

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Understanding Article 24 of the
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



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September 2017

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognises the right to inclusive education for all persons with disabilities. But what does this actually mean? And what measures are needed to make it a reality? The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the international body set up to monitor governments' progress in implementing the Convention) has produced a 'General Comment' on education - a document that interprets inclusive education and sets out in detail what governments must do to make sure it happens.

This leaflet provides an overview of the General Comment. It applies to all children with disabilities including 'those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'. (Article 1, CRPD)



Understanding inclusive education

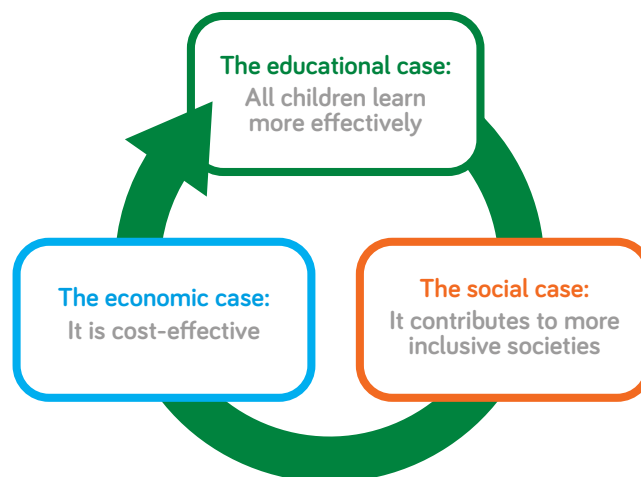
What is inclusive education?

Every child has the right to education. That includes children with disabilities. The CRPD goes further to stress that inclusive education is a fundamental human right for every child with a disability. An inclusive education system is one that accommodates all students whatever their abilities or requirements, and at all levels – pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and life-long learning.

It is important to understand what is and is not inclusive education:

- **Exclusion:** students with disabilities are denied access to education in any form.
- **Segregation:** education of students with disabilities is provided in separate environments designed for specific, and in isolation from students without disabilities.
- **Integration:** placing students with disabilities in mainstream educational institutions without adaptation and requiring the student to fit in.
- **Inclusion:** education environments that adapt the design and physical structures, teaching methods, and curriculum as well as the culture, policy and practice of education environments so that they are accessible to all students without discrimination. Placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes without these adaptations does not constitute inclusion.

Why is inclusive education important?



What does inclusive education involve?

Inclusive education involves transforming the whole education system - legislation and policy, systems for financing, administration, design, delivery and monitoring of education, and the way schools are organized.

It requires changes to:



Interpreting Article 24, the right to inclusive education

The right to education applies to all children. Article 24 describes what is needed to ensure that children with disabilities are able to realize this right:

- ✓ **Non-discrimination:** Children with disabilities must be able to access education without discrimination and on the basis of equality. This means the right not to be segregated, and to be provided with all the support they need. All barriers must be removed - legal, physical, communication and language, social, financial and attitudinal barriers.
- ✓ **Aim of education:** Education should promote the full development of all the abilities and potential of children with disabilities, support them to participate fully in society, and provide them with understanding of human rights, diversity, tolerance and respect for the environment.
- ✓ **No exclusions:** children with disabilities must never be excluded from the general education system. Any legislation limits their access must be repealed.
- ✓ **Access to primary and secondary education:** children with disabilities must have access to inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education in the communities where they live. This means that:
 - Sufficient numbers of schools must be **available** throughout the country.
 - Schools must be **accessible** for all children with disabilities - including buildings, transport, playgrounds, hygiene and toilets facilities, communications, curriculum, education materials, teaching methods, and assessment and support services. All new buildings must be accessible.
 - Education services must be **acceptable** to the requirements, cultures and languages all students with disabilities.

- Schools should **adapt** to the needs of students with different learning requirements.
- ✓ **Reasonable accommodation:** Students with disabilities must be provided with 'reasonable accommodation' to help them have an education on an equal basis with others. This can include adaptations or services which will help overcome discrimination in getting an education. Deciding whether an accommodation is reasonable involves an assessment of whether it is relevant and effective, in relation to how much it will cost. The type of accommodations needed must always be decided with the student, and where appropriate, with their parents or caregivers. Accommodations might include, for example:
 - **Changing** the location of a class
 - **Providing** different forms of in-class communication
 - **Enlarging** print, providing materials and/or subjects in sign, or in an alternative format
 - **Providing** students with a note-taker, or a language interpreter
 - **Allowing** students to use assistive technology in learning and assessment situations
 - **Allowing** a student more time
 - **Reducing** levels of background noise and ensuring sensitivity to sensory overload
 - **Providing** alternative evaluation methods or replacing an element of curriculum by an alternative element

What is reasonable accommodation should never be decided by a medical diagnosis of a child's impairment. It must be decided by looking at the barriers to education that a particular child faces. Denying reasonable accommodation counts as discrimination, and students must be able to challenge a decision to refuse them the accommodations they need.

- ✓ **General support:** Students with disabilities are entitled to general support to enable them get the most out of their education. This might include, for example, having enough trained and supported teaching staff, school counsellors, psychologists, and other relevant health and social service professionals, as well as access to scholarships and financial resources.
- ✓ **Individual education plans:** Every student with a disability should be provided with an individual education plan that sets out the accommodations and support they need. These plans should be developed together with the student. They should be monitored regularly and be designed to help them be fully included. The student should be able to make a complaint if the support they need is not provided.
- ✓ **Providing for specific impairments:** Certain groups of students may require specific services so that they can acquire the life, language and social skills to help them benefit fully from their education. For example:
 - Blind and partially sighted students need to be able to learn Braille and other alternative communication modes, as well as orientation and mobility skills
 - Deaf and hard of hearing students must have the chance to learn sign language and have their linguistic identity promoted, as well as access to quality speech therapy services, induction loop technology and captioning.
 - Learners with communication impairments must be provided with the opportunity to express themselves using alternative or augmentative communication including sign language, low or high tech communication



aids such as tablets with speech output, voice output communication aids (VOCAS) or communication books.

- Learners with social communication difficulties must be supported through adaptations to classroom organisation, including working in pairs, peer tutoring, seating close to the teacher and the creation of a structured and predictable environment.
- Learners with intellectual impairments must be provided with easy-read teaching and learning materials within a safe, quiet and structured learning environments.

- ✓ **Trained teachers:** Teachers must be trained to work effectively in inclusive environments. And teachers with disabilities must be recruited and trained. Teachers with disabilities in schools will help promote equal rights, provide unique expertise and skills, contribute to breaking down barriers and serve as important role models.

Right to education and other human rights

All human rights are interlinked. This includes the right to education. It is not possible to achieve an effective education unless other rights are realized. And if the right to education is fulfilled, it leads to the realisation of other rights.



What must governments do to ensure inclusive education?

- ✓ **Establish structures for education:** schools for every child should be the responsibility of the **education ministry**. And other ministries need to be involved in helping create inclusive education – for example, **transport** to enable children to get to school, **planning** so that buildings are accessible, **child protection** to make sure that children are safe, **finance** to ensure sufficient funding is available.
- ✓ **Introduce laws and policies:** the right laws and policies must be in place to support inclusive education. This can include laws to end **discrimination**, to promise the **equal right** to education, to guarantee **inclusive education**, to provide **support**, to give children the **right to be heard**, to make sure all schools are **accessible** and introduce **early identification and assessment** of young children
- ✓ **Create education plans:** governments need to make a **plan of action** to introduce inclusive education. It will need to spell out, for example, how much money will be made available, how many children will need to be provided with a school place, what action it is going to put in place to make it happen and time frames for when it will achieve these goals.

- ✓ **Collect information:** governments need to know how many children with disabilities there are and what help they need to support their learning. They also need to find out what problems they face in getting to school. Only with this information can they plan properly.
- ✓ **Close institutions:** many children with disabilities are forced to live in institutions – orphanages, residential schools. Government needs to bring an end to this practice, and those children should be helped to **live with their own families** or with other families in the community. Then they can go to their local school.
- ✓ **Make money available:** governments must make sure that any money spent to support segregated schools is moved so it can support inclusive schools. And they need to make money available to **adapt schools** so they are accessible to all children. And to provide the **learning materials and supports** needed by children with different disabilities. This can include **assistive technologies** that help with learning.
- ✓ **Provide teacher training:** all teachers need to be trained to work in inclusive schools with children with very different abilities.
- ✓ **Introduce inclusive testing and assessment:** children with disabilities should be assessed on the progress they have made for themselves. They should not be judged simply on the basis of a standard set of exams or tests.
- ✓ **Enable complaints:** children with disabilities must be able to make a complaint if their right to inclusive education is not being met, or they feel they are being discriminated against. And the system for making a complaint must be safe and easy to use. Governments or schools must take action if the complaint is justified.
- ✓ **Measure progress:** it is important that the government sets itself goals and time frames so that it can measure if it is making progress. For example, a date by when 50% of schools have been made accessible, or when 50% of children with disabilities complete secondary education.

Further information

For more information on inclusive education:

1. General Comment No 4, Right to Inclusive Education, you can get hold of it at: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD/C/GC/4&Lang=en It is available in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arabic. It is also available in word and pdf formats.
2. There is a really useful guide to creating inclusive schools called The Index for Inclusion: <http://www.csie.org.uk/resources/inclusion-index-explained.shtml>
3. The World of Inclusion website provides a large number of resources on inclusion: <http://worldofinclusion.com/resources/>



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