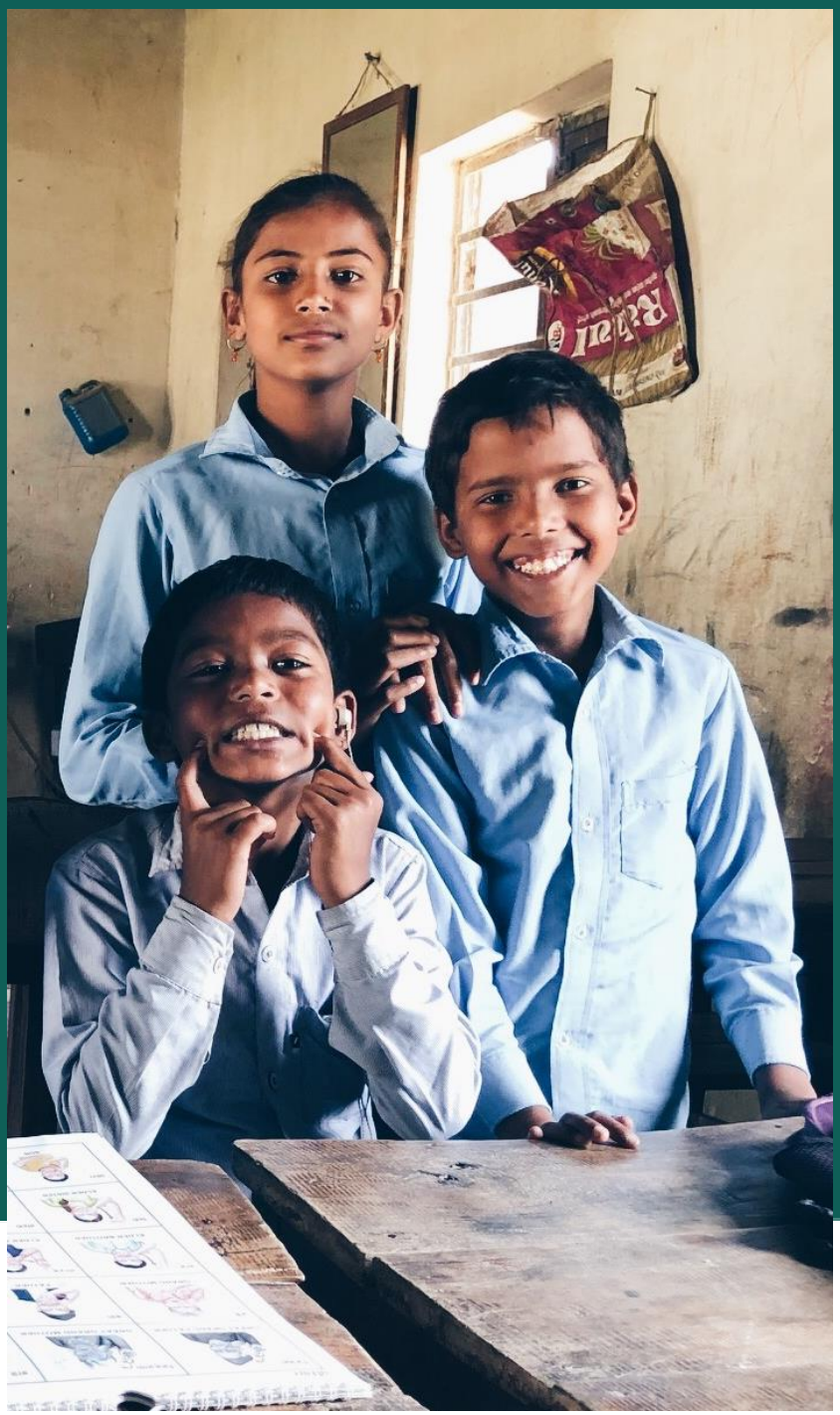
MARCH 2020

WHAT AN INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE, QUALITY EDUCATION MEANS TO US

REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY ALLIANCE



International Disability Alliance

UKaid from the British people

The report has been developed as part of the Inclusive Education Flagship initiative of the International Disability Alliance (IDA), a component of the Disability Catalyst Programme funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), also supported by Inclusive Futures. This was led by the IDA Inclusive Education Task Team and informed by the experience of national Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), as well as inputs from partners from the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC).

Cover Photo: *Deaf resource class students at Shree Devnandan Devraj Higher School, Ramnagari, Parsa District, Nepal. Photo credit: Kristin Snoddon/WFD and Carmelle Cachero/WFD.*

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ABBREVIATIONS

AT	Assistive Technology
DFID	Department for International Development
ECC	Expanded Core Curriculum
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EIEI	Early Identification and Early Intervention
ICEVI	International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDA	International Disability Alliance
IFHOH	International Federation of Hard of Hearing People
GC	General Comment
GEMR	Global Education Monitoring Report
GLAD	Global Action on Disability (network)
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPDs	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WBU	World Blind Union
WFD	World Federation of the Deaf

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This global report on inclusive education presents the work and views of the International Disability Alliance (IDA) on how to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) – *ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all* – in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), especially respecting its Article 24 on the rights of all learners with disabilities.

The report was developed as part of IDA's Inclusive Education Flagship initiative, a component of the Disability Catalyst Programme funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). Led by the IDA Inclusive Education Task Team and informed by the experience of national Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), it is based on an analysis of the current global trends with regard to inclusive education. It considers inclusive education as an ingredient of social transformation, which can lead to societies that better embrace the diversity of their citizens.

This report centrally integrates and builds on the consensus position developed by IDA members on strategic orientations that must guide the reform of the education sector, presenting a commonly agreed, cross-disability perspective, which hopefully can inform disability rights advocacy in the area of education. A critical message of this report is that **an inclusive education system is *the only way* to achieve SDG 4 for *all* children – including children and youth with disabilities – whomever and wherever they are**. Inclusive education requires an educational transformation, which is unachievable if it is considered an add-on to existing education systems rather than a basis for educational transformation.

The report aims to inform education sector stakeholders of the priorities agreed by the disability rights movement, and to equip disability activists and their allies with essential messages and recommendations to unify and strengthen advocacy towards effective and accelerated reforms of the education sector. Building this consensus was not an easy task; therefore, this report is aimed at explaining how inclusive education can be implemented. It includes recommendations of good practices that can be supported by good policies and legislation, leading to truly inclusive education systems. It also intends to provide evidence on the current situation faced by learners with disabilities, as a contribution to track progress in achieving SDG 4 for all. The task ahead is immense and requires coordinated efforts to push for transformations of inclusive education systems that truly welcome diversity.

In implementing the UNCRPD, governments must closely consult and actively involve persons with disabilities through their representative organisations (Articles 4.3 and 33). IDA with its unique composition as a network of international disability rights organisations is the most authoritative representation of persons with disabilities at the global level. This report brings together the representative voices of persons with disabilities on how to *ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning* for persons with disabilities.

INTRODUCTION – Nothing about us without us

2.1 The Flagship Report

The right to education for all has been entrenched in international law since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and the overall number of out of school children[1] has been gradually reduced. However, children and youth with disabilities continue to be disproportionately excluded from any form of education and those who do attend school usually receive a poorer quality education and fewer years of it. Precise data on the number of children with disabilities out of school and the quality of their education is not available, but United Nations agencies agree that at least one third of the children out of school have a disability.

Organisations of Persons with Disabilities united to bring their concerns to the attention of world governments during the negotiations of the UNCRPD in the 1990s. The result was a commitment to "an inclusive education system at all levels," which means transforming education systems to be inclusive while providing the individual support services required for learners to succeed. OPDs are looking forward to finally achieving true inclusive education for all learners; this report highlights progress achieved and what still remains to be done, after many years of work.

IDA was established in 1999 and is a network of global (8) and regional (6) organisations of persons with disabilities. IDA's unique composition as a network of international OPDs allows it to act as an authoritative and representative voice of persons with disabilities in the United Nations (UN) system, representing approximately one billion persons with disabilities worldwide. Now, members of the IDA have come together again to help governments, multi-lateral institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the private sector understand the frustration: **insufficient progress has been made and much needs to change for governments to meet the commitments of the UNCRPD and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

As part of IDA's Inclusive Education Flagship initiative (funded by DFID), representatives of four IDA members formed the technical task team to guide the initiative and its framing of inclusive and equitable quality education. The four members are Inclusion International, the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, the World Blind Union and the World Federation of the Deaf. While this report is endorsed by the Alliance as a whole, examples used in this report reflect a perspective on the commonly agreed position as illustrated by the four IDA member organisations who engaged actively in the technical task team. The next phase of the Inclusive Education Flagship initiative will further develop, expand and disseminate the content of the report in ways that reflect the wider diversity of the disability rights movement.

[1] Out-of-school children are "children in the official primary school age who are not enrolled in pre-primary, primary or secondary schools."

Members of the IDA Inclusive Education Task Team with representatives of Nepalese OPDs in Kathmandu. March 2019. Photo credit: IDA

2.1.1 IDA's Education Task Team

Inclusion International, one of the founding members of the International Disability Alliance, is a global federation of national organisations of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families. Most member organisations were formed by parents whose children and youth were denied entry into regular schools, and many began the first special schools for children and youth with intellectual disabilities. Experience with special schools confirmed the potential of students with intellectual disabilities to learn, but also led to lives apart from their communities. Inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in regular classes, with support, led to better academic outcomes for students with and without disabilities and prepared them all to be members of inclusive communities. Furthermore, members recognised that there would never be enough resources to run two separate systems concurrently – a special education system and a regular education system.

The International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH), a member of the International Disability Alliance, represents the voice of persons who are hard of hearing worldwide and consists of national organisations of persons who are hard of hearing themselves. Through the Inclusive Education project, the exclusion of children and youth who are hard of hearing from even being able to attend school due to cultural barriers has been identified. Children who are hard of hearing require attention to developing language and listening skills from an early age. Throughout their schooling, their full participation requires that their accessibility needs, such as for amplified hearing and captioning, be provided, along with support services and effective communication strategies. Without doing so, students who are hard of hearing, while being in an integrated classroom, are not able to fully participate and, therefore, experience exclusion based on their disability. These are issues that require redress, which is part of the essence of this Flagship report.

The **World Blind Union** (WBU), a member of the International Disability Alliance, represents approximately 253 million people worldwide who are blind or partially sighted. Members are organisations of and for the blind in 190 countries, as well as international organisations working in the field of vision impairment. The WBU and its partner, the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI), are in close collaboration on the essential components for the education of learners with visual impairments.

The WBU recognises the gross inequalities in educational opportunities for children and youth with blindness and low vision, especially in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, where approximately 90% of all children and youth with visual impairment live and where less than 10% of these children and youth currently have access to any type of education, formal or non-formal. WBU affirms that: inclusive, appropriate education and lifelong learning is the foundation for improving the lives of people with visual impairment. WBU supports Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and emphasises that learners with visual impairment require unique teaching, learning and assessment methods to access a quality, holistic education. Learners must have access to the curriculum, which must be flexible for adaptation and include mathematics and science. They should be taught the skills of reading and writing braille, orientation and mobility, use of information and communication access technology, socialisation and activities of daily living, which in life after school will promote overall development and independent living in the community.

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), an international nongovernment organisation of 125 national members and a founding member of the International Disability Alliance, has long advocated for children who are deaf to receive a quality bilingual education in their national sign language(s). The UNCRPD (Article 24(3) and (4)) recognises the rights of children who are deaf to be educated in environments that maximise their educational and social development. The rights and full learning potential of children who are deaf are realised in language rich environments, i.e.: bilingual sign language schools and other educational environments that are part of an inclusive education system. The WFD believes inclusive education for children who are deaf is achieved through quality bilingual sign language schools and other educational settings teaching the national sign language(s) and national written language(s). These bilingual environments bring together peers who are deaf and other children who use sign language, with teachers fluent in the national sign language(s), including teachers who are deaf; and teach the national curriculum and include the teaching of sign language and Deaf culture. These settings play a crucial role in maintaining sign languages and deaf communities; they also enable the ongoing development of necessary sign language and deaf cultural teaching resources.

In complying with the UNCRPD, governments must **closely consult** and **actively involve** persons with disabilities through their representative organisations (Articles 4.3 and 33). The International Disability Alliance, with its unique composition as a network of international disability rights organisations, is the **most authoritative representation of persons with disabilities globally**. The uniqueness of this report is that it is the representative voice of persons with disabilities, from **their perspective**; and that it brings together the representative voices of persons with disabilities on how to *ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning* for persons with disabilities.

2.1.2 IDA and the Flagship Report

IDA's mission is "**to advance the human rights of persons with disabilities, as a united voice of organisations of persons with disabilities, utilising the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other human rights instruments.**" As per its Strategic Framework 2020-2023, the overall objective of IDA is that "the rights of persons with disabilities are advanced by Member States, the UN and international cooperation stakeholders across human rights, development, peace and security agendas, in partnership with and through meaningful engagement of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities technically equipped to frame, deliver and monitor policies and programmes that affect their lives."

Thanks to successful advocacy in the past decade, the question is no longer **whether to include**, but **how to include** all persons with disabilities. As interest grows to engage in disability-inclusive development, the disability rights movement has a key role to play in orienting development efforts so that they effectively contribute to realising the rights of persons with disabilities. Unless a clear message is channelled, there is a risk that investments are made in models that do not fully promote the rights of persons with disabilities, contravene the UNCRPD, and/or perpetuate discrimination against some groups. In the area of education, this may mean, for example, sustained funding to segregated settings where children and youth with disabilities are deprived of opportunities to learn on an equal basis with others.

In the early years of the 2030 Agenda, IDA and its members started a new collaboration through the Disability Catalyst Programme. This Programme (funded by DFID) aimed at framing the implementation of the SDGs from a UNCRPD and OPDs perspective, while ensuring participation of most marginalised groups. The idea of the programme was to maximise SDG momentum for further compliance with the UNCRPD. The Inclusive Education Flagship initiative, a component of the Disability Catalyst Programme, had the goal **to develop an OPDs-led, evidence-based consensus perspective on how best to achieve SDG 4 – fully compliant with UNCRPD Article 24 – by 2030.**

IDA flagship process

This publication is one of the key outcomes of the Inclusive Education Flagship initiative in developing a framework to support national OPDs in their advocacy towards the implementation of SDG 4 and UNCRPD Article 24. It is the result of a process aimed at building a cross-disability consensus on strategic recommendations to commonly advocate for the realisation of the rights of all learners to quality, inclusive education, including all learners with disabilities. This process was not easy. As it took time for organisations of persons with disabilities to agree on the text of UNCRPD Article 24, it took time for the IDA Inclusive Education Task Team to understand the perspective of diverse constituencies and agree on strategic orientations to ensure its enforcement in resource-constrained environments. However, members of the IDA Inclusive Education Task Team were guided by a strong sense of responsibility to come up with clear and common guidance to engage in and contribute to fast and significant reforms of the education sector. The group felt the urgency of coming up with a clear response to meet what is at stake – nothing less than the futures of millions of children and youth with disabilities, and the need to shape truly inclusive societies.

Through three technical workshops, which included exchanges with consultants, education sector stakeholders, inclusive education allies in particular the IDDC Inclusive Education Task Group, global, regional and national level OPDs, a consensus position was developed on how to best achieve SDG4 in compliance with UNCRPD Article 24. This position was endorsed by the Board of IDA and is being used to influence inclusive education debates, including UNESCO's upcoming Global Education Monitor report 2020, and the Inclusive Education Working Group of the Global Action on Disability (GLAD) network. This global level consensus paper is grounded on a detailed review of the situation of Nepal with regard to children and youth with disabilities' access to education, which informed preliminary discussions on possible policy scenarios. This review is available as a separate report. It was further enriched by studies conducted by the World Federation of the Deaf (Nepal) and by the International Federation of Hard of Hearing (Nepal and Uganda), the Catalyst for Inclusive Education Initiative of Inclusion International (Peru, Paraguay, Nepal), and the World Blind Union's work through its partner, the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI).

Rationale for the report

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION is *the only way* to achieve SDG 4 for *all* children – including children with disabilities – whomever and wherever they are. Inclusion is not a placement, but rather an experience with a sense of belonging. Inclusive education requires an educational transformation, with accessibility to enable full participation; it is not an add-on to existing education systems.

This report aims to clearly express **IDA's vision with regard to inclusive education**, by strengthening the commitment to the fulfilment of SDG4. Existing efforts have demonstrated that only by making the most of available resources can education systems prevent children and youth with and without disabilities from failure. Building a truly inclusive education system is the only way to respond simultaneously to the schooling and learning crises and to ensure the realisation of SDG4 – inclusive and equitable quality education – for all children, whomever and wherever they are.

In an **inclusive education system**, all learners with and without disabilities learn together with their peers in schools and classes in their local community schools. They all receive the support they need, from preschool to tertiary and vocational education, in inclusive and accessible schools that are responsive to cultural and community values, evidence and best practices, and individual preferences.

An inclusive education system is geared towards providing quality education to all children and youth equitably through the following measures (further elaborated in this report):

1. Whether managed by the public or private sectors, all education facilities are regulated by Ministries of Education, Ministries of Higher Education, or other relevant ministries for inclusive vocational training, early childhood development and life-long learning;
2. Enforcement of non-discrimination and Zero Rejection policies[2] are implemented;
3. Provision of reasonable accommodation as defined in the UNCRPD, across the country, at all levels of the system is enforced;
4. Significant investments (human, social and financial) are made in recruiting and training qualified teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who can provide inclusive and quality learning for all learners;
5. Teacher education and curriculum reforms incorporate the principles of Universal Design for Learning, including equal access and participation;
6. Significant investments (human, social and financial) are made in the accessibility of needed infrastructure, materials for teachers, students and parents, curricular and extra-curricular activities, and systems for engaging parents and the community, including the provision of assistive products and technology, and in the training of their use;
7. Well-resourced support services are made available at all levels, to assist all schools and all teachers in providing effective learning for all students, including those with disabilities;
8. A diversity of languages (including sign languages, tactile sign languages) and modes of communication (easy-to-read, Braille, etc.) are used throughout the system. Priority is given to teachers who are already fluent in their use (i.e., teachers who are deaf) with adequate support provided to ensure all teachers have opportunities to develop fluency;

[2] Zero Rejection policies state explicitly, in part, that no child is refused access to their local school because of their disability.

9	Special schools and other segregated settings are progressively phased out, while key human resources and knowledge assets are converted into support services for equal access, participation and inclusion by inclusive institutions, such as schools, colleges and community-based support centres;
10	Because of their critical role in language acquisition for children who are deaf, existing schools for learners who are deaf that currently do not use sign language-based education and/or do not follow the government curriculum are supported to become inclusive bilingual sign language schools (see Annex);
11	Data are consistently collected, disaggregated to the extent possible by disability type and analysed to ensure adequate monitoring and resourcing of inclusive and equitable quality education;
12	In decentralised systems, a consistent set of regulations, accountability mechanisms and resource planning for inclusive education at all levels of government is ensured;
13	Multi-stakeholder engagement between ministries of education, schools, educators, support services, parents and communities, is promoted to ensure equal access and effective inclusion. Engagement with stakeholders with disabilities (parents, educators, government officials and others) is properly supported to ensure full participation in decision-making;
14	Linked with support and services offered by other government departments and in coordination with the education system, a range of support services (i.e. training, health, protection, social, etc.) are made available for children, youth (and their parents), starting at birth and throughout the life cycle. These services are aimed at developing specific skills during early language development, including literacy in tactile and sign language. The services should include covering extra costs related to disability and overall support for independent living.

2.2 IDA's vision for realisation of SDG4 from a UNCRPD perspective

Responding to both the schooling and learning crises, inclusive education systems contribute to future generations' greater ability to embrace diversity and achieve gender equality, to promote sustainable development, peace and non-violence, and to develop a wider range of skills required in future economies.

This report is based on the strong conviction that the only way to ensure inclusive education is by creating an education system that is inclusive of *all* children and youth and provides the necessary access, resources and support for their full and direct participation.

Thus, building **a truly inclusive education system is the only way to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all learners.**

2.2.1 SDG 4 and Incheon 2030

Sustainable Development Goal 4 calls for inclusive education, as expressed in the CRPD Article 24 and General Comment No. 4. In an inclusive education system, all learners, with and without disabilities, learn together in their age-appropriate classes, in their community schools. All learners receive the support they need, from preschool to tertiary/vocational education, in inclusive and accessible schools and educational facilities that include (sign language) bilingual schools. Thus, to be in compliance with SDG 4 (and in compliance with the CRPD), all efforts should be made to provide all required services at the community level, and specialised skills, knowledge and support must be progressively made available in the entire education system. Importantly, the student does not go to the service; the service goes to the student. As per CRPD Article 24 (3) and (4), learners who are deaf should learn in environments that maximise their educational and social development, which is understood to include the provision of inclusive bilingual sign language schools (outlined in more detail in the Annex).

In addition, the Incheon Declaration Education 2030, once again reaffirms the universal right to education and acknowledges the difficulties in upholding previous agendas and commitments. It is a further commitment to the implementation of policies and actions leading to the fulfilment of SDG 4 and includes previous commitments (such as those expressed in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action) and the more recent ones (such as those expressed in the UNCRPD). It calls for a transformative agenda focused on access, inclusion and equity that includes a quality teaching profession, life-long education opportunities, gender parity and emergency-responsive education systems.

Some learners – with and without disabilities – may attend an inclusive school or educational institution away from their community to benefit from quality bilingual education (including in the national sign language(s)), acquire a specific skill/knowledge (such as those related to the arts or sports) and/or get specific support (such as orientation and mobility or Braille) not yet available in their community, village or town's schools.

2.2.2 UNCRPD Article 24 & General Comment No. 4

In parallel with the development of the SDGs, the process of clarifying Article 24 of the UNCRPD was an important event, crucial in advocating for inclusive education. **General Comment No. 4 to Article 24 of the CRPD** (GC4) was adopted by the UNCRPD Committee; it provides an interpretation of the provisions and obligations of CRPD parties with regard to education. GC4 clarifies the meaning of inclusive education and **defines inclusive education and its principal features**.

General Comment No. 4 makes clear that there is **persistent discrimination** against persons with disabilities that results in significant numbers of children and youth with disabilities being denied the right to education. There is a continued lack of awareness of the barriers that prevent the fulfilment of the right to education for all, particularly children and youth with disabilities and a lack of knowledge about the nature of inclusive education (which is often confused with integration), its potential and implications. Despite substantial efforts, there is a persistent lack of adequate data, a failure to recognise the case for inclusion, and a confirmed need for clarification and definition of inclusive education and strategies for implementation. Inclusive education requires in-depth transformation of education systems and the improvement of education for *all* learners – whomever and wherever they are. In effect, although inclusive education **requires compliance with the UNCRPD, it goes far beyond providing education to children and youth with disabilities**.

A critical way to tackle the vast problem of out-of-school children with disabilities is to enforce **non-discrimination** and **Zero Rejection** policies systematically, both of which are enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights (as well as the UNCRPD). However, as demonstrated in this report, enforcement of non-discrimination and Zero Rejection policies, including the duty to provide **reasonable accommodations**, do not result in inclusive education. They are necessary – but not sufficient – conditions to ensure that all out-of-school children access education in their community as fast as possible. But they are **only a few of the critical components** leading to an effective and inclusive education for all children.

2.2.3 Cali commitment to equity and inclusion in education

The Cali commitment that resulted from the UNESCO International Forum on Inclusion and Equity in Education (October 2019) is the most recent "commitment to the international human rights agenda […] which recognises the necessity and urgency of providing equitable and inclusive quality education for all learners" (p. 1). However, while much anticipated, and understood as a recommitment to *all* children and youth – including children and youth with disabilities – the document largely ignores children and youth with disabilities and makes no mention of the rights of children and youth as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The IDA Flagship report makes the case that promoting an "equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all learners" can only be achieved when all children and youth are made visible in policy and practice, thus requiring that the international commitments to the UNCRPD Article 24 be front and centre in planning and implementing a transformative process.

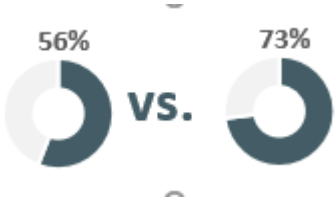
REALISING SDG 4 FOR ALL LEARNERS: more of the same won't work

Children and youth with disabilities have often been overlooked in education policy or have been given access to education settings and programmes that do not provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge for adulthood. When *special* policies exist, they do not always result in outcomes that allow children and youth with disabilities to thrive and become contributing citizens in their communities.

3.1 The disability gap: access, participation and outcomes for learners with disabilities

Despite the existence of education programmes for children and youth with disabilities in most parts of the world and recent policies for inclusive education, research indicates that when comparing children with and children without disabilities, **gaps in education outcomes have increased over time**. Although data are scarce, research from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2017) indicates that many children with disabilities are never enrolled in school, and the number of out-of-school children with disabilities is rising, likely due to a lack of adequate support systems and accessible environments.

For example, only 56% of children with disabilities **complete primary school** in Cambodia, Colombia, Gambia, Maldives and Uganda, compared to 73% of children without disabilities (World Bank, Inclusion International, Leonard Cheshire, 2019).



According to other estimates (UNESCO 2014 Facts and Figures), persons with disabilities are 30% less likely to complete primary education, compared to persons without disabilities, even in countries where primary completion is low (in Bangladesh, 30% of persons with disabilities versus 48% of persons without disabilities; in Zambia, 43% of persons with disabilities versus 57% of persons without disabilities; in Paraguay 56% of persons with disabilities versus 72% of persons without disabilities). **Completion rates in secondary education are also much lower** for children with disabilities when compared to children without disabilities. This disability gap is also true for children in developed countries. Government policies have led to cutbacks in services and closure of bilingual schools for learners who are deaf in, among other countries, Canada and USA, leading to a decrease in primary school completion rates, learning outcomes, and social-emotional skills.

A comparative analysis of enrolment and completion in primary and secondary education indicates the **gap in literacy** between children with disabilities and children without disabilities has grown over time. Likewise, although primary schooling

completion rates have increased for both groups of children, literacy gains have been much smaller for children with disabilities – a phenomenon perhaps related to the "disability and development gap" (Groce & Kett, 2013).

3.1.1 Impact of lack of education on persons with disabilities and their families

Global literature (WHO & World Bank, 2011; UNESCO, 2015) indicates that lack of education has lifelong impacts, leading to the conclusion that the right to education is a right in itself, and the means by which all other rights can be realised. It is unarguable that **persons with disabilities are more likely to be illiterate** than persons without disabilities, even in countries with long-standing policies on the right to education (such as USA). Literacy is irrevocably related to employability and poverty.

Poverty is directly related to disability, in a circular relationship, by which persons who are poor are more likely to develop a **disability**; and those with a disability are more likely to be poor. When poverty and disability intersect with **gender**, the impact is exponentially larger – women and girls with a disability are more likely to be poor and illiterate. In addition, not only are persons with disabilities more likely to be unemployed, but disability often also impacts the **employability of the family member** who is a caregiver. Low levels of education constrain the possibilities of employment; and it is not uncommon for adults with disabilities to have no income at all, making them reliant on social welfare and charity. In addition, the **associated costs of disability** (health care, personal assistance, transportation, accessibility, etc.) often place undue strain on households already experiencing financial difficulties (United Nations, 2019).

3.2 The persistent policy misunderstanding

The UNCRPD does not define new requirements specific to persons with disabilities; rather it reaffirms and clarifies the existing rights of persons with disabilities as enshrined in existing international treaties. Likewise, GC4 and GC6 do not create new demands of education systems; rather, they highlight the **persistent segregation of children and youth with disabilities from and within education** systems, and the steps necessary to address the segregation. "Segregation" includes placements in mainstream school where children and youth are physically present, but no provisions are made for true inclusion in their educational settings. Merely placing children and youth with disabilities in mainstream schools does not mean inclusion. A combination of factors is required to ensure that inclusive education is at play.

Until the last half century, most children and youth with disabilities were absent from education, including in most high and middle-income countries. Although there has been a narrow and reductive understanding of education for children and youth with disabilities in most countries, special education has been provided for many children and youth with disabilities, mostly in **specialised schools, special classes, rehabilitation centres and other similarly segregated settings**.

3.2.1 Persistence of failed models of special education

The emphasis on providing education to children and youth with disabilities through enactment of special education policies and in special schools has **failed to deliver quality education and inclusion** for the vast majority of children and youth with

disabilities, of whom more than half remain out of school globally. Such policies have diverted attention, efforts and resources from required investment in improving overall quality of teachers, reforming curricula and teaching methods and providing the support to learners in their neighbourhood school. The policies have also built legacies that undermine effective transformation towards inclusive education systems.

Inadequate education in special education settings (and discrimination) are reportedly the main barriers to education, as experienced by children and youth with disabilities and reported by their families. In addition to lack of birth registration and invisibility within social protection mechanisms, abuse and neglect of children and youth with disabilities can start as early as pre-school; and rates are exponentially higher when the child is separated from family, friends and caregivers. Discrimination and **violence** are present in all settings and are perpetrated by children and youth and adults alike, including teachers. Violence and **bullying** are often cited as reasons for non-enrolment in school, and cases of violence and **abuse** within residential schools are widely documented by the media.

Despite this picture of discrimination, some policymakers and education professionals continue to advocate for children and youth with disabilities to be educated outside the general education system, and that they be provided with a *modified curriculum* that is often of lower quality, in education settings that are referred to as "*safer"* and cater to the "*specific needs"* of this or that particular impairment. The challenge of **reconciling the ideals of special education** (a service) **and inclusive education** (a system), have resulted in an appropriation of the concepts and language of inclusive education by supporters of special education, who use the often failed attempts at placing children and youth with disabilities in mainstream classes as the examples of the failure of inclusive education. Fear of losing some existing services, even if they could benefit from improvement, often hinders efforts to make changes that are designed to provide inclusion for all learners with disabilities together with all other children. These arguments fail to acknowledge the fact that a fully inclusive education system is one that caters for, is accessible to, and supports every child. A lack of access and/or resources and not providing an equitable education is not "inclusive education," and is a failure of the system, not the child. The focus of governments and policymakers should be on creating an inclusive education system for *all* learners.

3.2.2 NOT THE SAME – Integration versus Inclusion

Equitable access for all learners to existing education systems is an obligation of all States that are parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and CRPD and a core pillar of SDG4. Non-discrimination and Zero Rejection policies both require that all children and youth – including those with disabilities – not be excluded from accessing existing education and not be segregated from their peers.[3] However, equitable access to existing education systems cannot and should not be mistaken for *inclusion*. Merely allowing children and youth with disabilities to **access existing systems is the equivalent of *integration, which can result in isolation,* not *inclusion***.

[3] Inclusive bilingual sign language schools are not segregated settings.

Integration and inclusion, although often used interchangeably, are different concepts. **Integration** is directly related to providing access to students who have traditionally been prevented from attending regular school; such students may be children or youth with disabilities or those from a particular racial or religious group. Emphasis is on providing access to an existing school and classroom – mainstream – but does not require the environment to adapt to the student in any way. On the other hand, **inclusion** is (and can only be measured in relation to) full participation in the learning process. Not only is the student given access to the environment, to the curriculum, co-curricular activities and expanded core curriculum, but a transformation of the system ensures equal access and full participation in all aspects of learning. Importantly, while integration aims to assimilate a student within an existing structure, inclusion respects, responds and flourishes on the diversity of members, including their cultural and identity development through opportunities to interact with others who share the same language and culture.

Some **examples of integration – that are not inclusion – are**:

- having a *resource classroom* for children and youth with developmental disabilities in a mainstream school, which only children and youth with developmental disabilities attend, where they are taught according to a modified, lesser curriculum, or have a school schedule that differs from the rest of the school
- enrolling a child who is deaf in a regular school with a sign language interpreter, but no teachers fluent in the national sign language(s) or other students who are deaf with whom to interact
- excusing a child in a wheelchair from science class because the lab where it takes place is not accessible to them

Inclusion of all children and youth – including children and youth with disabilities – requires the following **minimum conditions**:

1. All children/learners have **access** to quality education in schools where their inclusion requirements are met

2. All teachers are equipped to ensure that all their students **participate** in quality learning

3. Well-resourced **support services** and resources are available to assist all schools and all teachers to provide inclusive and effective learning to all learners, including those with disabilities

4. All students **succeed** in reaching their full academic and social potential, with learning outcomes measured against their own wishes, plans and benchmarks

The legacy of special education

As mentioned above, globally, the emphasis on education for children and youth with disabilities has been on providing access to education, often in segregated environments. While the Salamanca Statement focused on providing education for students with special education needs – including children and youth with disabilities – in their neighbourhood schools, it did not explicitly describe inclusion as it is understood today. The **legacy of *special education needs*** is one of focusing on providing access to education to children and youth with disabilities in settings considered adequate for particular groups of children and youth and tailored to their perceived needs – not necessarily inclusive or geared towards academic and social success.

Thus, in alignment with the vision of the CRPD and in compliance with Article 24, the **IDA opposes any education setting that does not provide inclusive education in its broadest sense**. IDA proposes that any other settings be phased out, with key human resources and knowledge assets converted – whenever possible – to support equal access and reasonable accommodation towards inclusion. However, sign language access for learners who are deaf and non-visual access to learners who are blind are both essential for meeting the right to education; this access cannot always be provided in local settings.

Therefore**, IDA opposes education settings**:

- ◊ That are not the ultimate responsibility of the ministry of Education (or whichever relevant ministry is responsible for students without a disability);
- ◊ Where attendance is solely based either on *not* having a disability or *having* a disability;
- ◊ Where enrolment is solely based on having a particular disability and is exclusive of others (without disabilities or with other types of disabilities);
- ◊ That provide subpar education standards compared with the general education system;
- ◊ Do not lead to equal education outcomes, qualification or certifications.

Some learners – with and without disabilities – may choose to attend an inclusive school or educational institution away from their community to benefit from quality support and services not yet offered in their community (e.g. bilingual education, braille instruction). Because of their critical role in language acquisition for children who are deaf or deafblind, deaf schools that provide an inclusive bilingual education in a national sign language(s) (visual and tactile) must be maintained and promoted as part of an inclusive education system. Inclusive bilingual education for learners who are deaf or deafblind involves teaching using the national sign language(s) (including tactile sign language) and teaching the country's written language and the teaching of sign language and Deaf culture. Deaf schools that are not yet providing inclusive bilingual education will be supported in their transition into inclusive bilingual sign/national language schools. These bilingual schools can be open to children and youth who are deaf or deafblind and others wishing to learn and/or use sign language.

3.3 Inclusion at the core, not at the margins of education reform

While there is a large body of accumulated research on the inequalities faced by children and youth with disabilities with regard to education, many **other marginalised children and youth** face discrimination and exclusion from education. **Child poverty** can be a determinant of disability and it is just as likely a determinant of exclusion from education or access to low quality education. Likewise, **women and girls** are at a higher risk of exclusion from education and are often prevented from completing secondary school once they enter puberty. Indigenous people, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious minorities and **remote location** are also determinants of exclusion from education, as well as **child labour**. However, the greatest determinant of exclusion from education is the presence of **two or more characteristics**, such as the ones above, together. For example, poor, Aboriginal women are more likely to be excluded from education than their male counterparts.

These and other examples of addressing marginalisation and discrimination at the individual/group level while **disregarding institutional discrimination, ableism and racism** has contributed to the continued reluctance of investing in social inclusion efforts, such as inclusive education. Addressing discrimination on the basis of disability and other marginalisation as an add-on to overall existing policies and practices will keep failing a vast number of learners and deter efforts towards fulfilment of SDG4.

Too often a mainstream school that has been supported to ensure non-discrimination of children and youth with disabilities, is **mistakenly understood as an *inclusive school***. Similarly, many projects financed, planned or implemented by civil society to support schools to ensure non-discrimination of children and youth with disabilities, have been mislabelled[2] as ***inclusive education projects***. However, most of the time, they do not consider all children and youth with disabilities and may not consider the overall impact of improving the school environment for all learners. Because they have not been focused on the system or *all* children, these situations have contributed to a sense of failure, provided critics with examples of *why inclusive education does not work*, and even created strong resistance to inclusive education.

3.3.1 SDG 4 related efforts positively impact every child, whomever and wherever they are

The benefits of inclusion for both minority and majority students have long been demonstrated and are at the core of the UNCRPD and the SDGs.

The **social** benefits of inclusive education have life-long implications. Inclusive education guarantees that all children and youth in a particular community learn, play and live together and have opportunities to develop relationships and friendships that can lead to important social competencies. Inclusive education leads to more positive environments, higher social emotional outcomes, less stigma and discrimination, and more independent and self-sufficient children and youth. Belonging, language and cultural identity development, tolerance, acceptance and respect for diversity can only be fostered in inclusive settings.

Educational benefits are inevitable with an inclusive education policy and practice. A system transformation will result in higher quality of teaching/learning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Once centred on the learner and focused on improvement for all students, teaching/learning will result in an improvement of the learning outcomes and behaviours of all students. A broader aim will also impact the ways in which teachers are educated, taking into consideration a collaborative approach of mutual support. Lastly, because in an inclusive education system learner progress is measured against its own goals, all children and youth can take advantage of a broader curriculum more tailored to each individual, thus taking advantage of each learner's strengths and not focused on remedying their weaknesses.

Financial benefits can be obtained in two ways. Firstly, inclusive education that leads to inclusive employment and social inclusion will also lead to a reduction in overall poverty. As previously mentioned, the circular relationship between disability (and other minority status) and poverty can only be broken by the provision of access to, participation in and success in inclusive education. Persons who are excluded from education become a double burden on the economy: they do not contribute to the economic production of a country and are often a drain on the welfare system. Thus, the costs of providing an inclusive education system for all learners is a long-term investment that benefits society and the economy as a whole. Secondly, various large studies from UNESCO, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and others have demonstrated, since the 1990´s, that segregated education is more costly and less efficient than inclusive education. Therefore, inclusive education budgeting, by allocating resources to inclusive education settings, will generate cost savings through greater efficiencies, result in the provision of quality education, and lead to a more productive workforce.

Addressing the inclusion of marginalised learners must be the core of education reform for inclusion. It is the only way to build quality, equitable, inclusive education systems for all learners. Because patchy efforts that focus on this or that group and attempts to overcome this or that obstacle have not been successful, overcoming the *learning crisis* – by creating an inclusive education system for *all* – requires that all stakeholders come together and work with one vision to achieve one goal. History has demonstrated that if education systems do not improve overall, they will not improve for children and youth with disabilities.

Inclusive classroom in Graz, Austria (2015). Photo credit: Inclusion International

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SYSTEMS FOR QUALITY, INCLUSION AND EQUITY: IDA Vision 2030 explained in practice

4.1 Prerequisites

As both SDGs and UNCRPD imply universality, all education systems should positively impact all learners, including learners with disabilities, across any given country – **whoever and wherever they are** – to ensure that no one is left behind.

All efforts and steps towards achieving SDG 4 should be compliant with the UNCRPD and at all times comply with the double duty of:

- Immediate and continuous improvement of **non-discrimination enforcement**, including the provision of reasonable accommodation in access to schooling, participation and learning, at all levels and types of education;
- **progressive realisation** in the transformation of the entire education system towards full and effective inclusion, with comprehensive accessibility and individualised supports.

In realising SDG4 and to ensure compliance with the UNCRPD, **meaningful engagement of OPDs** at all levels of monitoring the implementation of reform efforts is required.

4.2 Eliminating barriers and ensuring access: a holistic government approach

Education of all learners – whomever and wherever they are – must be the responsibility of ministries of education, in collaboration with others. Inclusive Education is everyone's responsibility and, while under the responsibility of ministries of education or other appropriate ministry, it must be planned and provided in collaboration with other relevant ministries (such as ministries for inclusive vocational training, early childhood development, life-long learning, etc.) and equally governed whether in public, private or voluntary education settings. Currently, there are cases where children and youth with disabilities are the sole responsibility of ministries of social welfare or ministries of health and have limited access to their rights to an inclusive education. ***All* children and youth** – including children and youth with disabilities – **must be recognised as rights-bearers and must be the responsibility of all government levels and entities.**

Inclusive education is the responsibility of all and will require **wide cross-sectoral collaborations**. At a minimum, broad efforts towards inclusive education will require that multiple levels of government share the same vision (full social inclusion for all) and line ministries collaborate and enforce adequate policies both **horizontally** (e.g. ministries of finance, transport, internal administration, education, health and social

protection) and **vertically** (e.g. clear accountability mechanisms between central, regional, and local levels of government).

4.2.1 Necessary but not-sufficient conditions for inclusive education

Non-discrimination

Despite multiple instances of discrimination leading to exclusion/segregation in education, the **principle of non-discrimination** is often outlined in a country´s constitution. In addition, both the UNCRC and UNCRPD again reaffirms the right to non-discrimination. However, this is often overlooked with designing policy and programmes, particularly in countries where there is lack of accountability between levels of governance.

Enforcing the right to non-discrimination is absolutely essential for all citizens, including *all* children and youth – whomever and wherever they are. The **right to education without discrimination** is clarified in both GC4 and GC6 and makes all levels of government responsible for identifying and eliminating all structural barriers to effective participation on an equal basis with others. However, while this is a necessary right, it is not – in itself – a sufficient condition to guarantee inclusive education.

Zero Rejection policies

Likewise, the **principle of zero-rejection**, usually cited in association with non-discrimination, is a requirement of an inclusive education system, but not a guarantee of inclusion by itself. It recognises the right of *any* person, regardless of circumstance, to education. It makes specific categories of children and youth unlawful, such as those deemed *uneducable*, *unable to benefit*, *unable to access/participate*. The principle of zero-rejection is applicable to all persons – whomever and wherever they are – irrespective of disability, gender, race, ethnicity, caste, economic status, or religion, etc. In addition, the zero-rejection principle prohibits **direct and indirect exclusion**: when a child is deemed uneducable; when a student is required to take an entry exam with no accommodations or support; when children and youth with disabilities are required to have an assistant with them during the school day for access to schooling.

Reasonable accommodation

The principle of reasonable accommodation is another essential condition for inclusive education but, by itself, is not sufficient to ensure it. Often mistaken for accessibility measures and individualised support services, reasonable accommodations are a main precondition for UNCRPD implementation. **Reasonable accommodations** ensure that **students with disabilities have access to education on an equal basis with others**. Because each student has individual needs and strengths, reasonable accommodations are specific to a person, and any discussions of reasonable accommodations must include the person her/himself. Examples of reasonable accommodations can include specific arrangements made for children and youth with disabilities taking exams that are tailored specifically to the student's needs (e.g. additional time, alternative formats,

quiet rooms) and documented in an individualised educational plan. Failure to provide reasonable accommodations is discrimination on the basis of disability.

Individualised support is usually focused on the modes and means of the teaching/learning process. It is a more flexible arrangement that can be exemplified by fitting a specific lesson to a particular learning style. It differs from reasonable accommodations, which covers the set of measures necessary to ensure to children and youths with disabilities the enjoyment of their right to education on an equal basis with others.

Accessibility measures are broad in scope and ensure access and use by all. Some education-related accessibility measures can include, for example, building school facilities without mobility barriers, and availability of information, communication and teaching materials in formats other than print-only, all following the principles of Universal Design.

A deaf student, Muskan, in the Shoi Nepal Rastoiya Secondary School resource class (Nepal).
Photo credit: Kristin Snoddon/WFD and Carmelle Cachero/WFD.

4.2.2 Addressing costs related to education

The costs of inclusive education can only be addressed within the scope of addressing the cost of an education system. While it is largely agreed that inclusive education systems are more cost effective than education systems that provide parallel mainstream/special settings, governments are often reluctant to place the responsibility of inclusive education transformation within ministries of education because of perceived exponentially higher costs due to related services. In countries where children and youth with disabilities have been the responsibility of other ministries (and ministries of education have only budgeted to the mainstream population), they may be perceived as an expensive student population. However, if focus on **equity is at the core of education reform** – inclusive education – then the inclusion of all students within the same education system will require a cross-governmental sharing of resources and, in some cases, a reallocation of existing resources. This will vary from country to country and requires a thorough analysis of the existing education system and strong cross-sectoral collaboration. For example:

- ◊ Although many children and youth with disabilities are prevented from attending school due to travel and transportation concerns, it is the responsibility of the of Transportation – in collaboration with the Ministry of Education – to ensure adequate roads leading to schools;
- ◊ If more children and youth start enrolling in schools and there isn't a sufficient number of teachers, then the Ministry of Education should collaborate with the Ministry of Finance to address the need for further human resources;
- ◊ In countries where children and youth with disabilities already attend school, but in special education settings, the responsible ministries (usually Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Welfare) should devise a common plan that focuses on providing inclusive education by taking advantage of the existing resources – which might include reallocating funds and/or human resources.

As per the UNCRPD, required support services and (re)habilitation services should be available at the community level. But this cannot happen overnight. Thus, while investments are made to ensure effective national coverage, and reallocation of funds is implemented, some children and youth (and their families) may have to attend, for a limited period, facilities away from their home. In some specific cases, where determination of disability, treatment or rehabilitation are highly specialised, creative solutions must be found to provide support to children and youth and families. However, such occurrences should never lead to segregation and should always contribute to enabling children and youth and their families to live and be included in their communities.

4.3 Staying in school – decentralisation can foster inclusion

Difficulties in access to education are not only related to availability of schools, distance to school, transportation and adequate infrastructure (water and sanitation), but also access to information, particularly about the right to inclusive education. But global research also indicates that decentralised systems where decision-making has been devolved to local authorities are most likely to be able to support inclusive education that is responsive to communities (UNICEF 2012 & 2015).

However, decentralisation presents both challenges and opportunities. The challenges are usually related to the lack of coordination between the levels of governance, from central to local. In decentralised systems where inclusive education is progressing, there is a **comprehensive and consistent set of regulations**, and **adequate resource planning**, for inclusive and quality education, at the various levels of governance, with relevant vertical and horizontal accountability mechanisms. Decentralisation of the system (and a less bureaucratic burden) enable opportunities for a more responsive system of service provision that, in coordination with the education system, provides support services to children and youth and their families from an early age throughout the life cycle. In some cases, it may be important for jurisdictions to share some resources. For example, some may have specialists in one area that could be shared across jurisdictions. Decentralisation should not lead to the denial of services to children and youth with disabilities because they are located in districts with insufficient services.

Ensuring that parents – the entire population – are knowledgeable about the rights of children and youth is challenging across the globe. Despite the recent celebration of the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, many parents and families that have a child with atypical growth or development know little about their child's rights. There are often cases of parents and families that assume that because their child has an impairment or disability, they do not have the same rights as all other children. Thus, education and support to families of children and youth with disabilities and children and youth from other minority populations are essential to support enrolment and retention in school.

4.3.1 Early childhood education and care (ECEC), early identification and early identification and early intervention (EIEI) and access to (re)habilitation services

The need for parent education and support often starts even before a child is born. During pregnancy, parents can be informed of basic **rights of all children and youth** and health professionals can support referral to other services (e.g. social welfare) as needs are identified. **Early childhood education and care** are essential for all children, as 85% of the brain develops in the first 5 years of life. However, ECEC is even more critical for children from marginalised and vulnerable populations, such as children with disabilities, children from ethnic/linguistic minorities and children in poverty. ECEC is essential in identifying needs and providing support services to families, and it is also a steppingstone to ensure school-readiness and a successful childhood. For children with an impairment or an identified disability, ECEC is crucial for developing a plan of action, including its education component, and supporting families and schools to assist with a successful transition from early age to primary education placements.

Early identification and early intervention (EIEI) is a process that often occurs in the early years of life, but can take place at any time during the lifecycle. While in most countries EIEI provisions are within the health sector and focused on mother and young child health, EIEI fundamentals can be used to identify an impairment and/or disability later in life as well. EIEI is an important concept that allows for the identification of disabilities as soon as possible, and the planning and implementation of adequate interventions necessary to ensure a successful and independent life. In developing an EIEI strategy and methodology it is important to consider that service provision will be cross-sectoral and, respecting the bio-psycho-social model of disability, include services from at least three sectors: health, social protection and education (or employment).

As is the case with all other aspects of lifelong planning, **parents are essential in supporting health, EIEI and education professionals** in properly identifying and addressing difficulties or disabilities. All early identification and early intervention programmes should ensure that both professionals and parents take into account the evolving capacities of children. EIEI is essential in determining if an impairment leads to a disability and what **rehabilitation** of **habilitation** needs should be considered and planned for. While rehabilitation – relearning or adapting an existing skill – is often needed when a disability is identified later in life, habilitation – learning a needed skill – is critical to ensure children can enjoy their rights to play, learn and live with their families. Rehabilitation and habilitation are essential support services for inclusive education and will require that ministries of education partner with other ministries and with other service providers. In this case, expert instruction may facilitate access to language and the learning of specific skills, i.e. Braille, activities of daily living skills, language development and speechreading, gross and fine motor stimulation and development, and the use of adaptive software and hardware.

4.3.2 Assessing support requirements, not gatekeeping

Assessing and providing the necessary support to children and youth with disabilities is a governmental obligation as required by the UNCRPD. Provision of services requires multi-disciplinary engagement and planning for the future. However, in some countries, identification and assessment of disability continues to take place solely under the medical model of disability, with antiquated tools and methods, often leading to exclusion and segregation from mainstream services.

As discussed above, inclusive education goes beyond access to school and includes belonging, linguistic and cultural identity development, participation in learning and successfully acquiring academic and social competencies. However, access is a precondition for inclusive education; in other words, children and youth cannot participate in what they cannot access. Therefore, mechanisms currently used to identify, assess and determine disability and services needed, must focus on the provision of services – including education – in the most inclusive settings and with supported conditions. Identification and assessment of disability with provision of services for inclusive education must occur in parallel with reallocation of services from special education to inclusive environments, to avoid ongoing exclusion of students with disabilities. Thus, it is important that identification and assessment of disability take place within a child-centred methodology and by a multi-disciplinary team of people

that is focused on the most-inclusive service provision and not on perceived barriers to inclusion.

4.4 Beyond access: developing an inclusive education system's capacity to deliver

As previously mentioned, developing an inclusive education system goes well beyond providing access to mainstreaming. It requires a deep transformation of the system, which will take place in different ways depending on each country and its existing resources. The success of the process of inclusive education depends on various aspects of governance, many of which go beyond the education sector.

4.4.1 Adequate resourcing and relevant financing models supporting inclusion and equity

Financing for inclusive education is financing for equity. However, despite an urgent commitment to SDG4, most countries do not track expenditure for equity in education. The volume of an education budget is a political matter and research shows that most countries never reach the ideal of 20% of their national budgets devoted to education. External funding also contributes to education, although some studies suggest that most international funding aimed at children and youth with disabilities has arguably been used to fund special education settings and not inclusive education systems.

In addition to the volume of the budget, inclusive education requires different ways of allocating budget funds, with some models considered better than others:

INPUT	Children and youth with disabilities are allocated a specific amount of money, designed to be used in accessibility provisions. It incentivises the identification and labelling of children and youth with disabilities and results in clustering of students with particular needs in specific locations
OUTPUT	Funding is allocated according to performance of schools/teachers. It promotes competition among schools and teachers and encourages segregation and resentment of average and low achieving students
THROUGHPUT	Funds are allocated according to services needed, not students. It incentivises the clustering of students with a particular need in specific locations to make services easier to deliver

If inclusive education is to be understood as a flexible policy design and implementation, then **financing for inclusive education must also be flexible**. It should be a country-specific **combination** of input, output and throughput models. Perhaps more important, funding for inclusive education should be allocated to respond to the best interests of

persons with disabilities, creating adequate and inclusive environments as close as possible to people's own communities. Funding models should be based on existing assets (human and financial) with a view to adequately respond to the needs, strengths and aspiration of each learner.

4.4.2 Sufficient numbers of well-trained education personnel, including teachers with disabilities

Many countries have made significant investments in recruiting and training teachers. Unfortunately, teacher education programmes continue to focus on curriculum areas or grade-level standards, with little or no attention to how children learn, or how disability may affect learning. Education system reform that is at the core of inclusive education requires investing in quality education for all children and youth – including children and youth with disabilities.

As such, **it requires**:

1	teacher education that incorporates the principles of inclusive education, with opportunities to acquire equal knowledge about, and exposure to, multiple diversities in the classroom
2	pre-service and in-service teacher education and training that is child-centred, embodies the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and focuses on an individualised approach
3	knowledge, skills and competencies that respect disability as part of human diversity
4	teaching and learning methods that are based on student-strength and not on remediation
5	individuals with disabilities are recruited into teacher education programmes and provided with reasonable accommodations in order to perform their teaching roles
6	teachers working with children who are deaf are given the necessary training to be fluent in the national sign language(s) as the language of instruction
7	curriculum reforms that are centred on flexibility and individual pathways leading to the competencies needed in the 21st century

While there is a recognition that a small cadre of disability specialists (and, for children who are deaf, sign language fluent teachers) will have to support teachers and teaching, these should be a part of well-resourced national, provincial and local level support services that assist all schools and all teachers in providing inclusive and effective learning to all, including children and youth with disabilities. In addition, there should

be renewed support to persons with disabilities who wish to be teachers, so that children and youth can be exposed to knowledgeable professionals with first-hand experience with particular impairments and who can provide educated adults first-language models of sign language and enable bilingual education.

Teachers with disabilities are viewed as a part of a *win-win-win* strategy for inclusive education: They will certainly serve as role models to children and youth with and without disabilities; they are resources to the inclusion process, and act as support experts for children and youth with disabilities.

Likewise, it is equally important to promote leadership arrangements and management teams that are committed to inclusive education. While teachers are essential in the teacher-student domain, they must be supported, motivated and incentivised by knowledgeable and enthusiastic school leaders. Although school leadership is still, in many countries, a largely political position, it is important to consider that education leaders must understand the day-to-day didactic and pedagogical challenges faced by teachers, as well as the need for continued dialogue with parents and community members.

4.4.3 Relevant and responsive curriculum for inclusive education

General Comment No. 4 indicates that an inclusive education system requires a flexible curriculum. It is a transformative vision that directly impacts how schools and teachers think about and work with *all* children. Firstly, given the necessary conditions (flexibility of content and methods, support services and accommodations) *all* children and youth – whomever and wherever they are – can use **one and the same national curriculum.** For students with a visual impairment, the necessary conditions might include braille reading and writing and other elements of the expanded core curriculum (i.e., orientation and mobility, career education, sensory efficiency, assistive technology, self-determination, etc.). Secondly, a flexible curriculum needs to be responsive to individual goals and based on the assumption that **learning and assessment are a part of same circular relationship**: assessment is directly related to what has been learned and clearly indicates the pathway to new learning. Thirdly, measuring (individual) student progress has to **give consideration to the barriers they must overcome** in achieving their goals.

In addition to flexibility, the national curriculum and associated methods and materials, must be **culturally relevant** and value the school-home-community relationship. All members of a community should be reflected within the curriculum, with children and youth from marginalised groups being able to identify themselves with positive and affirmative representation within materials and activities. Particular attention should be payed to ensure that **values and messages are clear and explicit**, and take into consideration silent, hidden or invisible populations.

A curriculum that is centred on human rights education for all students should include the history of the exclusion and persecution of person with disabilities and ensure the representation of persons with disabilities in all learning materials. For students who are deaf or deafblind, the curriculum should include a comprehensive sign language curriculum (i.e., a curriculum involving the teaching of Deaf culture, history, and sign language linguistics, and tactile sign language).

Of utmost importance for children and youth with disabilities is **access to a national curriculum**. While it is globally accepted that some children and youth, such as those who are deaf, blind or deafblind , require sign language(s) (including tactile sign language) as a language of instruction or other specific means of accessing the curriculum (Braille, digital technologies, accessible infrastructure, among others), not all children and youth with disabilities require a tangible means of support. Children and youth with intellectual disabilities and others, who might need support with complex tasks and inter-personal skills will require **adapting** and expanding the national curriculum to their specific – individualised – needs.

CURRICULUM VARIANTS[4]

An **adapted** curriculum includes the same standards and expected outcomes as the national curriculum, but provides accommodations, such as Braille; to enable equitable access to and participation in the curriculum. A **modified** curriculum follows the same standards, but allows for a different set of expected outcomes to be determined, based on the individual student.

An **alternative** curriculum is a separate curriculum designed for children and youth with disabilities. It usually provides a limited amount of information and is reductive in nature, often well below grade-level and seldom age-appropriate, limiting the students' potential outcomes. These are often curricula that stress life skills, arts and crafts and/or social skills, and assume that children and youth with disabilities do not have the learning ability that an academic-focused curriculum might require.

4.4.4 Accessibility and support services for inclusive education

While human, financial and curricular resources are investments for *all* children, a few investments must be made that are specific to children and youth with disabilities. In addition to accessible environments, many children and youth with disabilities also require access to **assistive devices/technologies** (AT) and/or **Information and Communication Technologies** (ICT) in order to be able to take full advantage of education opportunities.

Again, this is an instance of a service that, while it might impact education directly, might not fall under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education alone. For example, while spectacles (i.e., glasses and corrective lenses) and magnification devices are a necessary AT for children and youth with low vision to access school, it might also be argued that they are necessary in their daily life, in and outside of school. Hearing aids are often essential for children who are hard of hearing and cochlear implants for those who are profoundly hard of hearing.

[4] Adapted from: Hunt, P. (upcoming). Global Education Monitoring Report 2020 – Background Paper – inclusive education (children with disabilities). UNESCO. Paris.

Likewise, a child with a mobility limitation who needs a wheelchair to get around will need it both in and outside of school. Provisions of this type of device would be the responsibility of a ministry or agency outside of the Ministry of Education. On the other hand, the provision of instruction in the national sign language(s), or text-to-speech devices, for example, would likely be the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Sign language learning (including in visual or tactile sign languages) for young children and their families also needs to be supported by the Ministry of Education or another appropriate ministry.

It is imperative that **AT, ICTs and other support services** be fit-for-purpose and provided to each individual, based on an Individualised Educational and/or (re)Habilitation Plan. The determination of what services and tools to provide should be made by a multi-disciplinary (and cross-sectoral) team, that can determine which institution is responsible for procuring, providing and paying for needed support services. In complex cases, it is possible that a child will require various support services to be covered by several different entities.

For example, a child with cerebral palsy might require a wheelchair and special transportation arrangements (to be provided by Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Transport), support from a speech therapist (to be provided from the Ministry of Health), and support to be provided to the teachers by a physical therapist (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education). While potentially costly in a segregated setting, these types of support services require very little financial strain when offered in an inclusive education system; but they require a strong commitment for children and youth and investment on collaboration and case-management. Assistive technologies do not replace direct instruction from qualified teachers.

4.5 Resolving the special education debate

Children and youth with disabilities have traditionally been provided access to education in segregated settings. Special (needs) education developed from a perceived failure of the education systems in providing education to all students – including children and youth with disabilities. Over time, it became an established **placement** within an education system, **rather than a service to support students** in the mainstream.

While special education has been criticised since its inception, it has also become an institutionalised form of education, with a professionalisation and apparatus that parallels regular education. Thus, special education has been identified as an obstacle to inclusive education implementation and resistance to dismantling this shadow system has often resulted in integration rather than inclusion.

Although in most low-income countries children and youth with disabilities are completely excluded from education, in most middle and high-income countries, segregated settings such as the ones below are the norm.

IN RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS usually under the umbrella of the Ministry of Social Welfare, children and youth with intellectual disabilities attend health treatment (and often education/leisure programmes of a remedial nature) for long periods of time, often away from their families, with little to no focus on academic competencies. Enrolment in a residential institution often leads to transition into a residential setting for adults with disabilities;

SPECIALISED SCHOOLS under the umbrella of ministries of education, either boarding or day settings, are geared towards the perceived needs of children and youth with a particular impairment (e.g. schools for persons who are blind, etc.). These specialised schools may follow standard academic curricula, but also focus on therapeutic and remedial educational skills, depending on the needs of their students;

SPECIAL CLASSES are similar to special schools, but on a smaller scale and usually within the building of a regular school. Despite proximity, children and youth in special classes have little to no interactions with students without disabilities except, perhaps, in non-academic classes (e.g. art, music, physical education);

RESOURCE CLASSES are special classes in regular schools, often staffed with special education personnel, where children and youth with all types of disabilities can access behavioural or academic support not provided in the regular classroom. Although they are sometimes intended as a short-term support to children and youth with disabilities, many children and youth spend the majority of their school day in the resource class, and only interact with children and youth without disabilities during non-academic periods.

***NOTE**: as stated above, inclusive bilingual sign language schools are not considered specialised schools as described here.)*

4.5.1 Phasing out segregated special educational settings

With the advent of SDG4 and the need to comply with UNCRPD Article 24, special education is, to a certain extent, already engaged in transformation. However, it can be argued that these efforts are not aligned with GC4 because they are not occurring within the spirit of whole-system collaboration.

One way in which *transformation* is taking place is by **converting specialised schools into resource centres**. In some countries, special schools are placing some/all of their students in mainstream schools and creating resource centres where their existing staff can support community schools to ensure services. In addition, resource centres will be responsible for identification and certification of children and youth with disabilities, as well as training of professionals for regular schools.

Phasing out special education settings is a precondition for inclusive education. By definition alone, it is not possible to have special education settings and inclusion within the same system. Inclusion is not a placement, but rather an experience. However, this

will also require a cross-sectoral approach to planning and implementation, one that requires two seemingly opposed philosophies to come together with one goal: inclusion.

Phasing out special education settings is going to require civil society to engage with education systems in different ways, to support new practices. In particular, OPDs will have new roles to play within schools (and systems): becoming advisors, providing expert advice to professionals; becoming mentors and role-models for children and youth with disabilities – thus, supporting regular schools to welcome and ensure the participation of children and youth with disabilities.

OPDs of deaf people should be included in policy and planning at all levels to facilitate language access to children who are deaf, and as expert advisors on standards for quality bilingual education in the national sign language(s) and regular assessors of the language competencies of teachers who work with these children. OPDs related to physical limitations can engage at all levels of government and become advisors on accessibility.

OPDs related to persons with sensory disabilities are experts on assistive technologies, alternative communications and ICTs that can support ministries of education with procurement and utilisation of needed technologies. OPDs of persons with psycho-social disabilities can engage with both education and social welfare professionals to provide psycho-social support in and outside of schools. OPDs of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families can support curriculum writers and classroom teachers in identifying the best accommodations for children and youth with intellectual disabilities who need them. In short, persons with disabilities and their families are the best placed advisors for a system transformation that places children and youth with disabilities – and UNCRPD commitments – at the core of reform.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 – *ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all* – in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it is imperative that one common understanding of inclusive education be reached.

In this regard, IDA welcomes UNESCO's 2020 Global Education Monitor Report (GEMR), which emphasises learner diversity not as a problem, but as an opportunity and endorses its ten key recommendations. Specifically, speaking as an authoritative voice of the disability rights movement at the global level, IDA promotes this important ideal:

> **In an inclusive education system, all learners with and without disabilities learn together in classes in their community schools. They receive the support they need, from pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational education, in inclusive and accessible schools. Some learners, both with and without disabilities, may choose to attend schools outside of their local communities in order to benefit from quality bilingual sign language schools, to acquire specific skills and knowledge, or to get specific support that is not yet available in their community schools. But these settings must also be inclusive settings.**

An inclusive education system is geared to foster equity, quality and inclusion. Inclusive education is the means by with each and every learner, regardless of their ability, identity or background, will access and participate in quality education, on an equitable basis. **IDA´s vision of inclusive education is incompatible with a system of segregated education**. Therefore, special schools and other segregated settings are to be progressively phased out, with key human resources and knowledge assets converted into support services for inclusion. Because of their importance in language acquisition for children and youth who are deaf, schools for persons who are deaf need to be supported to become inclusive bilingual sign language schools. In the same light, because of their importance for reading and writing in non-print modalities, specialised schools for blind and children with low vision must also be considered short- and long-term instructional settings and supported to become inclusive through community engagement and interaction

The renewed commitment to inclusive education and SDG4 requires a combined effort of all stakeholders speaking with one voice. The recommendations below are those that IDA deems **essential and urgent** to the implementation of inclusive education for all learners, including children and youth with disabilities.

TO GOVERNMENTS

1. Whether managed by the public or private sectors, all education facilities must be regulated by ministries of Education or relevant ministries for inclusive vocational training, early childhood development and life-long learning.
2. Non-discrimination policies, Zero Rejection policies, and reasonable accommodations – as defined in the UNCRPD – must be enforced across the country and at all levels of the system.

3 Significant investments (human, social and financial) must be made in:

a) recruiting and training qualified teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who can provide inclusive and quality learning for all learners;

b) ensuring accessibility of all education facilities, teaching and learning materials, curricular and extra-curricular activities;

c) providing assistive products and technology, and the training thereof;

d) ensuring support services at all levels, including in engaging parents and the community, to assist all schools in providing quality and inclusive learning for all.

4 Teacher education and curriculum reforms must foster the principles of Universal Design for Learning, including equal access and participation in learning and assessment. Ministries of Education must engage in the planning, design and implementation of a single, flexible, national curriculum that recognises the diversity of the country and encourages an individualised learning approach that is fit-for-purpose.

5 A diversity of languages – including national sign languages and tactile sign languages – and modes of communication must be used throughout the system (with teachers who have full fluency).

6 Data must be consistently collected, disaggregated to the extent possible by disability type, and analysed to ensure adequate monitoring and resourcing of inclusive and equitable quality education.

7 In decentralised systems, a consistent set of regulations, accountability mechanisms and resource planning for inclusive education at the different levels of government must be ensured.

8 Communities, families, parents and students themselves must be active participants in monitoring and evaluation activities. Education reform with a view to equitable participation requires governments and professionals to actively engage at the community level, in order to determine the strengths of each community and their preferences. Meaningful consultation and engagement with communities, families and parents is essential to the fruitful realisation of SDG4.

TO CIVIL SOCIETY

1 OPDs must assume new roles within communities, schools and systems and become advisors, professional experts in specific disabilities, becoming mentors and role models to children and youth with disabilities. All OPDs have a role to play in policy development, accessibility advisory, effective implementation, teacher preparation, parent support, providing psycho-social support, etc. Persons with disabilities and their families are the best placed advisors for a system transformation that places children and youth with disabilities – and CRPD commitments – at the core of reform.

2 Donors and external funding sources to INGOs comply with SDG4 and the CRPD by making all available funds contingent on disability-inclusive provisions. In addition, governments ensure all INGOs have an opportunity to actively and purposefully engage in reform efforts but continue leading in the provision of adequate and inclusive services. All INGOs must pledge their support to the design and implementation of inclusive education systems.

CONCLUSION

Education is key to transforming societies and creating equal opportunities in which all can actively participate. Agreeing on what an equitable, quality, inclusive education system looks like is an essential step towards ensuring that all education systems positively impact all learners, including all learners with disabilities, across any given country – whoever and wherever they are – to ensure that no one is left behind.

With this report, the International Disability Alliance reflects on the outcomes of the first phase of its Inclusive Education flagship initiative, which took a lot of time, with challenging and constructive debates and dialogues, in order to produce a clear and commonly agreed position from the disability rights movement. This contribution is essential to guide and ensure that the transformations required towards an inclusive education sector leave no learner with disabilities behind.

IDA welcomes the increased global attention given to inclusive education, including through the 2020 Global Education Monitor report. Much remains to be done. With this report, IDA wishes to provide recommendations for action, as well as a tool for organisations of persons with disabilities to use to actively engage in advocating for the rights of all learners with disabilities. IDA will pursue the work undertaken through this report, to enrich, further develop and/or illustrate components of this report with additional evidence, such as case studies, experiences from a wide range of learners with disabilities and their diversity in terms of regions, disabilities, gender, ethnicity and other identity factors. The second phase of the IDA Inclusive Education Flagship initiative will support this, as well as efforts to disseminate, explain, train and advocate all concerned stakeholders on the key messages entailed in this report. Members, partners and allies are welcome to take up this challenge jointly, to demonstrate that learner diversity is an opportunity, and to effectively advance the rights of all learners.

IDA and its members are particularly grateful to Paula Frederica Hunt and Alexandre Cote for the expertise, insightful contributions and unwavering support they provided to this process.

Inclusive classroom in Kampala, Uganda (2009). Photo credit: Inclusion International

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ANNEX

In this Annex, the **four** global members of the International Disability Alliance **who formed the Inclusive Education task team working on this report** briefly outline key points in the development of inclusive education for learners from their constituencies, **as guidance to policymakers and educators**. **Concerned** IDA member organisation can be contacted for more information. **The next phase of the IDA Inclusive Education flagship will aim to further enrich and expand this work with the perspectives of the wider disability rights movement, reflecting the diversity of its constituencies on this important work developed from a commonly-endorsed policy.**

Inclusive bilingual education for children and youth who are deaf and other sign language users

Children who are deaf present a unique case due to the intersection of their language and education rights; and being at risk of language deprivation syndrome, a set of disorders associated with not having unfettered access to language. Language rights are realised by ensuring opportunities to acquire and learn the language from native-level speakers and in language rich environments from birth and throughout their schooling and life. These environments have people of diverse ages and roles who are fluent in the language, providing opportunities for the acquisition and ongoing development of language skills. Early intervention services for children who are deaf must recognise the child's right to language and their acquisition of language necessitates the provision of sign language (visual and tactile) teaching to the family and supporting the child and family to participate in sign-language rich environments. Thus, realising the right to education for children who are deaf necessitates recognition and ongoing realisation of their language rights within the inclusive education system. This also includes their right to fully develop their cultural and linguistic identity, per UNCRPD Art. 30.

The inclusive education experience for children who are deaf provides for their right to language and their right to education concurrently. This is achieved in quality bilingual schools and other educational settings teaching in the national sign language(s) and the national written language(s). These quality bilingual teaching environments are part of the inclusive education system, teaching children who are deaf and other children who wish to be taught through the national sign language. Many countries around the world have schools for learners who are deaf; these settings should not be phased out but be supported in their transformation into inclusive bilingual schools in the national sign language(s) and national written language(s).

Quality inclusive education for children who are deaf must contain all the elements listed here:

1. Early acquisition and ongoing learning of the national sign language(s) in language rich environments provided to the child who is deaf and their family from the time of identification of the child being deaf and throughout their school years;
2. Education, including ECEC and schools for children who are deaf or deafblind is provided in quality bilingual sign language schools and educational settings that:

a) Provide quality education in the national sign language(s) and the national written language(s);

b) Provide sign-language rich environments that bring together sign-language fluent role models, including peers who are deaf or deafblind, teachers who are deaf and other children and education personnel fluent in sign languages, including tactile sign languages;

c) Follow the national inclusive education curriculum with an additional teaching curriculum that teaches sign language and Deaf culture;

d) Foster, respect and celebrate the cultural and linguistic identity of children who are deaf or deafblind;

e) Provide teachers who are deaf and/or teachers fluent in the national sign language(s), thus ensuring a natural language environment and pedagogy that meets the needs of multilingual students;

f) Provide sign language teaching materials and resources.

3. People who are deaf or deafblind can equitably access teacher training programmes and do not experience barriers to becoming qualified and registered teachers.

Inclusive Education provisions for learners with visual impairments

The following education provisions are considered by WBU and the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) as essential to ensuring that learners with visual impairments acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to reach their full potential and to prepare them for further learning, independence and economic self-sufficiency. Implementation of appropriate measures to ensure provision of the required financial, human and physical resources for the full and equitable inclusion in education of learners with blindness and low vision, in accordance with Article 24(3) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

1. Provision of quality educational services and programmes that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students with visual impairment from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds. Service and programme provision may include the following:

   a. Provision of individualised, disability-specific adjustments and modifications to the curriculum, assessments and examinations, teaching methods and the educational environment. Alternate methods of assessment must be devised to assess the performance of learners, where existing assessment techniques are inappropriate.

   b. Provision of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) in addition to the academic (or “core”) curriculum. The ECC addresses the disability-specific skills, access to information, sensory efficiency, assistive technology, orientation and mobility, independent living, social interaction, recreation and leisure, career education, and self-determination.

   c. Provision of technology, equipment and low vision devices in accordance with assessed learning needs; and

d. Provision of accessible information in the learner's preferred format (braille, large print, audio, electronic), including textbooks and learning materials, and assessment and examination materials.

2. Provision of early intervention and early childhood care and education (ECCE) services and programmes that address the developmental needs of young children with visual impairment, their parents and families and community members; and provision of health and allied services for families and carers to ensure the early identification of childhood visual impairment and referral to appropriate education services.
3. Recruitment and training of the required number of qualified teachers who are skilled in teaching learners with visual impairment. Pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes are essential to ensure that class and specialist teachers are fully equipped to deliver quality inclusive education programmes for learners with blindness, low vision, deaf-blindness or additional disabilities.
4. Incorporation of gender perspectives and initiatives to ensure that girls and young women with visual impairment have equitable access to quality education services and programmes on the same basis as their male peers.
5. Empowerment and participation of persons with visual impairment through recruitment and training for such positions as educators, education advisors or consultants.

ICEVI and WBU assure governments of full support in establishing education systems, services and programmes that ensure inclusivity of learners with visual impairment. This includes support with professional advice, advocacy, teacher training and technical assistance.

Education provisions for learners with intellectual disabilities

For learners with intellectual disabilities, the most important provisions relate to systemic changes required with regard to law and policy, school practices and classroom practices, recognising that reference to disability does not reveal learning needs and strengths.

1. With regard to l**aw and policy:** it is imperative that mechanisms for appeal and accountability exist so that families can challenge discriminatory practice.
2. With regard to **school practices**: schools need to foster a culture of respect, cooperation and inclusion amongst all staff and students. Teachers receive training and support to plan and deliver instruction to all students. Collaboration and problem solving are part of the school culture. Educational assistants and specialised material and technology is provided when it is needed.
3. With regard to **classroom practices:** teachers must be supported and prepared to accommodate the needs of every student, either through universal design for learning or through adjustments and accommodations to meet individual needs. Teachers need to:
   a) differentiate lessons so that all students can participate;
   b) set appropriate expectations for students depending on their unique learning needs;
   c) develop individualised learning plans with achievable goals;
   d) use appropriate assessment approaches for each student;
   e) promote cooperative learning by grouping students for different lessons;
   f) encourage peer support for all students.

Inclusive education provisions for children and youth who are hard of hearing

Inclusive education for students who are hard of hearing means that all levels of education should be accessible. The following elements contribute to achieving equality of opportunity and equity of outcome.

 **LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**	It is critical to maximise opportunities for language development as early as possible. To accomplish this, students require specialised instruction, tutors, and assistive listening devices. It is also essential to promote the development of alternative communication methods, which might include sign language, gestures, drawings, images, pictographs, electronic communication aids, etc.
 **BARRIER-FREE ENVIRONMENTS**	A barrier-free learning environment means an optimum acoustical environment to maximise speech intelligibility in the classroom. This can be accomplished by reducing background noise and sound reverberations. Sound-absorbing materials such as window curtains, carpets, fabric on the furniture, ceilings and wall panels that absorb sound will help reduce echoes.
 **TECHNOLOGY**	Students require hearing aids or cochlear implants to facilitate their hearing. Technical equipment such as induction loops, FM equipment and infrared systems often help students to maximise their hearing in the classroom.
 **CAPTIONING**	The use of captioning or speech-to-text technology should be available in the classroom so as to provide visual access to information. Also, videotapes, films and other audio-visual materials should be captioned.
 **SUPPORT SERVICES**	Students should have regular access to support services, including notetakers and tutors.
 **SOCIAL INTERACTION**	Children and youth need opportunities to interact with other peers with a hearing loss. For their interaction with peers who are hard of hearing may require interpreters, captionists, alternative communication methods and assistive listening devices.
 **TEACHERS**	Teachers should emphasise the visual in instructing students who are hard of hearing and should adopt effective communication strategies such as speaking at a regular rate with face and lips clearly visible to students.