her for six to eight years.

At the 2008 Beijing Paralympics, a small number of Chinese athletes were accompanied by guide dogs that had been trained by Wang and his colleagues. Ping Yali, a torch bearer that year and the first Chinese Paralympic gold medalist, was accompanied by a dog called Lucky at the opening ceremony.

"People praised the guide dogs' outstanding performance, which was encouraging for me," Wang said.

So far, the Dalian center has successfully trained and found suitable owners for 60 of their dogs and it is still the only guide dog training center in China that has been authorized by the CDPF.

In May 2009, a guide dog training center was set up in Dongying, east China's Shandong Province, and in September that same year, another such center was established in Zhengzhou, capital city of central China's Henan Province. However, neither of these centers have the CDPF's authorization.

In April 2011, the Zhengzhou Guide Dog Training Center sent Ami, their first dog, to its owner.

Henan Province announced on December 16, 2013 that it would invest around 30 million yuan (\$4.46 million) to establish the largest guide dog training center in China.

Not easy insistence

"The cost for training a guide dog is about 150,000 yuan (\$22,275) right now," Wang said. "But visually impaired people can take them home for almost nothing at all."

Funding is something of a concern for Wang and his colleagues. Wang uses his own money to keep the China Guide Dog Training Center operational, and has even gone as far as selling his apartment.

In 2011, the Dalian Municipal Government allocated 960,000 yuan (\$142,560) for the training center and pledged to reimburse it 60,000 yuan (\$8,910) for each dog trained and adopted.

"But this is far from enough, and the center still has a deficit of more than 400,000 yuan (\$59,400)," Wang said. "Many trainers quit over the past few years, because their wages just weren't enough to make ends meet. The remaining trainers persevere because of their pure passion."

Wang Xin has been working at the center as a trainer for three years. She, like Wang Jingyu, studied in Japan for nine years, though while there she obtained a master's degree in phycology, the study of algae. Before joining the center, she worked at a Japanese company and earned more than 10,000 yuan (\$1,485) a month. But after she saw how helpful having a guide dog was for her mother, she decided to become a guide dog trainer.

"Nobody understood my decision, including my mother," Wang Xin said. "But I love my job."

Wang Xin's first year at the center was a lot harder than she thought it was going to be. "It was frustrating when the dogs didn't follow my instructions, and the wages were just enough for basic living costs," she said. "Some college graduates quit after a week or a month. But if you make it through the first year, you will feel better."

Another concern facing guide dog training facilities in China is the professional and

public support available to them. According to Wang Jingyu, Chinese universities and colleges have no courses on guide dog training. Although some graduates have majored in zoology, they have to learn how to train guide dogs by themselves as what they studied isn't relevant.

"China doesn't have a lot of affection for large dogs and many people are scared of them. China also lacks appropriate facilities for large dogs," Wang Jingyu said.

A national law that took effect in 2008 recognizes the right of visually impaired people to use guide dogs and stipulates that such dogs are permitted on public transport and in public venues as long as they observe the rules.

Additionally, the Barrier-Free Environment Construction Regulations came into force on August 1, 2012. Article 16 states that "visually impaired people bringing their guide dogs into public places shall follow the relevant regulations of the state. Staff working in public places shall supply unimpeded access to them."

However, the situation has not changed much in spite of the legal clauses. Guide dogs are still often barred from getting on buses and subways, or entering stores, markets and other public venues in most Chinese cities.

"Guide dogs are still new in China," Wang Jingyu said. "We believe that people will be more understanding toward guide dogs in the future, but it will take time." ■



Peng Liyuan and Yoo Soon-taek, wife of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, unveil the custom-designed stamp honoring people with disabilities in New York City on September 27, 2015

Inclusive Society

China increases global collaboration and improves the lives of its people living with disabilities By Yu Nan

Wei Mengxin could not hide his excitement when he recalled the events of September 27, 2015. The day celebrated the 70th anniversary of the founding of the UN, and to mark the occasion the UN issued a unique disability-themed stamp in New York City.

"It was a historical moment!" said Wei, Director of the Department of International Liaison of the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF), which together with the UN Department of Economic and

Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the UN Postal Administration (UNPA) created the stamp.

"This event shows that the international community gives full affirmation to China's achievements in promoting the welfare of people with disabilities as well as its efforts on the international stage," he said.

Inclusive agenda

Just two days before the unveiling of the UN stamp, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development, which was endorsed at the UN Sustainable Development Summit for the adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, vowed to leave no one behind, including the world's 1 billion people with disabilities.

Five provisions among the 17 goals on the 2030 Agenda concern people with disabilities, stressing the importance of inclusive education and greater employment levels so as to ensure economic and social equality and an inclusive, barrier-free environment.

design of the stamp. "It is a great honor to cooperate with the CDPF and UNDESA to jointly issue a disability-themed souvenir stamp sheet," said chief of UNPA David Failor.

Peng Liyuan, wife of Chinese President Xi Jinping, and Yoo Soon-taek, Ban's wife, unveiled the custom-designed stamp honoring people with disabilities, showcasing the great emphasis both China and the UN place on the welfare of people with disabilities.

Failor said he felt deeply encouraged by the attendance of the two ladies. "This sends a very important message that it is the responsibility of the international society to boost the development of support for the well-being of people with disabilities and to make every person with disability cared for and respected, helping them to live full lives."

Global efforts

In recent years, China has played an active role on the international stage in the protection of the rights and interests of people with disabilities. The Chinese Government actively participated in the UN Decade for Disabled Persons from 1983 to 1992, and it supported and implemented the World Program of Action Concerning Disabled Persons and engaged in the formulation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

Wei added that China also played a key role in the drafting and negotiation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). As one of the first signatories, China has taken a series of measures to effectively implement the CRPD. China has also advocated and participated in three Asia-Pacific Decades for Disabled Persons.

China's effort to promote and protect the rights of people with disabilities has won widespread praise. The CDPF is the recipient of many honors including the special awards for the UN Decade of Disabled Persons and the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, and was named UN Messenger of Peace. In 2003, Deng Pufang, then Chairperson of the CDPF, was awarded the 2003 UN Prize for Human Rights. He is the first Chinese to receive such an award.

China has been and continues to be at the forefront of global efforts to promote inclusive development for people with disabilities. To ensure people with disabilities can enjoy equal opportunity and inclusive development in society, APEC economies launched a joint initiative during the 2014

APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, which was held in Beijing.

"It is the first time that the APEC meeting has discussed disability issues," said Zhang Haidi, CDPF Chairperson, adding that it showed the world China's commitment to bettering the lives of this group of people.

"Inclusion is critical to helping ensure that people with disabilities can participate equally and contribute fully to their societies," said Ban.

Since 2014, issues on people with disabilities have been an integral part of a series of cooperation frameworks including APEC, Asia-Europe Meeting and China-ASEAN Summit. The CDPF and its counterparts in countries such as the United States, Russia, Germany, the UK and Australia have an ongoing dialogue mechanism on disability issues.

Government assistance

While making positive contributions to putting the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into practice, China has achieved significant progress in helping people with disabilities.

The nation has formulated and implemented six five-year development plans for people with disabilities and is now accelerating the well-off processes of people with disabilities during its 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) period. The third national action plan on human rights protection was published this year, highlighting measures to protect the lawful rights and interests of people with disabilities.

President Xi said that "people with disabilities are a group facing special difficulties, and they need extra care and attention." Since 2016, the state has implemented a living allowance system for financially challenged people with disabilities and nursing subsidies for people with severe disabilities. A total of more than 20 million people are benefiting from the system.

Zhang said China's State Council had adopted a comprehensive mandate that provides guidance on improving the livelihoods of the 85 million people with disabilities in China.

"Guaranteeing equal rights and promoting the inclusion of the disabled has become a worldwide consensus. Both developing and developed countries have accumulated experience that can contribute to improving the development of the cause in China. So, we will further advance our international cooperation," she added. ■

Taking Center Stage

Renowned dancer gives a leg-up to young performers with disabilities By Li Nan

Tai Lihua has many titles—from China's dancing queen of the soundless world to member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee.

The 40-year-old president and art director of the China Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe (CDPPAT) was born in Yichang, a city in central China's Hubei Province. After an overdose of the drug streptomycin to treat high fever she had at the age of 2, Tai lost her hearing. But she didn't realize it until much later in kindergarten.

It plunged her into deep depression. Later she went to a special education primary school, where she became obsessed with dancing, which led her to perform on stages all over the world.

"Music is a beacon for dancers. Having no access to music is the biggest hurdle for dancers with impaired hearing," Tai said. "When I started dancing, I was extremely tense as I couldn't hear the music or feel the rhythm." However, she did not give up. She practiced over and over again. To perform *The Spirit of the Peacock*, choreographed by eminent dancer Yang Liping, Tai learned all the 700 movements and 3,000 beats by heart within a couple of months. Her consistent effort brought her success. With the performance, Tai won a national dancing contest for people with disabilities when she was 15.

Subsequently, she was selected by the CDPPAT as a solo dancer. The CDPPAT, founded in 1987, has 110 performers with an average

age of 20. They design programs, produce promotional and other audiovisual products, and are also in charge of publicity and marketing. The troupe has performed in 93 countries and regions.

In 2004, Tai led the *Thousand-Hand Bodhisattva* dance performance at the closing ceremony of the 2004 Summer Paralympics in Athens, Greece. She became a household name in China after the performance was aired during China Central Television's Spring Festival Gala, the most-

watched TV program during the nation's Lunar New Year celebrations.

The CDPPAT has won worldwide recognition after decades of tours. UNESCO hailed its members as "artists for peace" in 2007. Tai is the only Chinese dancer to have performed at both La Scala in Milan and the Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Tai told Chongqing-based CTV in a recent interview that she seldom performs on stage herself these days because of physical problems. Instead, her focus is on a dance program for children with disabilities jointly established by the CDPPAT and the Yichang Special Education School in October 2013. The program provides free training to students and after four years, the promising ones are offered a place in the CDPPAT.

Besides managing the troupe, Tai also teaches at the school. "My dream is to train these kids and help them be skilled and educated with independent minds," she said.

Advocating for people with disabilities is another job for Tai. Since becoming a member of the CPPCC National Committee, the country's top political advisory body, in 2008, she has made many proposals to improve the community's lot. Her proposal to subsidize people with severe disabilities was adopted by the government in September 2015. More than 20 million have benefited or will benefit from Tai's proposal.

At the annual session of the CPPCC National Committee held in Beijing in March, Tai called for improving infrastructure in small cities and towns to meet the cultural needs of people with disabilities at the community level.

"People with disabilities need not only barrier-free facilities, but also access to social activities," she said. "Public education and cultural services should be provided to help them live with dignity." ■



Moving to the Beat

A young, hearing-impaired man finds success in ballroom dancing By Ma Li

Growing up with a hearing impairment, 20-year-old Liang Yuangang said that he had little hope for a happy and bright future. Today, he is a successful ballroom dancer.

The social work major at China Youth University of Political Studies in Beijing remembers being bullied in elementary school in his hometown Anshan in northeast China's Liaoning Province.

"Some of classmates once threw a small stool at my back for no other reason than the fact that I have hearing problems," he said.

Liang's mom sent him to a ballroom dancing training school—a safe space away from the bullies and unwanted attention at school—where he thrived. The teacher put him in the first line of students so he could better mimic the teacher's movements.

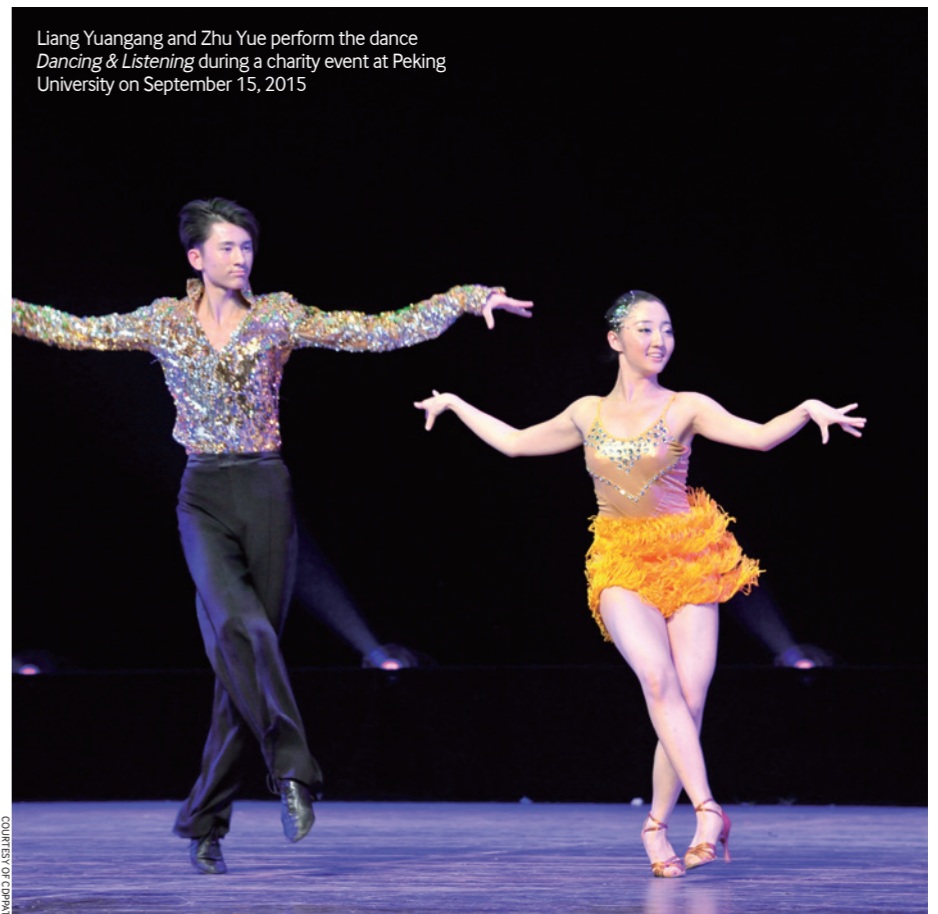
"Their kindness made me interested in ballroom dancing and re-activated my life," Liang recalled.

In 2007 at just 12 years old, Liang joined the Chinese Disabled People's Performing Arts Troupe (CDPPAT), which contributed to his success as a Latin dancer.

The *Thousand-Hand Bodhisattva* dance performance during the 2005 Spring Festival Gala—China's most-watched television program for celebration of the lunar New Year—launched the troupe to larger fame. Parents have been more willing to send their kids to the troupe since the show aired, believing that art and expression can help with the children's development and future.

CDPPAT has 37 staff members and 110 performers who have an average age of 20. The majority of the staff at management level also have disabilities. They design and create programs, train the performers, produce promotional and audiovisual products and are also in charge of publicity and marketing. The troupe is comprised of two teams of performers who can perform at the same time in different regions. It also has a trainee team to nurture young talent.

Liang and his dancing partner, 21-year-old Zhu Yue, who is also hearing-impaired, are the only ballroom dancing pair in the



COURTESY OF CDPPAT

troupe. Their performance *Dancing & Listening* was exclusively choreographed for them, a first in the troupe. The dance blends elements of various ballroom styles, including Rumba, Samba, Chacha and Cowboy and is the troupe's signature performance.

It may look easy to the audience members, but it took Liang and Zhu six months to get the routine down.

"Before our first performance, the supervisors watched the dance many times. They finally asked me to take out my hearing aid, which could affect the beauty of the dance," Liang said. This request makes the dance

even more demanding. "Without the hearing aid, I cannot feel the beat, and it's easier to mess up the dance."

But by the premiere, he was ready to try it without using his hearing aid. The first show's success gave him the confidence he needed to continue.

Liang plans to continue his studies in Beijing and wants to improve his dance skills to realize his dream to dance at the Blackpool Dance Festival in Britain, the world's first and most well-known annual ballroom dance competition. Ultimately, he said that he wants to be a professional ballroom dancer. ■

Living an Adventure

Three-time gold-winning Paralympic high jumper inspires millions at home and abroad **By Lu Yan**

The 90,000 attendees at the 2008 Summer Paralympic Games opening ceremony were left speechless when the flame was lit by the last torchbearer, who used his torso strength to pull himself up a 39-meter rope while in his wheelchair. The arduous climb was accomplished in just three minutes, and the man who achieved the feat was Hou Bin.

Hou, a Paralympic champion high jumper, was born in Jiamusi City in China's northeast

Heilongjiang Province in 1975. He lost his left calf in a devastating train accident when he was 9 years old. After graduating from middle school, he began working in a welfare factory in the hope of reducing the burden on his family. At 16, he watched a 3-minute newscast about the National Paralympics on TV, which inspired him to become an athlete and set the path of his future.

"I told myself that I wanted to be one of them," Hou recalled the experience.

However, becoming an athlete turned out to be a bumpy ride. In the beginning, almost no coach he contacted in his hometown wanted him, since it was hard for them to imagine how a man without a leg could undertake rigorous physical training. However, Hou convinced a coach with his sincerity and determination.

When he started to train with his first coach, he could jump only 1.55 meters. His goal was to clear 2 meters, which his peers believed to be overambitious, though he never quit. Having trained intensively for five years, he eventually set an astonishing record at his debut Paralympic Games in Atlanta, 1996—jumping 1.92 meters. Four years later he extended his record by clearing 1.94 meters at the Sydney Paralympics and won another gold medal in Athens in 2004.

Never underestimate yourself because everyone has unlimited

potential. Hou doesn't just say these words, but he lives them. One can hardly imagine that the man who successfully lit the 39-meter-high Olympic flame had suffered from severe acrophobia.

Hou is used to doing the undoable. Besides being a triple-Paralympic champion, he is also an impressive adventurer. From 2011 to 2013, Hou engaged in four extreme endurance foot races across Mongolia's Gobi Desert and finished the whole route of 138 km despite getting lost countless times after falling down and his prosthetic leg getting tuck in the sand. Hou explored the Arctic in August 2012 and swam in the freezing Arctic Ocean three months later. "For me, taking the first step is the biggest achievement, even if I can't finish the whole trip," he said.

"Maybe I got used to facing challenges," Hou said when asked where he gets his perseverance. "I have to face them and move forward, no matter what."

All his adventurous experiences make him a perfect motivational speaker. He has touched people's hearts with his stories and become a role model for millions of Chinese with disabilities. In 2009, Hou became the first Chinese youth speaker at the United Nations Youth Assembly. He was dubbed "China Bin" by the U.S. media and "Brother Bin" by fans motivated by him.

"I wanted to tell them my story, so I could have every opportunity to make an impact on their lives," he said. "The audience's applause and recognition make me very happy. Suddenly there's a stage that gives me the opportunity to speak from the bottom of heart. When I laugh, my audiences laugh with me. When I cry, they cry too."

After his experience of lighting the Olympic flame, he said he would never give up on anything and share his stories with others, inspiring everyone to dream big.

Hou was appointed ambassador for Beijing's 2022 Winter Olympic bid. "Beijing hosting the Winter Paralympics will promote a barrier-free environment for people with disabilities," Hou said. ■



Hou Bin climbs a 39-meter rope, lifting his body and his wheelchair, together weighing over 100 kg, to light the flame at the Beijing Summer Paralympics, on September 6, 2008

A Cut Above the Rest

The flag bearer of China's Paralympic team inspires with her charisma **By Lu Yan**



Rong Jing wins gold in the A category of women's individual foil at the 2016 Rio Paralympics on September 14

At the 2016 Rio Paralympics, Rong Jing was able to secure gold in the A category of women's individual foil and two more golds with her team. "It is definitely a dream come true," she happily exclaimed with tear-filled eyes.

Team China secured first place in the medal tally of the Rio Paralympics with 107 gold, 81 silver and 51 bronze medals. When

asked how this was achievable, Rong said with deep appreciation. "I have to thank all the coaches. My coach Zhuang Xingdi is 76, but she is always the first to get up and the last to go to bed. I learned a lot from her. Moreover, I have to thank the government for being so supportive of developing sports for people with disabilities. And people from all walks of life, especially the media, are also

paying closer attention to the games, giving people a better understanding of us and what we do."

Rong was born in a rural family in Shuyang County in east China's Jiangsu Province in 1988. Her right leg doesn't function normally due to polio since birth. While people around her felt sorry for her, Rong never felt sorry for herself—she was an energetic girl who loved to sing, dance and take part in sports in her school years. At the age of 16, she was selected for the wheelchair fencing team of Jiangsu Province.

She had to take a bus and a coach from home to get to the training center more than 300 km away. After a six-hour trip, a robust training routine awaited her. At first, she couldn't even lift up the sword. "Wielding it for just a few minutes made my shoulders sore," recalled Rong. "I badly wanted to do well, but all I did was quietly weep in my bed and continue with the training."

"It was the first time Rong had left home. The training was very tough. Her grandparents were concerned and didn't want to let her stay there. But Rong didn't want to quit, and she has stuck to it since then," recalled Sun Weihong, Rong's mother.

It was her positive attitude that made her the first female to bear the Chinese flag at the opening ceremony of the Rio Paralympics. "Rong Jing is a beautiful, sunny and positive girl," said Zhang Haidi, Chairperson of the China Disabled Persons' Federation. "She perfectly embodies the spirit of Paralympics. That's why she was chosen to be the flag bearer."

"Her growth is obvious, owing to her dedication and perseverance," said Rong's coach Zhuang, expressing her appreciation for one of her favorite students. "Facing strong competitors in major events, she is able to boldly attack and remain calm at the same time, which makes her an exceptional athlete."

"I'm just one of the millions of people with disabilities, and like them, I am optimistic and live my life to the fullest," Rong said, with her big smile. ■

A Machine's Soul

A startup introduces robot-assisted rehabilitation for children with autism

By Chen Ran

Just one year ago, Edith Liu knew little about robots and was planning on following her classmates to work at a *Fortune* 500 company after graduating. Today, she is the co-founder of a startup that is bringing a French robot to China to help rehabilitate children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). What a difference a year makes!

Liu's company—Open Source Maker Space—launched a robot project called A Machine's Soul on the crowdfunding platform Themakers.cn in September 2015. By the November 8 closing date, the company raised 135,210 yuan (\$20,078), surpassing their target amount of 120,000 yuan (\$17,820).

The humanoid robot, NAO, stands at 58 cm tall and has mood recognition and interactivity capabilities, such as walking and talking. The robot is programmed to communicate with children with ASD in voices that the children are familiar with, such as their parents or pediatricians. The kids can also acquire and practice life skills with the robot through an interactive imitation game called *Follow Me*.

The original developer—Paris-headquartered Aldebaran Robotics—has an open source policy that allows other entrepreneurs to create their own applications for the robot. The robot is being used in computer and science classes in over 70 countries, according to Aldebaran Robotics.

Liu, 25, graduated from Audencia Nantes in France with an MBA and toured the Aldebaran headquarters in November 2014. Her future business partner, 33-year-old Nicolas Xie, a telecommunication graduate interested in robotics, arranged the tour. Liu knew next to nothing about robots, but the machine's human-like capabilities piqued her interest.

"I was totally fascinated by how intelligent NAO was. It was the first time I have found that a robot isn't just a cold machine and it's not that far removed from my life. It was friendly and approachable and can be a good companion," Liu said.

"We made up our minds to introduce NAO to Chinese children with ASD because we would like to offer a new approach—a hi-tech one—to autism treatment back home," Xie said.

ASD is a group of neurodevelopmental disorders with repetitive patterns of behavior, sensory issues, difficulties with communicat-

ing or social interactions and cognitive delays, in some cases. Specific disorders include Asperger's syndrome and autism. According to a 2013 World Health Organization report, one child in about 160 has an ASD and related disability in the world. In China, there are about 1.64 million children diagnosed with ASD.

In December 2014, Liu and Louis Lu, 30, a former engineer at ZTE's European branch, established Open Source Maker Space in Shenzhen, south China's Guangdong Province. Liu and her team spent six months consulting experts, conducting field surveys and research, and designing solutions. They created a tailored application platform for teaching and learning based on NAO's hardware, making a one-on-one or group interaction between children with ASD and the robot a reality.

Their key innovation, according to Liu, is a platform that comes with a remote control that allows pediatricians and parents to control NAO without any programming knowledge.

"The ongoing assessment demonstrates that most of the children with ASD have a positive response to robot-assisted rehabilitation," Xie said.

The company began collaborating with the Golden Age Interventions Center for Special Children in May 2015. Launched in 2004, the center is among the first non-governmental rehabilitation institutions for autism in Shenzhen.

"The children here are curious about the robot, which encourages their desire to communicate," said Wang Jing, a social worker at the center.

It appears to be working. Some children recognized Liu after she repeatedly visited the center for assessment sessions.

"I was impressed the other day when 4-year-old Fei Fei [pseudonym] hugged me and sat on my lap right away. Another 7-year-old boy said 'robot' when holding out my arms. His pronunciation was unintelligible, but I was deeply moved," Liu noted.

After almost a year of operations, Liu and Xie said the next step is determining how they should evaluate treatment outcomes. Does the combination of artificial intelligence, medical theory and real life application meet expectations? One issue the team has encountered is that the human-robot interaction is interrupted if the child pushes NAO or fiddles with it. So,



A child with autism touches NAO for the first time with the help of Edith Liu (right) at the Golden Age Interventions Center for Special Children in Shenzhen, south China's Guangdong Province, on May 25, 2015

they're developing a bigger and heavier robot to counteract the problem.

"We need to spend more time on assessing if treatment has improved," Xie said.

The Machine's Soul project goes beyond helping individual patients, though. Lu said it has helped raise awareness of ASD.

"Currently, there are fewer than 3,000 professionals in rehabilitation training for autism nationwide. The involvement of robots will definitely lend them a helping hand," he said.

The company has promised to use all the money raised during the crowdfunding drive to improve the existing application platform. Beginning in January 2016, they collaborated with an autism treatment center and chose five families to design customized teaching content for their children with ASD.

"Now, more people know about our project. Several ASD-affected families have contacted us. We have recognition and support from the government," said Liu. "What we have is far beyond my expectations." ■

Brave Heart In a Wheelchair

Papercutting artist shows while there's a pair of scissors, there's a way

By Sudeshna Sarkar & He Shan

Those who think Superman comes only in the shape of a strapping six-footer who can whiz through air haven't seen Zhang Yonghong. The residents of Chaodong Hutong in Beijing's historical alley of Nanluoguxiang, who have seen the 43-year-old singlehandedly battle enemies worse than Superman ever faced—poverty, rejection and betrayal—know superheroes may be less than 1 meter tall and wheelchair-bound, but they remain superheroes by dint of their steely courage and refusal to throw in the towel. Zhang uses a much more modest self-description. The signboard on the door of the tiny room that serves as his studio, shop and apartment describes him as a paper-cutting craftsman. Born in Yan'an in Shaanxi, he inherited from birth an aptitude for making papercut figures and motifs, a traditional art the northwestern province is famed for. But he inherited something darker as well, a genetic disorder called the brittle bone disease. As the name suggests, it results in fragile bones that break easily and in severe cases, result in dwarfism and misshapen ribs. In Zhang's case, it has also made him unable to move on his own.

The third child in a farmer family where all his other four siblings have no signs of the

disorder, Zhang began to study making papercuts when he was about 8 years old. "I went to school for only two years, and then I dropped out," Zhang said. His mother and grandmother made papercuts, and his father made him learn it from them. "We won't always be with you to take care of you," his father told him. "So you must learn to fend for yourself." The first thing he learned to make was a cow. He still remembers that incident: "My father made me cut it 40 times," he said, absentmindedly petting Xiaohua, his pet kitten who had jumped on the bed to investigate what was going on. "You are disabled, so you have to work hard to succeed," my father told me. We didn't have money to buy paper, so my family would collect the red paper on which neighbors wrote auspicious things during the Lunar New Year and other festivals." There was no money to buy knives and awls, so his father dismembered an old bicycle and made the tools from the wheel spokes.

Zhang sold his papercuts when he was 12, getting 0.2 yuan (\$0.03) for 10 pieces. Today, there are bigger and more ornate ones with a price tag of 500 yuan (\$74) and more. From Yan'an, Zhang moved to provincial capital Xi'an

in search of a bigger market. There he was befriended by a man who helped him run a school to teach papercutting.

It was a mixed blessing. A student fell in love with him and they got married, despite his misgivings. Then they had a baby who was also diagnosed with her father's disease. So he came to Beijing to get her treated. "I spent 300,000-400,000 yuan (\$44,616-59,489) on the treatment," he said. "I spent a whole month living outside the hospital as there was no money for anything else. All my savings were gone." His daughter's condition improved but his wife left him, angered by his decision to spend the money on the treatment instead of buying a house. But Zhang refused to abandon his daughter. "Both of us lived on the streets of Xidan, making and selling papercuts," he said. "Then my parents learned what had happened and took their granddaughter home to Yan'an. But I need to stay on and work and make money so that her treatment is continued."

In the last two years, business has dropped with people not buying large papercuts. Also, municipal laws prevent Zhang from selling his work on the streets. Undeterred, he has switched to technology, selling them on WeChat, the mobile phone app. "But the winter makes me apprehensive," he said. Besides the high rent and the 3,000 yuan (\$446) he has to pay the woman who works as his caregiver, there is the heating charge. Still, he is not ready to abandon the battle. "He is my hero," said Li Qing Liang, a 34-year-old freelance writer and neighbor who is also a close friend of Zhang now. Li described an incident to describe Zhang's generosity: "He came across a woman rummaging in the garbage can for food. Others passed by without a second thought, but Zhang stopped his wheelchair and spoke to her. He then brought her home and treated her to Beijing duck even though he needed the money himself. That's what he is, a man with a huge heart." ■



Zhang Yonghong at his shop-cum-apartment in Nanluoguxiang, Beijing



Liu Yunshan, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, meets China's delegation to the Rio Paralympics in Beijing on September 21 and congratulates the athletes on their outstanding performances in the games



Long jumper Chen Junfei competes in an event on September 11

Rio Moments

Under the theme "The heart knows no limits; everybody has a heart," over 4,000 athletes competed in the 15th Paralympic Games, which took place in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro from September 7 to 18.

Team China won 107 gold, 81 silver and 51 bronze medals, broke 51 world records, and topped both the gold medal tally and the overall medal tally.

China's 499-member delegation, led by Zhang Haidi, Chairperson of the China Disabled Persons' Federation, was the largest the nation had ever sent to overseas Paralympic Games. These images showcase memorable moments during the competition.

(Photos by Xinhua News Agency)



Athletes Liu Wenjun (center) and Li Yingjie (left) during the 800-meter wheelchair race on September 17



China's sitting volleyball team plays against the U.S. team on September 12



Visually impaired runner Liu Cuiqing (right) sprints with her guide in the 400-meter track race on September 16



Lifter Tan Yujiao during a competition on September 11



Swimmer Xu Qing (right, back row) on the podium with his teammates after finishing first in the 4x50-meter freestyle relay on September 9. Xu's gold medal was his ninth in four Paralympic Games



Fencer Sun Gang (left) takes part in the wheelchair fencing event on September 13

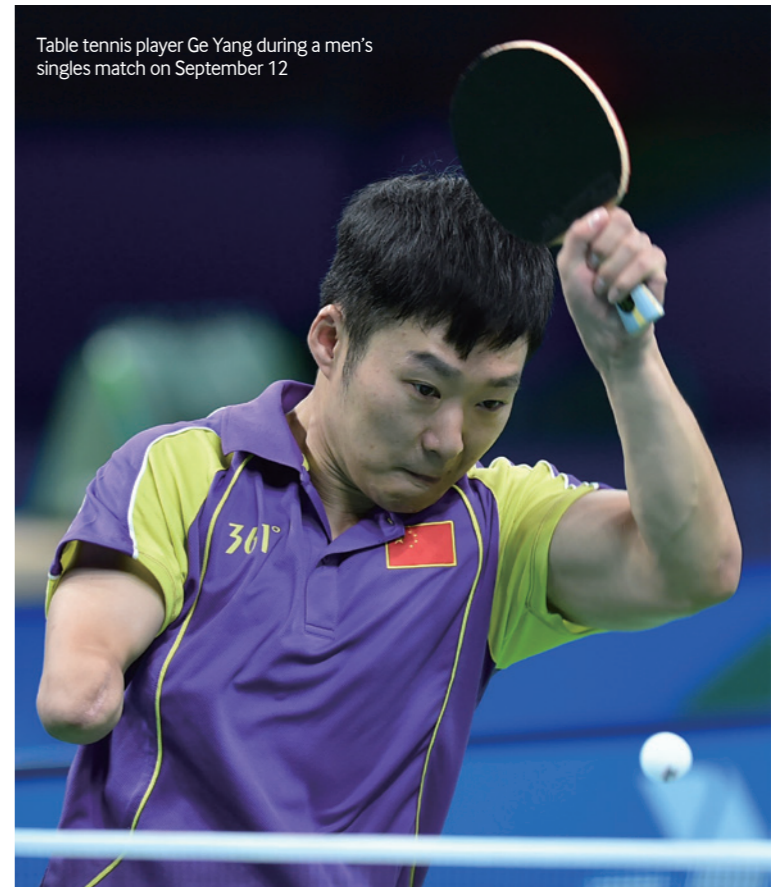


Table tennis player Ge Yang during a men's singles match on September 12

Colorful Inclusiveness

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities underlines these people's rights to full and effective participation as well as inclusion in society. With remarkable progress in their access to social security benefits, employment, education and public services, Chinese people with disabilities not only have better living conditions but also play an increasingly active role in advancing social progress.



Therapy for children with disabilities in Liaocheng, Shandong Province, on May 14, 2013



Differently abled Wu Yaowen paints at the national exhibition on employment and training achievements in Nanjing in June 2011



Children with disabilities take part in a sack race with the help of volunteers in Hanshan, Anhui Province, on May 11, 2014



A walking parade in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, on August 6



A young man in a wheelchair takes part in a recruitment fair for people with disabilities in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, on May 18, 2014



The first barrier-free supermarket in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, opens on June 23, 2014, employing barrier-free facilities and Braille price tags, sign language instructions and wheelchairs



Hui Yumei is helped on to a barrier-free bus by the bus driver in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, on January 26, 2011



People with visual impairments exercise at a training center for people with visual impairment in Maoming, Guangdong Province, on December 10, 2014



Visitors with visual impairment at a museum with tactile displays in Beijing on September 5, 2011

The Call of Humanitarianism Out in an Abridged Version



Deng Pufang

Selecting articles from *The Call of Humanitarianism*, a book examined and approved by Deng Pufang, Honorary Chairman of the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF), was recently published by Huaxia Publishing House. The book is an edited collection based on the first, second, third and fourth volumes of *The Call of Humanitarianism*. It also contains three speeches and articles by Deng. The production of this book was supervised by CDPF Chairperson Zhang Haidi and the Party Group and Executive Council of the federation, and was completed in two years.

The selection covers the development process and achievements of the undertakings for persons with disabilities carried out in China over the past 30 years. It reflects the spread of humanitarian thought in China. The book condenses the author's insights into China's undertakings for persons with disabilities over years. Containing a unique spirit, cultural value and thoughts, the book sends an inspirational message to people who work for the differently abled. ■



The Call of Humanitarianism in its new abridged version

Rights of the Disabled Protected

The Chinese Government has increased support for people with disabilities in policy priorities to ensure their rights to social security, health, education and other services are effectively protected, says a white paper on poverty reduction and human rights released by China on October 17.

The white paper hails China's efforts and progress made in poverty alleviation and human rights, including achievement in securing better rights for people with disabilities.

Since 2012, the Central Government has arranged 3.74 billion of discount loans for rehabilitation and poverty alleviation of 219,000 poor persons with disabilities. It has provided vocational training for 1.45 million persons with disabilities, and as a result 1.24 million urban residents with disabilities have found employment, the white paper says.

According to the paper, with government subsidies, 1.18 million households of poor rural persons with disabilities have seen their homes renovated, 3.17 million poor rural persons with disabilities have received practical technical training, and 4.96 million poor rural persons with disabilities have been lifted out of poverty. As a result of these initiatives, poverty resulting from disability has been effectively reduced.

As of the end of 2015, a total of 10.89 million urban and rural residents with disabilities had been covered by subsistence allowances, nearly 22.3 million persons with disabilities were covered by social old-age insurance for urban and rural residents, and 3.02 million persons with disabilities were covered by basic medical insurance for urban residents, the paper says. ■

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THE FACE OF PROGRESS

Zhang Haidi spearheads global efforts to empower people with disabilities

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集善残疾儿童助养项目

牵手残疾儿童及残疾人家庭子女

Caring for people with disabilities needs no reason.
All is done out of love.

