EQUAL RIGHT

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Inclusive Education For Children With Disabilities

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR
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HANDICAP
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Acknowledgements

Contents

GLOSSARY

CBR	Community Based Rehabitation
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DPO	Disabled People's Organsations
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product

GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
ICT	Information Communication Technology
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UIS	UNESCO Institute of Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UPE	Universal Primary Education

Executive Summary

The estimated 1 billion people who live with a disability face a multitude of barriers to participating equally in society. In particular, their right to education is often not realised, which in turn hinders their access to other rights and creates enormous obstacles to reaching their potential and effectively participating in their communities.

Globally, an estimated 93 million children – or 1 in 20 of those aged up to 14 years of age – live with a moderate or severe disability. In most low- and middle-income countries, children with disabilities are more likely to be out of school than any other group of children. Children with disabilities have very low rates of initial enrolment. Even if they do attend school, children living with disabilities are often more likely to drop out and leave school early. In some countries, having a disability can more than double the chance of a child not being in school, compared to their non-disabled peers. In Burkina Faso, having a disability increases the risk of children being out of school by two and a half times. It is, therefore, unsurprising that in many countries children with disabilities make up the vast majority of those out of school. For example, in Nepal, it is estimated that 85% of all children out-of-school are disabled.

For those children with disabilities who actually manage to enter classrooms, the quality and form of schooling received – often in segregated schools – can act to powerfully compound exclusion from the mainstream and confirm pre-existing societal notions about disability.

Tackling this severe discrimination is a matter of urgency on several counts. Firstly, this denial of the right to education robs children of the future benefits of an education and the opportunity to access other rights – for example, by limiting employment opportunities or participation in civic affairs later in life. It restricts full participation in society, exacerbating exclusion, and can limit a person's chance of escaping poverty. Far too often, exclusion from the classroom marks the beginning of a lifetime of exclusion from mainstream society. This and other barriers faced by people living with disabilities means they are usually among the poorest of the poor.

A lack of focus on educating disabled children is also impacting on the chances of delivering on the international promise to achieve universal primary education – a globally-agreed target set out in the Education For All and Millennium Development Goals. As most low- and middle-income countries have massively expanded access, the gap between the 'majority' now in school, and the 'forgotten minorities', is becoming increasingly pronounced – leaving some (including millions of children with disabilities) ever more marginalised, excluded and on the peripheries of society. For example, in Bolivia, it is estimated that 95% of the population aged 6 to 11 years are in school, while only 38% of children with disabilities are.

When a disabled child does get the opportunity to receive a quality education, doors are opened. This enables them to secure other rights throughout their lifetime, fostering better access to jobs, health and other services. For education to play this role as 'an enabling right', it must be of high quality, available equitably, built to tackle discrimination and allow each child to flourish according to their own talents and interests.

In recent years, human rights frameworks have begun to inform a vision for delivering on the right to education for disabled children, and articulating what this might look in practice. The 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was a milestone in this regard. The CRPD established inclusive education as the key mechanism to deliver the right to education for disabled children. Inclusive education systems can be defined as all children learning together in mainstream classrooms in their locality or community, irrespective of the different range of abilities and disabilities, with teaching methods, materials and school environments that address the needs of all girls and boys. Inclusive education systems are grounded in a rights-based analysis, which can empower learners, celebrate diversity, combat discrimination and promote more inclusive societies. This can be a powerful tool in addressing inequalities. It can also tackle discrimination by challenging widely-held attitudes and behaviours – helping us to celebrate and embrace the diversity in our societies.

Furthermore, the creation of inclusive education systems is fundamental to achieving better quality in education and realising the human rights of all children. Inclusive education can raise the quality bar across education systems, by using strategies that cater for naturally diverse learning styles of all students, whilst accommodating the specific learning needs of some students. They also serve to target and include other marginalised groups of children, helping to ensure inclusion for all.

However, the current challenges faced by children with disabilities in realising their right to education remain profound. But there is an increasingly clear set of areas of action for governments, donors and the international community. This report synthesises current evidence on the policy responses which can help bring down the common barriers faced by disabled children in gaining a quality education, across seven inter-dependent strategies – from the family, local communities and national government, through to the international community.

Strategy 1

Create appropriate legislative frameworks, and set out ambitious national plans for inclusion.

There is often a lack of national legislation, policy, targets and plans for inclusive education of disabled children. Adopting appropriate legislation and developing policies or national plans of action are important starting points to achieve inclusion for all. Overall, there is a lack of information for governments about how to translate international standards, such as Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, into practice. Few countries have ambitious inclusive education plans for educating all children with disabilities, as part of their education sector strategy.

Strategy 2

Provide the capacity, resources and leadership to implement ambitious national plans on inclusion.

Even when governments do have national policies or legislation in place, progress is uneven and, overall, implementing laws and policies is proving to be difficult. Too often, governments express a commitment to inclusive education but fail to implement concrete policies, plans and strategies, or measure progress. Few countries – if any – commit sufficient amounts to deliver inclusive education for all. Where finances are available, they are not being spent in the most cost-effective way, with funds being ineffectively channelled towards a few children in segregated schools, rather than being more equitably utilised through inclusive education strategies which improve quality for all. Governments and donors must increase financing for inclusion, while ensuring that financing is spent equitably and effectively.

Strategy 3

Improve data on disability and education, and build accountability for action.

A substantial problem faced in realising the rights of disabled people, and for disabled children in particular, is a vast disability data hole. The world's knowledge of the general status of children living with disabilities and their educational opportunities is shamefully scant. Information is often speculative or outdated. A lack of reliable and consistent data at national level feeds a lack of clarity internationally and is too inconsistent to provide accurate global figures. This leaves children with disabilities, and their educational needs, invisible to policy makers. This means that setting realistic plans, with meaningful targets and monitoring cannot be supported due to a severe lack of reliable data on the degree of exclusion from education faced by children with disabilities. In order to plan and monitor effectively, governments must have reliable data which enables them to set bold, yet realistic, targets and then measure them.

Strategy 4

Make schools and classrooms accessible and relevant for all.

Common school- and classroom-based barriers which impact on children with disabilities being able to get an education include a lack of accessible or appropriate equipment and learning materials. Inaccessible infrastructure can also act as a physical barrier. Providing government regulations on school buildings and revising curricula can help make schools and classrooms accessible and relevant for all.

Strategy 5

Ensure there are enough appropriately trained teachers for all.

Teachers are the most important factor in determining the quality of education a child receives. Successful inclusion requires sufficient teachers, adequately prepared and trained, and who are supported to work in inclusive ways, with specialist teaching support where necessary. Ensuring that people with disabilities can become teachers can both bring in specialist skills and understanding, and can make a strong contribution to reducing discrimination, giving all children role models of inclusion.

Strategy 6

Challenge attitudes which reinforce and sustain discrimination.

Social attitudes are a powerful driver of the marginalisation of disabled children in and from education. Negative attitudes towards disabled children's abilities and capacity to contribute to society can profoundly influence the chances they have of going to any school. Even when education is offered, the widely held belief that 'special' schools are the most viable option limits chances of going to mainstream local schools. Broad public awareness campaigns are needed to tackle these attitudes, at various levels.

Strategy 7

Create an enabling environment to support inclusive education, including through cross-sectoral policies and strategies that reduce exclusion.

It is also clear that while inclusive education systems can help schools to adapt to the needs of children living with disabilities, this must be coupled with interventions which seek to target broader social, cultural or economic barriers faced by children living with a disability. This could include community-based rehabilitation, social protection schemes or health interventions.

Inclusive education systems, grounded in a rights-based analysis, must no longer be seen as a marginal policy issue, but as central to the achievement of high-quality education for all learners, and the development of more inclusive societies. The world has to act now to halt the severe marginalisation of disabled children from education.

We have to ensure that a lack of appropriate education is not the catalyst for a lifetime of exclusion, poverty and injustice for the millions of children living with a disability. The tide is certainly beginning to turn, but it needs to move faster and with greater urgency towards action. According to the seven strategic areas outlined in this report, the Global Campaign for Education calls on governments to take action on a number of priority policy areas.

National Governments must:

Strategy 1

Create appropriate legislative frameworks, and set out ambitious national plans for inclusion.

- All governments must ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Abolish legislative or constitutional barriers to disabled people being included in mainstream education systems.
- Develop ambitious yet realistic and time-bound inclusive education plans, within the overall education sector plan.
- Involve disabled people and organisations in planning and monitoring education plans, at all levels.

Strategy 2

Provide the capacity, resources and leadership to implement ambitious national plans on inclusion.

- Allocate at least 20% of national budgets to education, and ensure at least 50% is dedicated to basic education.
- Ensure a time-bound and costed inclusive education implementation plan, with sufficient and specifically allocated resources.
- Ensure the Ministry of Education has the primary responsibility for the education of disabled children, with different levels of responsibilities clearly outlined across the whole education system, backed by high-level political leadership.
- Invest in improving the knowledge and capacity of local and national government institutions, in order for them to deliver on inclusive education (from decentralised local education authorities responsible for education planning, through to policy makers in the Education Ministry).

Strategy 3

Improve data on disability and education, and build accountability for action.

- Ensure education data is disaggregated by disability and gender, and that it tracks both enrolment and retention (including in different schools, such as segregated or mainstream).
- Ensure effective collection and analysis of data to improve planning and monitoring.

Strategy 4

Make schools and classrooms accessible and relevant for all.

- Develop and enforce accessible school building regulations.
- Provide accessible materials and assistive technology to support learning.
- Ensure that curricula are able to better adapt to a diversity of needs.
- Develop national guidelines to support inclusive education, such as guidelines on curriculum adaptation, or screening, identifying and addressing support needs.

Strategy 5

Ensure enough appropriately trained teachers for all.

- Reduce teacher-pupil ratios, so that teachers can focus on individual learners' needs.
- Ensure adequate pre-service and in-service training in inclusive education.
- Ensure that adequate support material and expertise in disability specific skills are available.
- Ensure 'special' education teachers become resources to assist mainstream schools.
- Promote the training and recruitment of teachers with disabilities.

Strategy 6

Challenge attitudes which reinforce and sustain discrimination.

- Tackle the attitudes which keep children with disabilities out of schools by launching an awareness programme among parents, children, communities, schools and within the public sector.

Strategy 7

Create an enabling environment to support inclusive education, including through cross-sectoral policies and strategies that reduce exclusion.

- Bring in additional polices and resources to support children with disabilities to go to school, i.e. social protection schemes, Community Based Rehabilitation Programmes, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) or health programmes.

These strategies must be supported by bi-lateral donors and the international community through development cooperation.

Bi-lateral donors must:

- Meet the long-standing commitment to allocate 0.7% of GNI to aid, and allocate at least 10% of aid budgets to basic education.
- Ensure that aid supporting inclusive education, or targets that reduce disabled children's exclusion, are commensurate with the needs and gaps for meeting the EFA and MDG targets.
- Ensure that education programmes, plans and policies make supporting inclusive education central to development assistance.
- Ensure that aid supports the scaling-up of national plans and does not add to fragmented and small scale efforts on inclusive education.
- Ensure that donor agency staff have the capacity to implement plans.
- Strengthen the capacity of partner governments to address inclusion.

The international community must:

- Build clear and measurable global targets for inclusive education and disability into the post-2015 agenda, ensuring that inclusive education is explicitly referenced. Prioritise the development of reliable data collection on education and disability to enhance tracking and monitoring of progress on post 2015 goals.
- The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) must become a champion of more inclusive education for children with disabilities. This should include ensuring sufficient expertise within the country support teams; the production of guidelines that could help improve inclusion, including guidelines to support improved data collection; and the mainstreaming of inclusive education perspectives into assessment processes.

1 The state of education for disabled children

Box 1. Understanding disability

The so-called 'social model' of disability sees people living with disabilities as full members of society who have important contributions to make to their families and communities. According to the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC): "The social model of disability, combined with a rights-based approach:(i) recognizes persons with disabilities as rights-holders who should determine the course of their lives to the same extent as any member of society; and (ii) defines limitations imposed by the social and physical environment as infringements on people's rights." This contrasts with older 'medical models' of disability, which viewed those with disabilities as having a condition that set them apart from the rest of society.

Of course, 'disability' is a generic term covering a multitude of different circumstances. A child who has lost a limb will face very different education-related challenges from children who are partially sighted, or, say, a severely autistic child. Impairments that affect the capacity to communicate and interact in ways common in mainstream schools can impose particularly high obstacles to participation in education. In the scope of this report, it is difficult to effectively reflect the likely different educational experiences of children living with different impairments. Clearly more work and understanding must be built to ensure that education systems respond effectively to different needs.

Source: IDDC's 2005 "Inclusive Development and the Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities". Available at http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/ahc5docs/ahc5iddc.doc.

The estimated 1 billion people who live with a disability – comprising approximately 15% of the global population – face a multitude of barriers to participating equally in society. In particular, their right to education is often not realised, which in turn hinders their access to other rights and creates enormous obstacles in reaching their potential and effectively participating in their communities.

Globally, 93 million children – or 1 in 20 of those aged up to 14 years of age – live with a moderate or severe disability.[1] The concentration of children living with either a moderate or severe disability[2] is higher in low- and middle-income countries than in rich countries, and is highest in sub-Saharan Africa.[3] As noted by the 2011 monitoring report of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children with disabilities are "one of the most marginalized and excluded groups in respect of education."[4]

There is very little accurate information available on the extent and nature of disability among children globally – and even less on the degree of exclusion from education faced by children with disabilities.

However, the data that is available undeniably shows that disabled children have far poorer educational opportunities, compared to non-disabled peers.[5] For example, the 2004 World Health Survey found that respondents with a disability had significantly lower rates of primary school completion and on average fewer years of education than respondents without a disability.[6]

At national level, while situations and ways of measuring vary greatly, it is clear that children with disabilities have a far greater chance of being out of school than their non-disabled peers. A disability can more than double the chance of a child not being in school in some countries.[7] In Malawi and Tanzania, for example, a child with a disability is twice as likely to have never attended school as a child without a disability.[8] In Burkina Faso, having a disability increases the risk of children being out of school by two and a half times.[9] In Bolivia it is estimated that 95% of the population aged 6 to 11 years are in school, while only 38% of children with disabilities are – more than doubling the chances of not being in school.[10]

A World Bank analysis of data from 14 household surveys found that the gap in primary school attendance rates between disabled and non-disabled children ranges from 10 percentage points in India to close to 60 percentage points in Indonesia. For secondary education, this ranged from 15 percentage points in Cambodia to 58 in Indonesia (see Figure 1 for a comparison across

countries). The report noted that "the [schooling] deficit associated with disability is clearly large compared with other sources of inequality." [11]

Even if they do attend school, children with disabilities are far more likely than their non-disabled peers to leave school early.[12] In Tanzania, children with disabilities who attended primary school progressed to higher levels of education at only half the rate of children without disabilities.[13]

Overall, even in countries with high primary school enrolment rates, disabled children are more likely to drop out of school than any other vulnerable group, including girls, those living in rural areas or low-income children.[14] Unsurprisingly, children with disabilities often make up the vast majority of those out of school. For instance, in Nepal, almost 6% of school-age children are out of school. Of these, an estimated 85% are children with disabilities. [15]

Figure 1.

Proportion of children aged 6–11 years with and without a disability who are in school

Source: Filmer D. Disability, poverty, and schooling in developing countries: results from 14 household surveys. The World Bank Economic Review, 2008
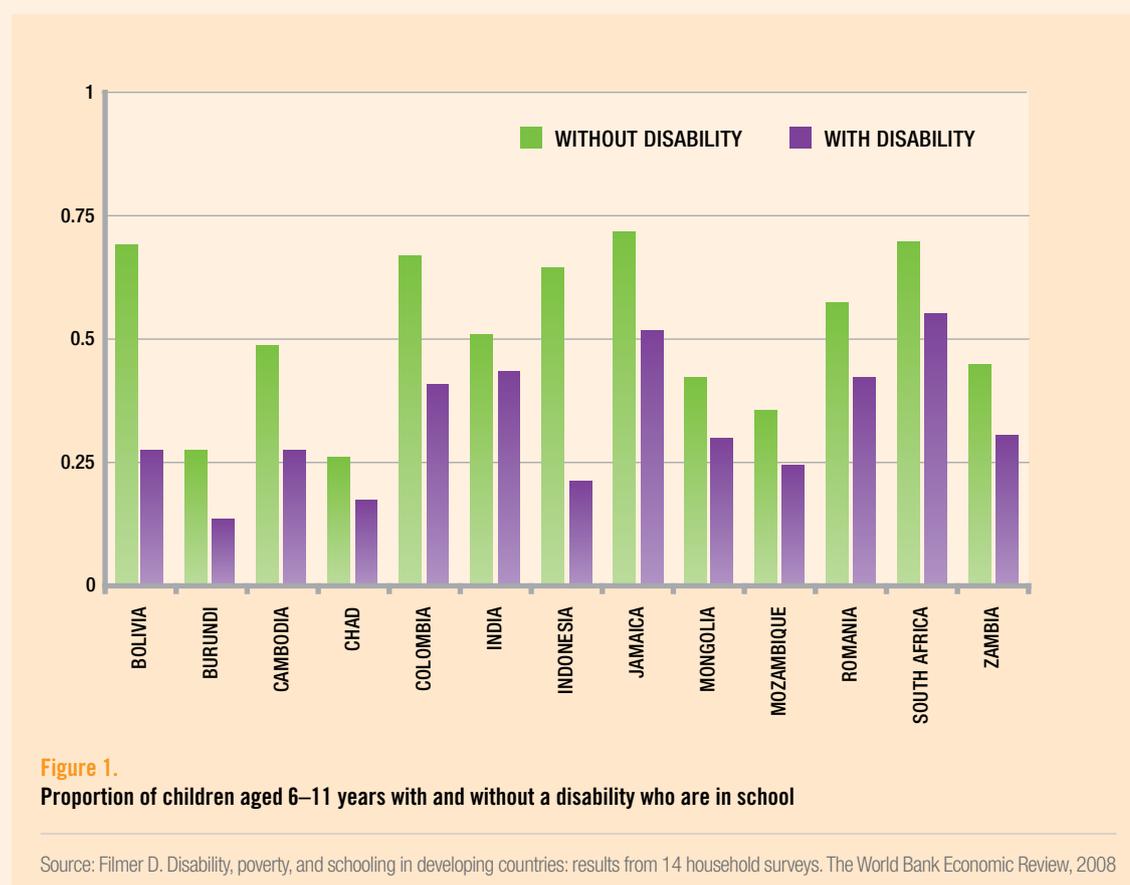
The exclusion related to disability can, moreover, be compounded by other sources of discrimination and marginalisation, such as gender. It is clear that disabled girls fare even worse than boys. In Malawi one study showed that more girls with disabilities have never attended school compared to boys with disabilities.[16] This translates into lower literacy rates as adults: for instance, national statistics in Ghana show that the literacy rate for non-disabled adults

stands at 70%, which reduces to 56% for adults living with disabilities, and this drops to just 47% for women with disabilities.[17]

Finally, even if disabled children actually manage to go to school, the quality and form of schooling received – often in segregated schools – can act to powerfully compound exclusion from the mainstream and confirm pre-existing societal notions about disability.

Box 2. Data gaps and their importance for policy making

The world's knowledge of the general status of children living with disabilities and their educational opportunities is shamefully scant.[18] Information is often speculative or outdated, and national data is too inconsistent to yield global figures.[19] A lack of reliable data at national levels feeds into a lack of clarity internationally, with globally comparable data on disability notoriously difficult to obtain.[20]

This scarcity of information on disability is due historically to a complex interplay of political, social, technical and practical factors, which makes collecting robust and accurate national data, which is comparable across different countries, very difficult.

A lack of political focus on disability by governments (and other policy makers) has given little impetus for collecting data – and has helped to allow the other problems outlined here to continue.

This can be compounded by social attitudes towards reporting disabled children. In some countries, families raising children with disabilities face ostracism, due to cultural beliefs (for example, in some cultures disability is seen as a form of 'punishment' for wrong doing). Because of this, families are often reluctant to report that a child of theirs has a disability.

Technical problems include differing definitions, classifications and categorisations of disability, which hamper efforts to get accurate and globally comparable data on children and adults with disabilities. Cross-country comparable data is thwarted right from the start by different definitions of disability across countries, based on the importance given to the different aspects of disability.

Practical difficulties – such as ensuring enough household surveys are carried out in rural areas by trained enumerators who can identify families with disabled children – can mean lower reported prevalence rates of disability.

This can lead to lower reporting than would be expected in many low- and middle- income countries, with rates often as low as 1% or 2%.[21] It can also lead to starkly differing estimates of childhood disability prevalence from countries which would be expected to have similar levels – for example, 3% for Chad compared to 48% for the neighbouring Central African Republic[22] (even though both are conflict-affected). Often, countries reporting low disability prevalence tend to collect disability data through censuses or have a focus on a narrow set of impairments, or simply ask questions like 'Are you disabled?'.

Countries reporting higher disability prevalence tend to collect their data through surveys and apply a measurement approach that records activity limitations and participation restrictions in addition to impairments.[23] These more robust approaches are beginning to address historically low reporting rates in some countries. For example, the 1991 Brazilian census reported only a 1% to 2% disability rate, but the 2001 census, using an improved approach, recorded a 14.5% disability rate.[24] This is important to tackle, because a lack of data can often be the beginning of 'policy invisibility', which can lead to severe exclusion. It makes it difficult to understand what policy responses are required: if you don't fully know what the problem is, then it is hard to plan what to do about it. As the State of the World's Children 2013 stated: "A society cannot be equitable unless all children are included, and children with disabilities cannot be included unless sound data collection and analysis render them visible".[25]

The urgency for action

Tackling the marginalisation of children with disabilities from education is a matter of urgency on several counts. The education targets for 2015 adopted in the Dakar Framework for Action and for the MDGs, notably universal primary education, will not be achieved unless governments step up their efforts to reach disabled children. After making some fairly impressive gains in the last 20 years, progress in improving access to primary school has ground to a virtual standstill.[26] In large part, this is a result of countries not having overcome the challenges related to reaching children from poorer or more marginalised backgrounds, including disabled children.[27]

The lack of focus on educating disabled children, and other marginalised groups, is impacting on the chances of achieving universal primary education. The Millennium Development Goal progress report in 2010 noted that even in countries close to achieving universal primary education, children with disabilities are the majority of those excluded.[28] The increasing education gap between those in school and those remaining locked out of the classroom is leaving pockets of deepening marginalisation. As more children participate in education, then the exclusion of those who are not included becomes more pronounced, leading to an increasing gap between the 'majority' and the 'forgotten minorities'. This severe discrimination leaves disabled children on the periphery of society, experiencing growing inequality and extreme exclusion – particularly in an increasingly knowledge-based world.

Breaking down this educational disadvantage, including that related to disability, will require a dedicated focus. As the 2010 Education For All Global Monitoring Report said: "Marginalization has remained a peripheral concern. The assumption has been that national progress in education would eventually trickle down to the most disadvantaged. After a decade of steady but uneven national progress, it is time to abandon that assumption".[29]

Moreover, the present level of exclusion of disabled children from education is a deep violation of their rights, which are affirmed in a number of treaties. The right to education was universally recognised as a human right within the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It has since been reinforced by numerous treaties, including the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC includes a commitment from governments around the world to take responsibility for ensuring that all children, irrespective of ability or disability, enjoy their rights without discrimination.[31]

These treaties are rooted in a rich understanding of education in terms of its personal impact and its broader social context. The former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katarina Tomaševski, summarised how fulfilling the right to education, as outlined in these various treaties, means that education should be available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable.

This means, among other things, that education must be free, it must be universal, it must be non-discriminatory and it must be of high quality – and it is a state responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil these rights.[32]

This rights-based approach to education spells out a vision which is about more than just meeting goals or reaching targets – it also provides a vision of the potentially transformative nature of a quality education. As the 2010 EFA Global Monitoring Report so aptly put it: "Education should be a driver of equal opportunity and social mobility, not a transmission mechanism for social injustice".[33] Education, when of high quality, available equitably, designed and built to tackle discrimination and transmit notions of rights, allows each child to flourish according to their own talents and interests and is one of society's greatest levellers. In this vision, education is a powerful tool to address inequalities and prepare each individual to contribute towards their society.

Box 3. The post-2015 framework and disability

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), designed to combat extreme poverty, remarkably, failed to mention the one billion people across the world with disabilities – the largest 'marginalised' group and often among the poorest citizens in any country. There is no mention of disability in any of the 8 goals, 21 targets or 60 indicators. The post-2015 development framework that will replace the MDGs must redress this and ensure that disabilities are included.

Momentum is now building towards a new post-2015 development agenda. At the same time, an increased body of research shows the links between poverty and disability, and the limitations to not focusing on people with disabilities in reaching global poverty reduction targets, which is making the international community increasingly aware that the MDGs will never be achieved without a focus on reaching people with disabilities. The post-2015 framework offers an opportunity to include disability as a cross-cutting issue in global development.

The demands of people with disabilities to be better recognised in post-2015 frameworks are showing some results. For example, the report of High Level Panel of Eminent Persons (HLP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda shows some progress. The call to "Leave no one behind" specifically mentions the need to ensure that people with disabilities are included in development agendas. The HLP also calls for a "data revolution" to improve the quality of statistics and information available to all people and indicators that are disaggregated.

Despite some welcome signs of progress, it is crucial that pressure is maintained to ensure that post-2015 frameworks – both the broader development agenda and the Education For All agenda – are inclusive of persons with disabilities. The Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All called for education for "every citizen of every country", yet action to provide education for people with disabilities is still lacking. Post-2015 frameworks must address this by developing disability-sensitive indicators and targets within each of the goals as well as by disaggregating data by disability. The post-2015 development frameworks should be based on human rights, which are uniformly applied across all goals and targets.

Sources: Leonard Cheshire 2013 "Leave No-One Behind: Including disability in the post-2015 development agenda" and IDDC and IDC briefing", 2013, "Make the post-MDG framework inclusive of persons with disabilities"

DISABILITY
There is a greater chance of a disabled person being among the poorest.

Disability leads to social stigma which leads to invisibility and exclusion from mainstream services and activities.

This leads to a lack of access to services for people with disabilities - for children with disabilities this often means a lack of access to a good quality education.

A lack of access to quality education limits opportunities to escape poverty – such as through good employment, improved health etc. – this leads to further vulnerability and exclusion.

Poverty and exclusion deepens – which is often passed onto the next generation.

Exclusion from education exacerbates poverty levels and limits life chances

Unfortunately, far too often the violation of the right to education is the beginning of a spiralling pattern of unmet rights. Exclusion from the classroom for children living with disabilities often marks the beginning of a lifetime of exclusion from mainstream society.

In particular, education can play a powerful role in either reducing or embedding poverty. A complex and mutually reinforcing cycle of poverty and exclusion often starts at a young age and continues throughout a lifetime (see Figure 2). Children living in extreme poverty are often denied access to basic services, which increases their likelihood of developing health conditions that can lead to disabilities. Meanwhile children with a disability are more likely to experience exclusion from education, which leads to a greater chance of being in poverty in later life.[34]

There is a strong body of empirical evidence from across the world which indicates that people with disabilities are more likely to experience economic and social disadvantage and are more at risk of poverty than those without disability.[35] For instance, compared with non-disabled persons, persons with disabilities are less likely to be in full-time employment, more likely to be unemployed, and significantly more likely to be economically inactive. In low- and middle-income countries, they are more likely to work in the informal economy. When in employment, they are likely to be 'underemployed', that is, they are more likely to be paid less, be in part-time jobs, with few long-term opportunities.[36]

The result is that in most countries, disabled people are among the poorest of the poor. Adults with disabilities typically live in poorer than average households: disability is associated with about a 10 percentage point increase in the probability of falling in the two poorest quintiles.[37] According to World Bank estimates, one in every five of the world's poorest people is disabled.[38]

Gender inequalities, in particular, can powerfully magnify this disadvantage, with disabled women and girls experiencing extreme exclusion in many low- and middle- income countries.

For example, women with disabilities are less likely to have a decent job than either women without disabilities or men with disabilities, and they face greater barriers in finding and retaining employment.[39] Mutually reinforcing layers of disadvantage can lead to severe deprivation, leading to 'double discrimination' or 'multiple discrimination'.

Exclusion not only has stifling consequences for individuals, but also impacts negatively on societies. While this is far more than a monetary concern, key studies which have attempted to estimate the impact on economies show the detrimental effect this can have on them. For instance, in Bangladesh the cost of disability due to forgone income from a lack of schooling and employment, both of people with disabilities and their caregivers, is estimated at US$ 1.2 billion annually, or 1.7% of GDP.[40] An International Labour Organization (ILO) study of 10 low- and middle-income countries found that the loss to gross domestic product (GDP) from the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the labour market – which is at least partially linked to a lack of education opportunities in these countries – is estimated to be between 3 and 7% of GDP.[41]

Tackling exclusion from education is, therefore, a matter of priority for poverty reduction and development. It can also play a huge role in reducing disadvantages across other development areas. Education is an 'enabling right', and it has a significant impact in enabling access to other human rights: there is a solid and robust body of research which demonstrates that high-quality education can unlock access to, for example, the right to health, to gender equality, decent paid work, political participation and much more. For instance, improved education is responsible for half of the global reduction in child mortality in the last 40 years, having a far greater impact than economic growth. Children whose mothers have completed basic education are twice as likely to survive past age five[42] and are half as likely to be malnourished.[43] For children and adults living with a disability, education can help to level the playing field so that people with disabilities can have better access to jobs, health and other services, while helping to develop knowledge about rights and the government's duty to uphold them.[44] As such, educating people with disabilities should be a priority for ensuring greater inclusion across all development programmes.

2 Inclusive education: delivering the right to a quality education for all

It is time to deliver on the right of all children to have a quality education: to do this, education systems need to respond to the needs of disabled children. In recent years, frameworks have begun to articulate what a rights-based approach to educating disabled children might look like from this human rights perspective. The solution is rooted in building inclusive education systems.

The principle of inclusive education was first internationally recognised and endorsed in 1994 at the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain. The Salamanca Declaration – as it became known – encouraged governments to design education systems that respond to diverse needs so that all students can have access to regular schools that accommodate them in child-centred pedagogy.[45]

However, it was the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006 that established inclusive education as a mechanism to deliver the right to education for people with disabilities.[46] In Article 24, the CRPD stresses the need for governments to ensure equal access to an "inclusive education system at all levels" and provide reasonable accommodation and individual support services to persons with disabilities to facilitate their education (see Box 4). The CRPD underscores the rights enforced by other international laws related to education for all, focused on disability, while outlining how these obligations might be met by governments. The commitment to inclusive education became a legal obligation through Article 24 of the CRPD. Ratification of the CRPD means that countries are legally obliged to provide inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education to all children. As of September 2013, 133 countries and the European Union had ratified the CRPD, with another 23 having signed but not yet ratified.[47] This commitment also implies that high-income countries should support low- and middle-income countries' efforts through their development assistance.

Box 4. Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

Article 24 of the CRPD stresses the need for governments to ensure equal access to an "inclusive education system at all levels" and to provide reasonable accommodation and individual support services to persons with disabilities to facilitate their education, with a view to realising this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, including:

– Children with disabilities must be able to access inclusive, free, quality primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live, which recognises the different stages of education provision in different countries.

– Governments are responsible for an inclusive education system at all levels, including life-long learning.

– Governments must provide reasonable accommodation of individual requirements and necessary support within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education.

– Governments should facilitate the learning of Braille and sign language, ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and means of communication.

– Governments need to take appropriate measures to employ enough well- trained teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train teachers to incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate teaching methods.

– Education must support the full development of human potential to foster individual talents, while instilling a sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity.

For more information see: http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml

Inclusive education can be defined as all children learning together in mainstream classrooms in their locality or community, irrespective of the different range of abilities and disabilities, with teaching methods, materials, and school environments that address the needs of all girls and boys. Inclusive education thus promotes participation and overcomes barriers to learning.

Traditionally, there have been three broad approaches to the education of children with disabilities: 'special' or segregated education, integrated education and inclusive education. Globally and historically, most countries have focused on providing education for disabled children through separate schools, usually targeting specific impairments, in which children are classified according to their impairment and allocated a school designed to respond to that particular impairment. This means children with disabilities receive an education in a segregated learning environment, and are often isolated from their community, from other children, or from mainstream education – frequently these schools are far away from family and friends. These institutions have tended to reach only a small proportion of those in need, often with second-rate opportunities which do little to prepare them for employment or furthering education. This makes it hard for them to realise their individual potential, and is a challenge to using education as a tool to fight societal inequalities and discrimination.

Integrated systems refer to schools where children with disabilities are located in mainstream schools but often in a separate classroom with other disabled learners and with a dedicated teacher. Unfortunately, too often this has left disabled children dumped in classrooms, within a school which makes only minimal attempts to address any specific academic or social needs the child might have, and the child must adapt his/herself to the environment.[48] This has also done little to challenge other children's perceptions and can reinforce stigma and discrimination.

Often it is assumed that an integrated system and an inclusive system are close cousins, especially compared with a segregated system – with the terms sometimes used interchangeably.[49] But inclusion goes beyond 'integration', and has quite different philosophical roots. Integration sees children with disabilities brought into a pre-existing framework of norms and standards. Inclusive education starts from seeing each learner as a rights holder: this brings in marginalised groups from the peripheries, placing them in a more central position. It shifts the focus from the individual's impairment to the social context. Inclusive education promotes changes throughout the education system and with communities, to ensure that the education system adapts to the child, rather than expecting the child to adapt to the system.[50] Inclusive education recognises the need to transform cultures, policies and practices in school to accommodate the differing needs of individual students, and an obligation to remove the barriers that impede that possibility.[51]

The Global Campaign for Education's commitment to a rights-based approach, in which states respect, protect and fulfill individuals' rights, and education promotes principles of quality and non-discrimination, aligns with the conceptual underpinnings of inclusive education. In many respects, inclusive education is a practical manifestation of education systems that embody human rights principles.

UNESCO sees inclusive education thus: "Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children."[52]

It is important to understand inclusive education as a broad concept, referring to the right of all learners (including children with disabilities, but also other marginalised groups) and applying to learners of all ages, both children and adults.[53] Although much of this report is focused on children in schools, in the context of commitment to Education for All, inclusive education also includes increasing opportunities for inclusive lifelong learning, using a wide range of strategies, activities and processes that seek to make a reality of the universal right to quality education.

Finally, it is worth noting that inclusive education is a process which can take time – the end goal should be inclusion, but reaching this might occur through a long process. Sometimes, this might mean that special or integrated initiatives and inclusive schools sit side-by-side as governments work towards the proper inclusion of all children (in line with human rights principles). In places where there are different education options for students with disabilities, the education system should use the experiences, skills and resources existing in special and integrated schools to promote the development of inclusive education within regular local schools. This could involve, for example, teachers from special schools training mainstream teachers in sign-language. These approaches must proactively inform one another, with learning gained from each informing the development of future strategies, rather than being parallel processes without links between them. Where there are no pre-existing 'special schools' for children, authorities should make sure that new provision is planned in an inclusive way. It is worth noting that the key to the success of this approach is the government having a plan for inclusion with clear targets and goals, for which they can be held to account by civil society organisations. Without this, it is possible that inclusion becomes a vague commitment which is never reached, while two parallel systems continue as before.

Inclusive education is good for everyone

The World Report on Disability in 2011 argued that, among other things, the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools promotes universal primary completion, can be cost-effective and contributes to the elimination of discrimination.

These are important benefits, but the potential of inclusive education, when properly and effectively utilised, goes even further, and can be fundamentally transformative – for individuals, education systems and society as a whole. Of course, in the first instance, inclusive education can help children with disabilities and other marginalised individuals – for instance, minority and linguistic ethnic groups – to access a quality education, helping them to fulfil their potential, and contribute towards their community and society.

But, when properly implemented, inclusive education can help to raise the quality bar across education systems. Inclusive education entails the provision of meaningful learning opportunities for all students within the regular school system, and therefore requires strategies that cater for naturally diverse learning styles of all students, whilst accommodating the exceptional learning needs of some students. An education system that is fully committed to inclusive education must therefore support well-motivated and well-trained teachers, and appropriate teaching methods[54] and will support improved teaching through a focus on effective and inclusive teaching approaches, skills and support.

This is vitally important because, at present, the exceedingly poor quality of many education systems is leaving far too many children without even the basics of reading and writing, let alone acquiring the more complex analytical, critical or creative skills that should come with a good education. For instance, around 50% of children in Africa who reach year 5 will be able to read and write.[55] Poor quality also leads to repetition – a waste of resources – with 11.4 million pupils repeating a primary grade in sub-Saharan Africa in 2010.[56] Effective delivery of inclusive education will not only ensure the inclusion of marginalised learners – including children with disabilities – but will help to tackle this appalling quality deficit and improve education for all.

Inclusive education can also help to shape more equal societies. Preventing discrimination in education can also help to ensure that society can tackle discrimination more broadly. It offers a chance to challenge widely-held and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, to celebrate and embrace the rich tapestry of diversity in our societies, and to promote social values that combat discrimination.

COUNTRY CASE STUDY 2.

Italy: the importance of legislation for securing commitments to inclusive education

The Italian Framework Law for the Assistance, Social Integration and the Rights of Disabled Persons was enacted by the Italian parliament in 1992. Amongst its provisions are: the right to inclusive education of every child with a disability ascertained by a doctor's certificate, including those with learning disabilities; the requirement that all day nurseries, schools, universities and others, including private institutions, have to accept students with disabilities, including those who are severely disabled; the coordination of all services, equipment of schools and universities, flexible timetabling and accommodations during exams; the setup of a tailored educational plan, the training of teachers, counselling and working groups at various levels; and the establishment of a National Commission on Inclusive Education.

Italy is so far the only European country in which almost all disabled pupils (over 99%) were included in mainstream schools. Inclusive education is achieved with the help of over 90,000 specialised teachers for learning support and an additional 25,000 educators employed by the schools. Physical barriers in access to schools have been almost eliminated. An important amendment of the law in 1999 concerned inclusive university settings. As a result, an impressive 12,400 disabled students had enrolled in Italian universities by 2006, tripling within only six years.

Source: Case study: Italy. The right to inclusive education. Available here: http://www.zeroproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Case-study-Italy-UN-CRPD-Article-24.pdf

3 Implementing inclusive education and supporting disabled children's right to education: outlining areas for action

While experts in the field of disability and education have long advocated for inclusive education, traditionally, inclusive education has been seen as a 'fringe' policy issue related to educating disabled people, and has gained little attention within mainstream development. But there is evidence that the tide is turning.[57]

Certainly, greater focus is being placed on exclusion from education on the basis of disability, and support for inclusive education as a policy response appears to be gaining ground. Many countries are in the process of ratifying and implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. At the same time, a series of important international reports, including the 2010 MDG report focusing on disabilities (the first to do so), the 2011 World Disability Report, and the State of the World's Children 2013 report, have all focused on children with disabilities and the importance of inclusive education as a strategy to address exclusion.

However, it is clear that across many countries, there is a gap between the rhetoric and commitments, and the level of delivery and action. Many misconceptions surrounding inclusive education continue to thwart attempts to mainstream and implement it. Inclusive education is seen as too costly, not a viable or practical option, or as requiring too many changes in the attitudes of communities, policy makers and parents to sustain it.

COUNTRY CASE STUDY 3.

Ethiopia: assessing disabled children's out-of-school levels and causes of drop out

In Ethiopia, according to the Ministry of Education, fewer than 3% of children with disabilities have access to primary education, and access to schooling decreases rapidly as children move up the education ladder.[58]

Handicap International carried out a survey in the regions of Dire Dawa, Harar and Jijiga to try and assess the causes of children with disabilities dropping out of education. Families were asked to identify reasons for children failing to attend school that fell into two broad categories: 'family-level' or 'school-level' causes. Most families and children reported that family issues – often related to work or caring responsibilities – are the main cause. When it comes school-level issues, "long distance to school" is the number one cause of drop-out. The report concluded that the following needs to happen:

– Parents should work closely with the school and teachers, providing resources and information about the child's behaviour, strength and abilities and to provide necessary care for their children;

– Parents should provide social, physical, psychological and educational support to the child at home and on the way to school;

– Introduce the child's strengths and various talents to the community they live in; for example, children's creativity, talents in arts, sports.

– Parents should actively participate in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) team, in teacher parent associations etc.

Source: Handicap International Ethiopia office

Bringing down the barriers to exclusion

The remainder of this report attempts to outline common barriers to education for children with disabilities, while exploring what can be done to bring down these obstacles and ensure inclusive education. The policy responses suggested are based on tried and tested models for ending exclusion – and yet very few countries are anywhere near close to implementing these reforms, at anywhere near the level of necessary ambition.

These areas for action are broken down into seven inter-dependent strategies, all of which are necessary to complement each other in tackling exclusion across multiple levels – from the family, local communities, national government, through to the international community. These seven strategies – all of which will require political will – are:

- **Strategy 1:** Create appropriate legislative frameworks, and set out ambitious national plans for inclusion.

- **Strategy 2:** Provide the capacity, resources and leadership to implement ambitious national plans on inclusion.
- **Strategy 3:** Improve data on disability and education, and build accountability for action.
- **Strategy 4:** Make schools and classrooms accessible and relevant for all.
- **Strategy 5:** Ensure there are enough appropriately trained teachers for all.
- **Strategy 6:** Challenge attitudes which reinforce and sustain discrimination.
- **Strategy 7:** Create an enabling environment to support inclusive education, including through cross-sectoral policies and strategies that reduce exclusion.

It is vital that governments, supported by development partners and the international community, start to take concrete policy action on these areas.

Box 5. National Education Coalitions: lobbying for inclusive education

Campaña Boliviana por el Derecho a la Educación, Bolivia:
For many years, the GCE-supported education coalition in Bolivia has been lobbying for inclusive education. Not only is this key to ensuring the inclusion of disabled children, but it is also a critical step in getting Bolivia's marginalised ethnic minorities into education. In 2006, the National Committee for Disabled People launched "The National Plan for Equal Opportunities for Disabled People" (CONALPEDIS), also known as the PNIEO, which calls for an inclusive accessible education for disabled people to combat discrimination within the Bolivian education system.

There has been some significant progress. The new education law incorporates inclusive education approaches, and commits to ensuring equal opportunities in education, without discrimination. There are, however, still problems with implementation, and the coalition continues to campaign on the issue.

COSYDEP, Senegal:
COSYDEP, GCE's member coalition in Senegal, works in communities to create awareness, including through radio and TV outreach, and to help sensitise teachers, parents and children to issues of inclusive education. COSYDEP is working on establishing a participatory Budget Watch with a particular focus on inclusion and children with disabilities, and aims to use findings of this Budget Watch in public hearings.

All for Education (AFE), Mongolia:
In 2013, GCE's member coalition engaged in policy debates with the Ministry of Education, and with the Inclusive Education Network consisting of government, INGOs, local NGOs and academia. The coalition contributed to enacting important amendments to the Education Law aimed at improving access to and quality of pre-school and secondary education for children with disabilities.

COESI, Solomon Islands:
COESI, a GCE member, has been engaging with member organisations, such as People with Disabilities Solomon Islands, and communities in joint forums to discuss issues around inclusive education, and to feed into policy debates. The coalition is working with policy makers to ensure the National Inclusive Education Policy is fast-tracked for endorsement and implementation.

Sources: Based on inputs from Light for the World, Campaña Boliviana por el Derecho a la Educación, COSYDEP, All for Education Mongolia, COESI and GCE's Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) reporting data.

Strategy 1

Create appropriate legislative frameworks, and set out ambitious national plans for inclusion

There is often a lack of national legislation, policy, targets, and plans – or at least significant gaps in them – for inclusive education of disabled children. Adopting appropriate legislation, developing policies or national plans of action, are important starting points to inclusion for all.

Overall there is a lack of information for governments about how to translate international standards, such as Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, into practice. In many countries there is no specific law to protect the rights of children with disabilities. Since children with disabilities are often not treated as equal citizens in society, generic national laws are usually insufficient. In other cases a specific law may exist but is ineffective, due to limited knowledge about the law, or inappropriate: for example, specifying that children with disabilities should attend special schools.[59] Some countries have, however, shown the positive impact that national legislation can play in driving policy reform and delivering on inclusive education. For example, Italy has had legislation in place to support inclusive education for all children with disabilities, resulting in highly impressive inclusion rates and positive educational outcomes, which have seen them take a global leadership role in inclusion (see Country Case Study 2).

Far too often national education policies have no mention of disabilities or inclusive approaches. One study of countries supported by the Global Partnership for Education (then known as the Education For All Fast Track Initiative, or FTI) found that most countries endorsed by the FTI process did not have national education sector plans which addressed the inclusion of disabled children, even when they were very close to universal primary education (i.e. disabled children remain part of the final hurdle to universal access). Of 28 countries reviewed, only 10 had some concrete policy commitment to include children with disabilities, 13 made some mention of disability but with no detail or strategy, while 5 had no mention at all of children with disabilities. Key gaps included a lack of targets or plans and weak data collection to feed into planning. Few had financial projections of costs, which could be translated into action, and many had no plan for appropriate teacher training, access to school buildings, and the provision of additional learning materials and support. The report concluded that the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) should become an 'inclusion champion' on inclusive education.[60] Since the report was published the GPE has included disability in its strategy – a welcome progression – although this still doesn't give clear guidance on including disabled children in education planning, which can support this being translated concretely into planning processes.

Finally, for plans to effectively respond to the real needs and issues 'on the ground', it is important to ensure that the voices of disabled people are included in policy planning processes and monitoring – from local through to national and global level. Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) play an essential role in giving a voice to people with disability. Ensuring that DPOs and other civil society organisations representing disabled people are included in policy and review processes on education is essential for planning which meets disabled people's needs. This means that children and parents are included in school management processes, while national planning processes (for instance, Local Education Groups) include CSOs working on disability and DPOs.

Bangladesh country example: the road from commitments to implementation

Bangladesh is home to approximately 160 million people. It is estimated that 15 to 17% of the population is living with some form of disability.[61] There is no accurate data available on the numbers of disabled children out of school but, according to one 2005 estimate, there are 2.6 million children with disabilities in Bangladesh.[62] A study in 2002 conducted by Department of Primary Education indicated that only 4% children with disabilities had some form of access to education.

Bangladesh has established a number of policy processes which give a sound legal basis for developing inclusive education systems, and the Bangladesh government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006 and the Optional Protocol in 2008. Implementation, however, continues to lag behind this. The current education policy – the Second Primary Education Program (PEDP II) – aims to improve inclusive education in Bangladesh.

So far, most attention in implementing inclusive education has focused on the improvement of classrooms. However, a lack of national legislation on buildings, which sets out requirements for accessibility, has led to this often being piecemeal, with a lot of the work carried out by NGOs working with government. This also mirrors overall trends, where most existing inclusive education in Bangladesh is provided by NGOs. For instance, the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) – a partner of the Campaign for Popular Education, GCE's coalition in Bangladesh – has been working on providing inclusive education for some years now. CDD set out to include children with a disability in mainstream schools in their locality, to keep them close to their home and community. The organisation does this by training teachers in inclusive education methods and delivering accessible education teaching materials, like computerized Braille software or Bangla sign language. In 2008 they developed the BEKAS box, which includes accessible materials for interactive teaching to all the children in the class. Now, CDD is training teachers from 600 government schools. In recent years other organisations have sought to learn from this approach. For example, BRAC (one of CAMPE's founding members) has changed its education policy, making it a rule that each of its schools needs to have at least one child with a disability before the school receives funding. BRAC has enrolled over 150,000 children with disability in their non-formal education programme countrywide.

The work carried out by NGOs has led to good examples, which need to be replicated and scaled up throughout the country; a good quality education for disabled children must be delivered by the state as a right, rather than be a question of luck dependent on where a child lives and NGOs active in their area. The recently adopted Disability Rights and Protection Act 2013 – designed to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – is expected to strengthen efforts for inclusive formal education in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in Bangladesh. The Ministry is in the process of introducing disability topics in the curricula of primary teacher training and the Bachelors degree in Education. Finally, the government has also introduced a stipend for children with disabilities. All of this points to significant future investments by the government to implement the pre-existing legal commitments.

Sources: Based on inputs from the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), including CDD, and Light for the World.

Strategy 2

Provide the capacity, resources and leadership to implement ambitious national plans on inclusion.

Even when governments do have national policies or legislation in place, progress is uneven and, overall, implementing laws and policies is proving to be difficult. Too often, governments express a commitment to inclusive education but fail to implement concrete policies, or measure progress.[63] For instance, the Ugandan Constitution provides that 'all persons have a right to education', backed with national policies. Although there are guarantees for equal opportunity, only 5% of children with disabilities have access to education within inclusive setting in the regular schools, while 10% have access through special schools.[64]

In many countries, the implementation of policies is complicated by divided ministerial responsibilities, where the responsibility for educating children with disabilities lies with the Ministry of Social Welfare (or a similar ministry portfolio), with no or few formal links to the Ministry of Education or education sector planning.[65] Education of children with disabilities is a right, not a welfare or charity issue and should therefore fall under the mandate of the Education Ministry, with plans for inclusion agreed across multiple sectors and ministries. An unclear mandate on the responsibility for education makes effective implementation cumbersome.

The gaps in policy implementation which are commonly encountered are often exacerbated, or caused, by a lack of financial commitments. Hardly any country commits anywhere near the amounts needed to ensuring inclusive education for all. For instance, a 2008 World Bank evaluation reported that only 1% of spending under the Education for All policy in India was on inclusive education for children with disabilities (see Country Case Study 1).[66]

It is often assumed that the costs of providing inclusive education are prohibitive in low- and middle-income countries. However, often the additional costs are not as high as first assumed. For example, accessible design can be inexpensive: one study estimated that making buildings accessible represents less than 1% of total construction costs.[67] The heaviest investment in this case is not necessarily in the cost of construction, but the more substantial investment in time for better planning and supportive policies for implementation. To ensure that resources are best utilised, it is important that inclusive education is not seen as a 'bolt-on', but as an integral part of planning and delivering the whole education system.

In most countries, the current system means that scarce resources are not being spent in the most cost-effective way. Segregated schools tend to be expensive, and reach only a handful of children with disabilities. This can be a costly, inefficient and inappropriate way to organise schooling. For example, an Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report estimates that the average cost of putting students with special educational needs in segregated placements is seven to nine times higher than educating them in general classrooms.[68] Within education in low- and middle- income countries, a fairly strong body of research points to the inefficiency of multiple systems of administration, organisational structures and services.[69]

Nonetheless, getting all disabled children into school, and enabling them to learn on an equal basis with others, is going to incur costs. Inclusion should not be seen as a 'cheap option' – as this runs the risk of disabled students not receiving sufficient support – but as holding the potential to be a more efficient way to ensure education for all, when done correctly. Governments will need to therefore both increase spending and ensure that what funds are available are being equitably and effectively spent.

Ensuring that funds are being equitably and effectively spent on inclusive education can ensure that scarce resources are used with greater impact. This is because inclusive education improves quality, which can reduce school repetition and drop-outs, reducing waste of resources. The Global Campaign for Education advocates for funding to increase, and to have a strong focus on 'equitable spending'. Equitable financing must target the most marginalised groups and redress previous discrimination through strategies such as inclusive education.[70]

Inclusive education policies should be accompanied by an increased budget to include the actual costs of supporting the essential conditions which ensure quality education for all children – i.e. improving teacher training or providing children with specially designed learning materials. In addition to costs of providing inclusive education, there is also a need to plan financially for other measures to support families, such as targeted incentives for children with disabilities to attend school.

Constrained budgets cannot be used as an argument against this investment. It is a state responsibility to fulfil the right to education.[71] Increasing education funding to the internationally recommended levels of 20% of national budgets is the first necessary step, and then prioritising those who are the most marginalised is vital, with at least half of education spending going to basic education.[72]

In low- and middle-income countries, it is important that this is supported by donor countries: for those who have signed the CRPD this is an obligation. However, far too few donors support inclusive education, and with donor financing currently reducing in support for basic education in low-income countries, there is a real danger that the kind of long term and predictable finance needed for investments in inclusive education – to achieve EFA – will be disproportionately affected.[73] Currently, the programmes donors do support are often piecemeal, or not mainstreamed through education and development policies. There are exceptions to this, but these are rarities rather than the norm. One study conducted which considered the UK's Department for International Development's (DFIDs) record showed a severe implementation gap between policy and practice in DFID's work on disability and education, with a policy environment that supports inclusive education but no formal strategies to implement this. DFID India stood out as the one country which was effectively implementing this, and had included disability indicators in the programme management agreements with the government. The indicator emphasises the need for improved educational achievement for scheduled tribe and caste children and disabled children and particularly girls within these groups.[74]

Strategy 3

Improve data on disability and education, and build accountability for action

Even when plans exist, often, meaningful targets cannot be supported due to a lack of reliable data. In order to draft and deliver inclusion plans, governments must have reliable data in order to set targets and measure progress.

Firstly, governments need to understand the current situation of disability and education in their countries, by improving data collection methods and techniques. This needs to include disaggregation according to different impairments and their education opportunities. Improving methods for collecting data is also crucial; for instance, household surveys, conducted by trained enumerators who can provide an assessment in the household, are important. Of course, this level of data collection can be very expensive and logistically difficult, but it is necessary to know the details of the scale of exclusion.

Once the backdrop has been assessed, this needs to be built into concrete targets, which are measurable over time. There must then be monitoring of targets against data – for instance, on monitoring the increase/decrease of children with disabilities being included in mainstream schools. It is also vital that civil society organisations have this information in order to hold their governments to account for delivery.

Data to improve target setting, monitoring and accountability also needs to improve at a global level: the global goals currently being negotiated as part of the 'post-2015' process must include strong goals, targets and indicators that are inclusive of persons with disabilities in education, guaranteeing their right to fully participate and reach their potential. Of course, for this to happen, it is necessary for there to be globally-agreed definitions linked to disability. This will also involve an international commitment to disaggregating data (including according to gender, age, household income, type of disability and learning support) in order to ensure the new goals are measurable and CSOs can hold their governments to account for delivery.

Strategy 4

Make schools and classrooms accessible and relevant for all

School- and classroom-based barriers which impact on children with disabilities being able to get an education include a lack of accessible or appropriate equipment and learning materials, and physical barriers as a result of inaccessible infrastructure.

The distance from home to school and inaccessible infrastructure make getting to, and around, the school difficult for children with mobility impairments. In sparsely-populated rural areas, where the distance to and from school is far, the cost of transport and the time and effort involved in accompanying a child on the journey often deter parents from sending their child with a disability to school. In Bangladesh parents of children with disabilities saw the absence of a specialised transport system from home to school in rural areas and the lack of subsidised support for rickshaw transport as major constraints.[75]

Regulations on school design can play an important role in tackling this: if education authorities have regulations, for instance, on school design, or providing subsidised transport, this can set standards to which to adhere.

At the same time, curricula are often rigid and expect all pupils to learn the same things, at the same time, and through the same methods. Instead, curricula should be flexible enough to provide possibilities for adjustment to individual needs and abilities of each and every pupil. Schools must be supported in developing inclusive approaches to both the curriculum and pedagogy. Moreover, assessment which focuses on measuring narrow outcomes of learning often restrict success for marginalised children; the subsequent underachievement may then result in grade repetition or even drop out.

National authorities should produce books and other learning materials in a range of formats that can be used by children with different impairments. For example, books in Braille, books with large font and high-contrast backgrounds, books for older children with simple language, picture books with limited words, and books with sign language pictures next to the text. New Information Communication Technologies (ICT) offer a host of ways to support this.

Strategy 5

Ensure there are enough appropriately trained teachers for all

Teachers are the most important factor in determining the quality of education a child receives. For disabled children they can also play a major role in determining whether or not they are even able to go to the local school, given that teachers or headmasters often determine whether or not a local child with a disability is 'allowed' into a school.

Successful inclusion requires there to be sufficient teachers, who are adequately prepared and trained, and who are supported to work in inclusive ways with specialist teaching support where necessary. Ensuring that people with disabilities can become teachers can make a strong contribution to this.

Many countries have overcrowded classrooms with teachers who have not been trained to respond to diverse needs. At present, teacher-pupil ratios in most low- and middle-income countries make ensuring a quality inclusive education very difficult. UNESCO estimates that 1.6 million additional teachers will be required to achieve universal primary education by 2015.[76] Without these additional teachers, and a consequent lowering of the teacher-pupil ratio, building inclusive education systems will be all but impossible. If teachers are faced alone with classrooms of 50-plus they will struggle to dedicate enough time to individual learners' needs, including those with disabilities.

Of course, it is not only about numbers. Teaching is a highly skilled profession, requiring dedicated training not only in subject knowledge, but in teaching skills – including identifying strengths, weaknesses and interests and responding to diverse learning needs, classroom management, positive discipline and attitudes. Training of teachers is therefore absolutely vital to ensure that being in school translates into a quality education and learning. Yet far too many governments have been trying to build education systems with unqualified teachers who have little or no training. The result is poor quality education – at least for the poorest – with many children completing three or four years of schooling without even learning to read or write.[77]

This can be tackled through improved training overall, and inclusive education requires specific training. Most pre-service and in-service training

for teachers in developing countries often doesn't include any inclusion component. Many teachers are concerned about their lack of preparation for inclusive education: in a recent survey, large numbers of teachers expressed concerns about inclusion due to a lack of training and professional development, as well as equipment and other teaching resources.[78] Many teachers, including head teachers, do not even know they are required to teach children with disabilities.[79] Being trained in inclusive education can help teachers to recognise and value learners' diversity as a strength, and empower them to adapt the curriculum and teaching methods to fit the specific contexts and needs of all their learners.

The impact of such training in fostering commitment to inclusion has been well-documented: studies have shown, for example, that when teachers and other school personnel (i.e. administrative staff) are trained to consider disability-related issues, they look upon inclusion of children with disabilities more positively.[80] It has also been shown that it is crucial for head teachers to show leadership in championing inclusive education to transform their schools into inclusive schools, preparing teachers and students for the inclusion of disabled children.[81] Inclusive education training must be embedded across training modules, and not come in the form of short 'special' training courses. Moreover, effective training is never theoretical, but must involve classroom practice; this holds for inclusive education too, and the most positive attitudes to inclusion found among teachers are from those who have actual experience in inclusive teaching.[82]

Beyond pre-service training, additional – often specialist – in-service training and support may be needed. Even when teachers are qualified and have general training in inclusive education,

they often lack the specialist training to deal with certain types of disability e.g. visual and auditory challenges. Therefore teachers also need to be given opportunities for continuing professional development throughout their careers which draws on new 'good practice', while also getting ongoing support and mentoring. Teachers need to be able to call on specialist help from colleagues who have greater expertise and experience of working with children with disabilities, especially children with sensory or intellectual impairments. For example, specialists can advise on the use of Braille or computer-based instruction.

Finally, the lack of people with disabilities among teaching personnel presents another challenge to inclusive education: adults with disabilities often face considerable obstacles to qualifying as teachers. Exclusion of people with disabilities from teacher training limits the number of qualified disabled teachers who can act as role models for children (with and without disabilities) in mainstream schools. The teaching workforce needs to be more diverse, and targeted efforts are needed to ensure that people with disabilities can train as teachers, find work and be supported in their jobs.

Therefore, adequate teacher numbers, pre-service and in-service training, professional development, support from specialised teachers and supporting people with disabilities to enter the teaching workforce are all critical to building a professional teacher workforce with the knowledge, skills, understanding and confidence to effectively ensure inclusive education. This will require a significant investment by governments, but, without it, there is little hope of improving the overall quality of education and bringing in marginalised groups into mainstream schools from the peripheries.[83]

Mozambique: Training blind teachers and changing society's attitudes

Education – including the provision of inclusive education – remains a responsibility of the state. Where governments are lacking experience in such approaches, partnerships with civil society can provide encouraging examples of ways to enhance teacher training and diversity, which can then be scaled up across the public system.

In Mozambique, for example, a number of NGOs have played a role in supporting such initiatives. The ADPP (Ajuda de Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo – Development Aid from People to People), for example, runs 11 teacher training colleges known as Escolas de Professores do Futuro (EPF); one institute of higher education that trains instructors for teacher training colleges and community developers; four vocational training centres; four primary and secondary schools with a focus on orphan and vulnerable children; and an adult literacy programme.

Meanwhile, the Teacher Training College (TTC) Nhamatanda has been training visually impaired primary school teachers for more than ten years, and since 2008 with support from Light for the World. The TTC in Nhamatanda has established an impressive system to ensure quality training for blind teachers. First, identification of candidates is done by the local Blind School, which proposes qualified graduates from mainstream schools to apply for a scholarship at the TTC. Over the years Nhamatanda TTC trainers have been trained in Braille by the Blind School and the Blind Union, and today all of them have at least a basic level of Braille skills, with a number of the trainers reading and writing Braille fluently. On a weekly basis, a group of interested trainers and students meet in the Braille Club to train and practise. During training at the college, all students teach in practice schools nearby. It has been important to raise awareness in these schools and communities to ensure a welcoming environment for students with visual impairment during their practical training. Over the years, the communities have become used to their children being taught by teachers with disabilities, resulting in a general change of attitude in these areas.

Such work needs to be conducted in close cooperation with the government, and with the aim of building state capacity and integrating successful approaches into state systems.

Source: State of the World's Children and inputs from Light for the World

GAMBIA

Education opens doors for life

Ndey Secka, a radio talk show host, was born in Banjul, in Gambia. Ndey and two of her sisters were born blind. Social stigma in Gambia around having children with disabilities in a family can be a huge pressure, particularly for the mother. For Ndey and her sisters, this led to them being sent to live with an aunt. Education was inaccessible and unimaginable for most children with disabilities when Ndey was a child, but Ndey was very fortunate that her aunt was determined to educate her despite all odds.

She was enrolled at the Campama School for the blind - a 'special needs' school, being the only school available at the time. The school was initially set up as a separate class and later integrated into the mainstream Campama Primary School in Banjul. Ndey talked about the challenges in these early years: "It was difficult at times as the other students would bully me and throw stones". But Ndey was determined to do well at school, and later sat the common entrance examination at the end her primary education, gaining admission into the reputable Saint Joseph Girls' High School where she became the only visually impaired student. She learned with the support of fellow students and teachers by using her Braille machine, taping lessons on a cassette and listening to explanations from students. "My teachers and fellow students were very helpful and I enjoyed going to school."

Upon completion of her high school education, she acquired a scholarship to study in the United Kingdom, later returning to work in the Social Welfare Department as assistant to the director.

Ndey has now moved on to working for Gambia Radio – a job she loves. Like Ndey, her visually impaired sister is well educated and works as a teacher at the school of the Gambia Organization for the Visually Impaired (GOVI). As she said: "I believe in the adage 'disability does not mean inability'. When advocating for inclusive education make sure that materials are available, teachers are skilled and schools are accessible."

Strategy 6

Challenge attitudes which reinforce and sustain discrimination

Social attitudes are a powerful driver of the marginalisation of disabled children in and from education. In terms of education, such attitudes can contribute to low rates of access to education for disabled children, and even lower completion rates.

In some cultures, children with disabilities are hidden, as they are perceived to be a bad omen or punishment for 'wrong-doing' in the family. This can act in a way which leads families to be the perpetuators of discrimination – sometimes leading them to hide away their disabled child, rather than actively seeking to engage them in mainstream community activities, such as going to the local school. In some instances this can lead to severe isolation and oppression, with disabled women and girls twice as likely to experience sexual abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, than their non-disabled peers.[84]

Even when children are not withdrawn from society to this extent, when children with disabilities are defined by social perceptions of what they 'lack', they are also being pre-judged on their potential to contribute to mainstream society. This drives the widespread assumption that their education is not a worthy investment – at family, community and national level – and in low-resource settings, where 'tough choices' must be made, this can lead to exclusion from education.

When education is offered, the widely held belief is that 'special' schools are the most viable option. A recent publication by Plan International, which interviewed people across the West Africa region, showed that many non-disabled people rejected the idea of inclusive education because they felt that children with disabilities cannot understand the course content at the same rate as children without a disability. Respondents said they were concerned children with disabilities would display "problematic" behaviour in the classroom which could disturb non-disabled children in their learning progress. [85]

In other cases, families and children fear the discrimination they might face, or worry about the level of support they will receive in mainstream schools. For instance, one survey in Uganda found that disability groups and parents favoured special schools because of overcrowding and poor resourcing in mainstream schools.[86] Many parents and disabled children themselves frequently express concerns related to their fears of mistreatment and stigmatisation in schools by other children and teachers. More often than not, wider societal discrimination is replicated in the classroom.

Engaging communities in helping them to understand and challenging their beliefs is important to reducing these negative attitudes. For example, Leonard Cheshire Disability has reported that, as a result of partnerships with local communities within their projects, there is increasing evidence of children with disabilities being accepted within the school community, which leads to greater participation over time in the programmes.[87]

COUNTRY CASE STUDY 6.
Burkina Faso: an example of tackling exclusion at multiple levels

In Burkina Faso, enrolment rates at primary school level reached 78% in 2012. However, it is estimated that only 16% of physically disabled children have access to a primary education. In recent years, GCE members the 'Cadre de Concertation sur l'Education de Base (CCEB), Coalition Nationale pour l'Education Pour Tous (CN-EPT) and Handicap International have been working with the government of Burkina Faso to improve the situation of children with disabilities, through inclusive education.

In 2003, the Ministry of National Education and Literacy launched its first pilot project near Ouagadougou to develop inclusive education in partnership with Handicap International. This sparked the development of a standardised process for inclusive education, leading to the ratification of CRPD and its optional protocol in 2009. In turn, this led to a national law on the 'Promotion and Protection of Disabled Persons', which states that inclusive education is guaranteed in kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and at university level.

Around 2,700 disabled children have now gained access to education in 10 school districts. The learning from
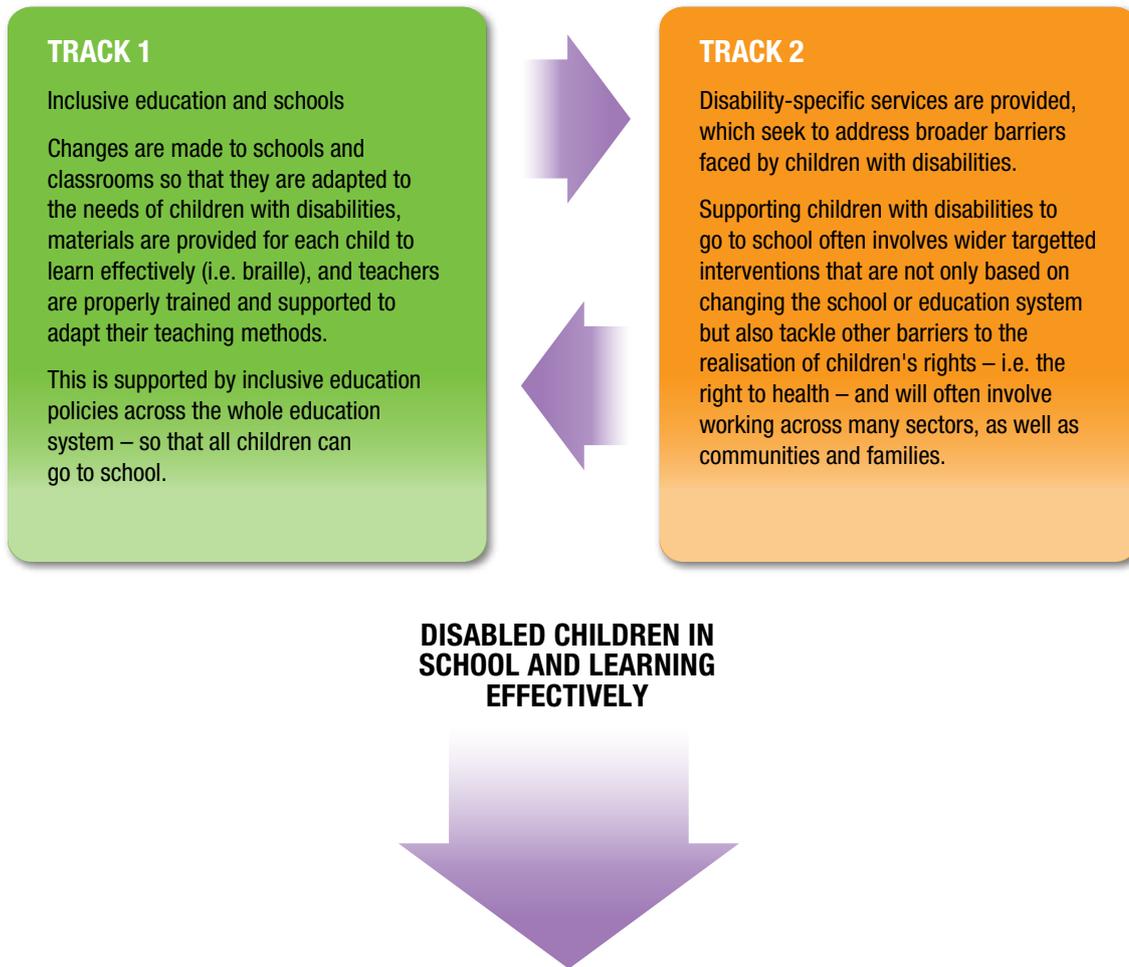
the first project highlighted that the social, community and rehabilitation aspects of inclusive education is as important as the pedagogical aspects. So, in 2010 the Ministry in collaboration with Light for the World developed a second project in a rural area in Garango, the southern province of Boulgou, to incorporate Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) approaches into the design, to tackle discrimination. Awareness raising, door-to-door identification, medical consultation, rehabilitation and teacher training preceded orientation and enrolment of the children with disabilities in 45 schools.

After these successful first steps the government has now made a concrete plan for scaling this up. The national education plan 2012-2022 (the Programme de Développement Stratégique de l'Education de Base) aims at addressing the challenges of inclusive education. The quality norms for school constructions have been reviewed to promote accessibility for all. Teacher training curricula will now include the basics and principles of inclusive education. Soon the Ministry of National Education will have a special department for the promotion of inclusive education.

Source: information provided by Handicap International, Light for the World and Coalition Nationale EPT du Burkina Faso (CN-EPT/BF)

Figure 3.
The 'Twin Track' approach to ensuring children with disabilities can get a quality education

TRACK 1

Inclusive education and schools

Changes are made to schools and classrooms so that they are adapted to the needs of children with disabilities, materials are provided for each child to learn effectively (i.e. braille), and teachers are properly trained and supported to adapt their teaching methods.

This is supported by inclusive education policies across the whole education system – so that all children can go to school.

TRACK 2

Disability-specific services are provided, which seek to address broader barriers faced by children with disabilities.

Supporting children with disabilities to go to school often involves wider targeted interventions that are not only based on changing the school or education system but also tackle other barriers to the realisation of children's rights – i.e. the right to health – and will often involve working across many sectors, as well as communities and families.

DISABLED CHILDREN IN SCHOOL AND LEARNING EFFECTIVELY

Community-based rehabilitation (CBR) programmes have a particular role to play in challenging negative attitudes in communities. Community-based rehabilitation projects involve the whole community in the rehabilitation process, including people with disabilities, their families, communities, local organisations and social, health and education services. The idea of CBR is to support communities so they can assume responsibility for ensuring that all their members, including those with disabilities, are given equal access to locally available resources and participate fully in the economic, social and political life of the community.

A recent study by African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) found that increases in children with disabilities accessing education in Ethiopia was a result of them being linked to CBR services. Furthermore, communities with active CBR services and disabled people's organisations tend to have considerably more positive attitudes towards children with disabilities and their families.[88] A three-year project in a disadvantaged community near Allahabad, India, resulted in children with disabilities attending school for the first time, more people with disabilities participating in community forums, and more people bringing their children with disabilities for vaccination and rehabilitation.[89]

Strategy 7

Create an enabling environment to support inclusive education, including through cross-sectoral policies and strategies that reduce exclusion

While inclusive education systems will need to be developed to meet the overall needs of disabled children, this must be coupled with other targeted interventions which seek to address broader societal and cultural discrimination faced by disabled children, and to address specific economic or social barriers faced by children living with a disability.[90] Sometimes stand-alone initiatives in education might not be enough, but taken together with other interventions can be mutually reinforcing.

The successful implementation of inclusive education requires a 'twin track' approach, one which focuses both on changing the school system and supporting learners who are vulnerable to exclusion.[91] Applying this approach would mean, firstly, that the school is adapted to be suitable for all children. Second, targeted interventions are implemented which address the specific needs of persons with disabilities so that they are able to participate more effectively. This in turn requires the involvement of other sectors, as well as communities and families. For instance, a child with a disability may require a healthcare or rehabilitation intervention to be able to access or participate in education more independently. School health and nutrition programmes are particularly important to support changes to inclusive education systems. This can often be crucial to ensuring that inclusive education systems can function properly. For example, a child with visual impairment can only be provided with an appropriate assistive device, following a proper medical assessment. Only then, can the child be provided with the correct spectacles, low-vision magnifier, or a hand-held telescope.[92]

Due to the higher costs often associated with caring for a disabled child – i.e. travel costs to school or medical costs – and the links between poverty and disability, targeted social protection schemes can play a vital role in supporting inclusive education and cushioning families against economic shocks.[93]

Finally, early childhood care and education is particularly important for disabled children, as it supports the right to a quality education by preparing children to make the most of their educational opportunities when they enter school. The first five years of a child's life are the most critical time of growth and learning. In fact, 85% of a child's brain develops by age five, before a child even enters school.[94]

The early childhood years set the foundation for life; ensuring that the health, nutrition, stimulation and support needs of children with disabilities are met, and that they learn to interact with each other children and their surroundings, can be a game changer for their later inclusion in mainstream schools. When disabled children and their caregivers receive good care, a nutritious diet and learning opportunities during the child's earliest years, children have a better chance to grow up healthy, to do well in school, and to reach their highest potential. Early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes can help children to survive, thrive, learn and transition successfully to primary school.[95] Clearly, when children with disabilities face so many disadvantages in accessing mainstream education, this can be a vital foundation stone to overcoming this.

Delivering education in conflict situations: the Palestinian Occupied Territories

As with other countries, children with disabilities in Palestine are far less likely to be in school – and this situation is compounded with the current conflict.

The disability survey conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2011 revealed that the prevalence of disability in the Palestinian Occupied Territories reaches 7%. Unsurprisingly, the most common cause of disability in Palestine is armed conflict. The Israeli occupation has increased the vulnerability of children to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. The ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict has caused the loss of hundreds of lives, leading to rapidly-mounting levels of disability. It is estimated that over the 2005 to 2008 period, 1,461 children were injured. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) indicates in its disability survey[96] that more than one third of Palestinians with disabilities didn't receive any education, and that 60% of the children with disabilities are not enrolled in education.[97] The survey findings also show that one third of those who were enrolled dropped out, and that 22% of the dropouts were attributed to the individual's disability. In addition, the report shows that 53.3% of the persons with disabilities in Palestine are illiterate.[98]

Traditionally, educational services for students with disabilities were provided through special schools. More recently some attempts have been made towards inclusive education. The concept of inclusive education was first mainstreamed into Palestinian education in 1997, where relevant public policies and plans were developed in light of the CRPD and other international conventions and guidelines. Since then, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) has worked closely with a variety of actors to promote and institutionalise inclusive education throughout the country. Since 2007, the Ministry of Education has worked with UNESCO in developing formal teacher qualification programmes and systems and in developing child-friendly and inclusive educational programs. In the pilot of this project, more than 1000 teachers received training on concepts of inclusive education.

However, the strategic plans that have been developed do not yet reflect the necessary scale or ambition for policies and practical procedures to be mainstreamed in all schools. There is also the challenge due to a lack of clarity of laws and regulations. The CRPD has neither been signed nor ratified by the Palestinian government due to the country's political status. The fact that Palestine has recently obtained its membership as an observer state at the UN will also make it possible for the country to be able to ratify the different human rights related documents and conventions, including the CRPD.

Source: this information was compiled by the Palestinian Education Coalition, with additional inputs from the Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation and the EFA-VI national coordinator from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Palestine, supported by CBM.

Pre-school education and care

At the age of 11 months, Reda, a 6 year old boy from Obeidieh village, near Bethlehem in Palestine, was diagnosed as having a large temporoparietal arachnoid cyst in the left hemisphere. The cyst was removed at the age of 12 months, but he was left with very limited vision and had problems moving, sitting and poor hand function.

Since then Reda has been getting support with rehabilitation. Reda is now able to see big objects, follow movements and recognise people and pictures. Reda has started at an inclusive pre-school, after modifications were made to his local kindergarten to support his involvement. The kindergarten was equipped with suitable and age-appropriate teaching and learning materials and toys. The pre-school director, teachers and other staff, as well as the students and their families, were prepared for welcoming Reda, and the teachers were provided with relevant training and teaching techniques that would enable them to meet the specific learning needs of young children with impaired vision. Adaptations to the pre-school curriculum and teaching methods were also made.

Reda is now able to walk and use his functional vision in an appropriate way that helps him benefit from his residual vision. He was very sociable and was well-accepted and liked by his peers and teachers at the kindergarten and was able to acquire the basic readiness skills. He is now looking forward to joining his peers when they move up to primary school.

This successful initiative of inclusive education at the preschool level was launched by BASR in partnership with CBM after the adoption of the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) EFA-VI campaign in Palestine in 2011.

Conclusions and recommendations

Inclusive education systems grounded in a rights-based analysis, which form part a wider strategy to empower learners, celebrate diversity, reduce exclusion, and combat discrimination, must no longer be seen as a marginal policy issue, but as central to the achievement of high-quality education for all learners, and the development of more inclusive societies.

The world has to act now to halt the severe marginalisation of disabled children from education, and shrink the widening gulf between the minority of children not receiving any education, and the majority who are receiving some form of basic education. We have to ensure that no child is left behind. We also have to urgently tackle the quality deficit which means that millions of children are leaving school barely able to read and write. Finally, we have to make sure that a lack of appropriate education is not the catalyst for a lifetime of exclusion, poverty and injustice for the millions of children living with a disability. The tide is certainly beginning to turn, with greater attention on issues of disability and exclusion in development discourse, and inclusive education becoming more widely understood as a credible policy option – but it needs to move faster and with greater urgency towards action.

According to the seven strategic areas outlined in this report, the Global Campaign for Education calls on governments in low and middle income countries, supported by donors and the international community, to take action on a number of priority policy areas.

National Governments must:

Strategy 1

Create appropriate legislative frameworks and set out ambitious national plans for inclusion.

- All governments must ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adapting national level legislation to meet these commitments.

- Abolish legislative or constitutional barriers to disabled people being included in mainstream education systems, and ensure that any contradictory policies, which may thwart the implementation of inclusive education, are eliminated

- Develop ambitious yet realistic time-bound inclusive education plans, outlining the specific activities which are to be undertaken for ensuring inclusive education, within overall education sector plans.

- Align all education policies and procedures with inclusive education (i.e. school management, EMIS, school health etc).

- Produce legal frameworks and district- and school-level guidance on how to make education accessible and well-adapted, including adjustments to infrastructure, learning materials and curricula.

- Involve disabled children and adults, parents and Disabled Peoples' Organisations, as well as other marginalised groups, in developing and monitoring education plans.

- Facilitate – including through provision of funding – the engagement of groups which represent disabled children and their parents in education sector review meetings and Local Education Groups.

- Develop strategies which increase community and family involvement in school management committees and district education offices, including encouraging inputs into budget priorities and the tracking of expenditure.

Strategy 2

Provide the capacity, resources and leadership to implement ambitious national plans on inclusion.

- Ensure there is enough finance available to provide every child with a quality education. This will involve allocating a minimum of 20% of national budgets to education, and ensuring that at least 50% of this is dedicated to basic education, with a focus on improving education for marginalised groups.

- Ensure a time-bound and costed inclusive education implementation plan, with sufficient and specifically allocated resources.

- Introduce targeted measures to reduce exclusion on the basis of disability, by developing funding approaches that target disabled children and compensate for disadvantage.

- Ensure investment is sufficient, efficient and well-targeted through participatory planning, budgeting and monitoring.

- Ensure the Ministry of Education has the primary responsibility for the education of disabled children, while coordinating resources across other departments (i.e. health), and ensuring that levels of responsibilities are clearly outlined across the whole education system, backed by high-level political leadership (i.e. from the Minister of Education).

- Put in place accountability measures – such as inclusive education indicators – as performance criteria across departments from national, district to school level.

- Invest in improving the knowledge and capacity of local and national government institutions, in order for them to deliver on inclusive education (from local education authorities responsible for education planning, through to policy makers in the Education Ministry).

Strategy 3

Improving data and building accountability for action

- Ensure data is disaggregated by disability and gender and tracks both enrolment and retention (including in different schools, such as segregated or mainstream).
- Ensure effective collection and analysis of data to improve planning and monitoring.

Strategy 4

Making schools and classrooms accessible and relevant for all

- Develop and enforce accessible school building regulations.
- Provide accessible materials, resource people and assistive technology such as Braille or sign-language interpreters and actively endorse the use of universally accessible Information Communication Technology (ICT).
- Ensure that curricula are able to better adapt to the diversity of needs and abilities in inclusive classrooms.
- Develop national guidelines to support inclusive education, such as curriculum adaptation, or procedures for screening, identifying and addressing support needs of learners with disabilities, or appropriate adjustments in examination procedures.

Strategy 5

Ensure enough appropriately trained teachers for all

- Reduce teacher-pupil ratios, so that teachers can focus on individual learners' needs.
- Ensure adequate pre-service and in-service training in inclusive education.
- Ensure that adequate support material and expertise in disability specific skills are available (i.e. computer technology, large print / braille learning materials, sign language and augmentative and alternative communication).
- Ensure teachers from 'special' education schools and with specialised skills become resources to assist the mainstream schools.
- Promote the training and recruitment of teachers with disabilities.

Strategy 6

Challenging attitudes which reinforce and sustain discrimination

- Tackle the attitudes which keep children out of schools by launching an awareness programme for the parents of disabled children, and for children themselves, about their rights.
- Build broader awareness programmes that tackle discriminatory views in communities, schools and within the civil service.
- Support Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) approaches, which can help to reduce stigma.

Strategy 7

Create an enabling policy environment for inclusive education, through cross-sectoral interventions

- Children with disabilities need additional resources and support (i.e. social protection schemes or transportation support) to keep them in school, funding must be allocated for this.
- Invest in early childhood care and education programmes that include disabled children.
- Promote school health programmes as an intervention to increase health promotion and protection.
- Encourage community based rehabilitation programmes to support inclusive education.

These strategies must be supported by bi-lateral donors and the international community through development cooperation.

Bi-lateral donors must:

- Meet the long-standing commitment to allocate 0.7% of GNI to aid and allocate at least 10% of aid budgets to basic education, with a particular focus on supporting country plans in the lowest income countries.
- Ensure that aid supporting inclusive education, or targets that reduce disabled children's exclusion, are commensurate with the needs and gaps for meeting the EFA and MDG targets.
- Ensure that aid supports the scaling up of national plans and does not add to fragmented and small scale efforts on inclusive education, while adhering to internationally agreed principles on aid effectiveness.
- Ensure that development assistance for education programmes, plans and polices includes support for inclusive education, and donor agency staff have the capacity and necessary understanding to support this.
- Strengthen and support the capacity of partner governments to address inclusion through planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Ensure all education programmes support learners with disabilities, with particular attention to those who are most marginalised or face multiple disadvantages, such as girls or children with higher levels of physical, or learning disability.
- Support partner governments to ensure adequate coordination amongst ministries and between government, civil society and other development partners, through processes such as the LEGs and other national policy planning forums.

The international community must:

- Build clear and measurable global targets for inclusive education and disability into the post 2015 agenda, ensuring that inclusive education is explicitly referenced within the post 2015 agenda.
- Prioritise the development of reliable data collection on education and disability (including according to type of disability and support needs) to enhance tracking and monitoring of progress on post 2015 goals.
- The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) must become a champion of inclusive education for children with disabilities. This would include ensuring sufficient expertise within the country support teams; the production of guidelines that could help improve the inclusion, including guidelines to support improved data collection; and mainstreaming of inclusive education perspectives into assessment processes.
- GPE must work towards ensuring that Local Education Groups (LEGs) have genuine space for organisations which represent people with disabilities and DPOs.

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Inclusive Education For Children With Disabilities

GCE is a civil society coalition that calls on governments to deliver the right of everyone to a free, quality, public education. Operating in 97 countries with members including grassroots organisations, teachers' unions, child rights groups and international NGOs, its mission is to make sure that States act now to deliver the right of everyone to a free, quality public education.

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