



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION MALAYSIA

June 2014

A SCHOOL FOR ALL CHILDREN

Celebrating differences, supporting learning, and responding to individual needs



Children with disabilities don't just want a good education, they want to feel welcomed by schools, included in all aspects of school life and supported to learn and make friendships.

In all settings, children and young people with disabilities want the same opportunities as non-disabled students to achieve qualifications and skills that will lead to job and training opportunities and help them to gain confidence and control over their own lives.

Unfortunately for some children and young people with disabilities, there are barriers that contribute to bad experiences in mainstream settings.

Inclusive education

Inclusive education means giving each and every child an opportunity to learn at their local school with enough support for them to reach their full potential.

This does not require special institutions, care, or expensive materials. It simply means that all students should have the opportunity to receive individualised services and approaches to learning.

In Malaysia

The Ministry of Education provides children with disabilities with three schooling options under the national special needs education system:

- Special Education Schools
- Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP)
- Inclusive Education Programme

In 2010, the Ministry of Education enrolled 48,140 children with disabilities in these three programmes, representing around 1 per cent of the total student population in the national school system.

In the same year, the Ministry of the Education estimated around 200,000 students with disabilities in the primary school population had gone unidentified; while some 23,000 children with disabilities were out of school.¹

¹ *Setting Up a Multidisciplinary Framework for Early Identification and Intervention Support Services for Children with Disabilities*, 2011

All children and young people of the world, with their individual strengths and weaknesses, with their hopes and expectations, have the right to education. It is not our education systems that have a right to certain types of children. Therefore, it is the school system of a country that must be adjusted to meet the needs of all children.

B. Lindqvist,
UN Special Rapporteur for
Persons with Disabilities, 1994



A PROMISE TO CHILDREN

We promised every girl and boy the right to an education

Nearly 25 years ago, the world made a promise to **ALL** its children: when it adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 20 November 1989.

That we would do everything in our power to protect and promote the rights of every child – to survive and thrive, to learn and grow, to make their voices heard and to reach their full potential.

There is much to celebrate as we approach the 25th anniversary of the CRC in 2014. But this historic milestone must also serve as an urgent reminder that our work is far from finished.

Equality of opportunity

Almost every government in the world, including Malaysia has ratified the CRC, a holistic human rights treaty addressing the social, economic, cultural, civil, and protection rights of children.

The CRC emphasises both the right to education on the basis of equality of opportunity and the broad aims of education in terms of promoting the fullest possible development of the child.

In its first General Comment issued in 2001 on the aims of education, the Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasised that “**the education to which every child has a right is one designed to provide the child with life skills, to strengthen the child’s capacity to enjoy a full range of human rights and to promote a culture which is infused by human rights values**”.

In a General Comment on children with disabilities issued in 2006, the Committee on the Rights of the Child further stressed that inclusive education must be the goal of educating children with disabilities.

CRC@25
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Despite these commitments, the rights of children with disabilities to education continue to be neglected and violated.

To keep to our promise of the CRC, measures must be taken to provide early assessment and access to early-years provision, to tackle prejudice and discrimination, to provide protection from bullying and violence, and to develop appropriate support and services for families.

Article 23 of the CRC specifically addresses the right of children with disabilities to assistance to ensure that they are able to access education in a manner that promotes their social inclusion.



THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Along with the CRC, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2006, provides a new impetus to promote the human rights of all children with disabilities.

The CRPD includes detailed provisions on the right to education in Article 24 which upholds the rights of people with disabilities to inclusive education, at all levels, without discrimination and on the basis of equality of opportunity.

The Article calls on government to ensure that children with disabilities:

- are not excluded from the general education system and can access inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- are provided with reasonable accommodation of their needs;
- receive the support they need within the general education system;
- are provided with individualised support measures, consistent with full inclusion.

MALAYSIA ratified the CRC in 1995 and the CRPD in 2010.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION²

Child-centred teaching that accommodates every child, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions.



All children, irrespective of their abilities, should be given the opportunity to learn together in mainstream classrooms in their neighbourhood school; with teaching methods, materials, and a school environment that addresses each of their needs.

The merit of such schools is not only that they are capable of providing quality education to all children; their establishment is a crucial step in helping to change discriminatory attitudes, in creating welcoming communities and in developing an inclusive society.

Learning for all

Inclusive education systems are those that have developed schools based upon “a child-centered teaching capable of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities.

It is not only about addressing issues such as access, teacher training, but also involves a shift in underlying values and beliefs held across the system.

Inclusive education stresses:

- The open learning potential of each student, rather than a hierarchy of cognitive skills
- Reform of the curriculum and a cross-cutting pedagogy, rather than a need to focus on student deficiencies
- Active participation of students in the learning process, rather than an emphasis on specialized discipline knowledge as key to teachers' expertise
- A common curriculum for all, based upon differentiated and/or individualized instruction, rather than an alternative curriculum being developed for low achievers
- Teachers who include, rather than exclude

Putting Inclusive Education into action

- Embrace and act on inclusive values
- Value every life equally
- Help everyone feel a sense of belonging
- Promote children's participation in learning and teaching
- Reduce exclusion, discrimination and barriers to learning and participation
- Develop cultures, policies and practices to promote diversity and respect for everyone equally
- Learn from inclusive practice to share the lessons widely
- View differences between children and between adults as a resource for learning
- Acknowledge the right of children to locally based high-quality education
- Improve schools for staff and parents as well as children
- Emphasise the value of building positive school communities as well as achievements
- Foster positive relationships between schools and their values and surrounding communities
- Recognise the inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society



The case for inclusion

An key message from the General Discussion Day on the rights of children with disabilities, held by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 1997, was the importance of recognising children with disabilities as contributors to society, not Burdens.

It is in the economic interests of governments to invest in the education of children with disabilities in order that they can become effective members of the labour force as they grow up.

Social, education benefits

- It can produce positive changes in attitudes within schools towards diversity by educating all children together and leading to greater social cohesion
- Children with disabilities are less stigmatised and more socially included
- Children without disabilities learn tolerance, acceptance of difference and respect for diversity
- Children with disabilities have access to a wider curriculum than that which is available in special schools.
- It leads to higher achievement for children than in segregated settings. There are educational benefits for all children inherent in providing inclusive education, through major changes in the way schooling is planned, implemented and evaluated
- Education is a means to ensure that people can enjoy and defend their rights in society and contribute to the process of democratisation and personalisation both in society and in education

² UNICEF, 2012, *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education.*

MALAYSIA: EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES



Primary level education was made compulsory in Malaysia for every child since 2003.

The Education Act 1996 and the Education (Special Education) Regulations 2013 provide the legal framework for education for children with disabilities in the country.

Section 40 of the Education Act requires the Minister for Education to provide special education in special schools or designated primary and secondary schools.

The Education (Special Education) Regulation 2013 is applicable to a government school or government-aided school with special needs education.

The 2013 Regulations revokes the earlier 1997 Special Education Regulations which restricted eligibility to the national Special Needs Education system only to children with special needs who were 'educable'.

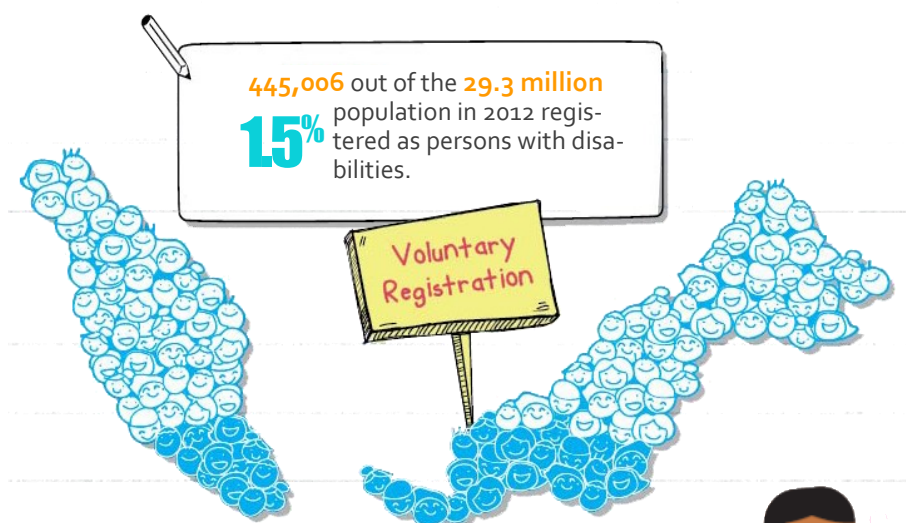
'Physically handicapped children' who were excluded in the earlier 1997 Regulations are now included for Special Needs Education in the 2013 Regulations.

Malaysia's Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Act, enacted in 2008, mandates that government-run and private education institutions are responsible for providing infrastructure, equipment and teaching materials, teaching methods, curricula and other forms of support to enable children with disabilities to pursue education.

Malaysia had 445,006 registered persons with disabilities as of end 2012, representing 1.5 per cent of the country's population of approximately 29.3 million.

It is unknown how many in this total are children below 18 years old since statistics prior to 2011 were not disaggregated by age.

In 2012, 85,803 new registrations were recorded; 38% of whom were children.



FULFIL, RESPECT, PROTECT

When Malaysia ratified the CRC in 1995 and the CRPD in 2010, it undertook to take all necessary measures to ensure that the rights they contain are realised.

• To fulfil the right to education:

For example, by ensuring that quality education is available for all children, promoting inclusive education, and introducing positive measures to enable children to benefit from it, such as by making physical adaptations to buildings, providing accessible transport, adapting the curricula to the needs of all children, and providing necessary equipment and resources.

• To respect the right to education:

For example, by avoiding any action that would serve to prevent children accessing education, such as legislation that categorises certain groups of children with disabilities as uneducable, or school entry testing systems that serve to categorise children with disabilities as not ready for school.

• To protect the right to education:

For example, by taking the necessary measures to remove the barriers to education posed by individuals or communities, such as resistance by teachers to accepting children with disabilities, or violence, abuse or bullying in the school environment.

SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION SYSTEM ELIGIBILITY, OPTIONS, & ENROLMENT

The Ministry of Education special needs education system for children with disabilities



Eligible Children

Education (Special Education) Regulations 2013 :

A pupil with special education needs means a pupil who is certified by a medical practitioner, an optometrist, an audiologist or a psychologist to have:

- Visual disability
- Hearing disability
- Speech disability
- Physical disability
- Learning difficulties (or)
- Any combination of the disabilities or difficulties listed above

Children who intend to enroll in special needs education will be required to attend a probation period of no more than three months at a government or government-aided school to determine suitability.

The school the child attended for the probation will submit a Probation Period Report to a panel for consideration at the completion of the probation. The Panel will comprise the 1) School Principal, Head Teacher or Senior Assistant for Special Education; 2) the State Education Department or District Education Officer; and 3) the Social Welfare Department Officer or Persons with Disabilities Development Department Officer.

Three Schooling Options

1. Special Education Schools

Specific schools for children with disabilities. There are currently 33 Special Education Schools.

Primary schools: 28

- 22 for children with hearing disability
- 5 for children with visual disability
- 1 for children with learning disabilities.

Secondary schools: 5

- 3 vocational schools
- 1 academic schools for children with visual disabilities
- 1 academic schools for children with hearing disabilities

2. Special Education Integrated Programmes (SEIP)

Specific classes in mainstream schools dedicated to children with special needs. There are currently just under 2,000 mainstream schools with SEIP

Primary schools: 1,300

Secondary schools: 670

3. Inclusive Education Programmes

Children with disabilities are integrated into mainstream classes.

Enrolment

The overall percentage of children with disabilities within the total student population in the national school system is around 1%.

The number of children with disabilities enrolled in inclusive education programmes for students with physical disabilities declined from 6,360 in 2010 to 562 in 2012.

The 562 children with physical disabilities enrolled in the Inclusive Education Programme in mainstream classes in 2012 represents:

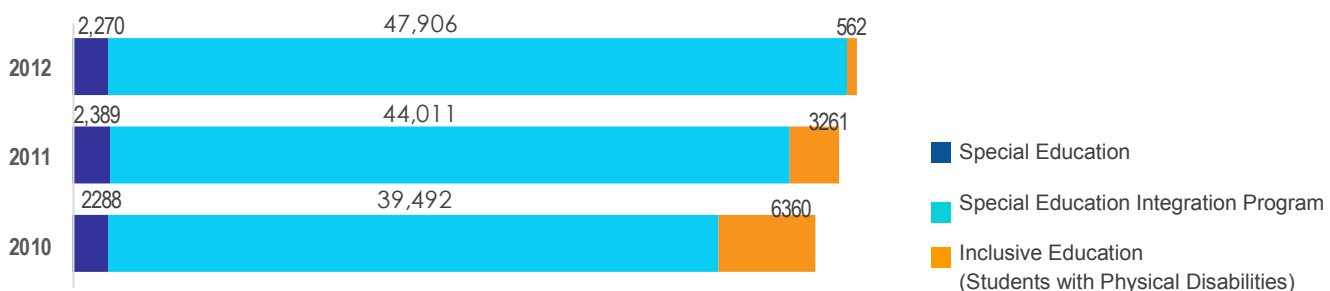
- around 1% out of the 50,738 children with disabilities enrolled in special needs education in that year;
- around 0.01% out of the 5,086,180 students (both with and without disabilities) who were enrolled in the national education system in that year.

'Quick Facts 2012 – Malaysia Educational Statistics', Ministry of Education in July 2012.

FAST FACT

1,131% decline

The number of children with disabilities enrolled in the inclusive education programme between 2010 and 2012.



DELIVERING EDUCATION SERVICES TO CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Ministry of Education

The MOE holds the primary responsibility to provide education for children with disabilities in Malaysia.

Responsibilities include:

- Provide and manage special needs education to certain categories of children with disabilities through Special Education Schools, Special Education Integration Programme (SEIP) and inclusive Education programmes
- Formulate curricula and educational modules for special needs education
- Manage the training of teachers and teaching resources for special needs education
- Provide support services and augmentative and assistive devices for students in special needs education
- Facilitate sports and co-curriculum activities and art programmes for children in special needs education
- Manage early intervention for children with disabilities at pre-school level and from 0 – 6 years of age at Special Education Service Centres
- Register and monitor private special education institutions at pre-school, primary and secondary level including teaching curricula and infrastructure
- Develop and periodically review of education policies, services and programmes for persons with disabilities.

The **Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU)** in the Prime Minister's Department is tasked to oversee the implementation and to assess progress of the government transformation programme, including in relation to education; as well as to coordinate the multisectoral effort to develop the new National Education Blueprint (which includes policies on the education of children with disabilities).



NGOs and Private Sector

The private sector and NGOs in Malaysia also play an important role to provide some options for education for children with disabilities; and to advocate for their right to quality education.

There are non-profit learning and care centres that provide early intervention, learning, rehabilitation and training programmes for children with disabilities. This fills an important gap in the public system.

For example, Malaysian Care, Asia Community Services, Kiwanis Centre for Learning Disabilities are some of the non-government organisations that provide early intervention education for the child and the parents. They also provide training for the children in order for them to fit in better in mainstream schools; and advocate for the admission of children with special needs into mainstream schools.

There are also NGOs that play a crucial role in advocating with government for improvements in early detection mechanisms, health and education services and accessibility for children with disabilities.

The National Early Childhood Intervention Council (NECIC) actively campaigns for effective early childhood intervention methods and improving the special needs education system for children with disabilities.

CHALLENGES

The government of Malaysia recognises that Inclusive Education is the most effective means of overcoming discriminatory attitudes and building an inclusive society. Enrolment of children in such programmes however is low.

Several reasons have been cited for this, both by government and advocates for children with disabilities. These include:

- shortage of qualified teachers
- shortage of professional support such as speech and language therapists and educational psychologists
- training syllabus for special education teachers needs to be reviewed.
- lack of a tailored curriculum for certain learning disabilities
- inadequate disabled-friendly facilities in mainstream schools
- lack of uniformity of access to education services, specifically in smaller towns in Sabah, Sarawak and the interior of Peninsular Malaysia.
- insufficient assistive technological devices like hearing aids and Braille typing machines.



WAY FORWARD

ACCESS AND AVAILABILITY

Every child has the right to education on the basis of equality of opportunity. Children with disabilities are particularly at risk of being marginalised or discriminated against in the realisation of this right.

Governments need to invest in universal and targeted measures to ensure that children with disabilities are equally able to realise the right to education alongside other children:

Right of access to education

Remove the barriers to education, including physical, mobility, communication and attitudinal barriers

Support parents for them to support their children's access to education.

Early identification and assessment to ensure that any developmental delay, impairment or particular difficulty experienced by the child is identified and addressed as early as possible for provision of appropriate support and care.

Early years education for every child with a disability so they are able to benefit from their formal education and achieve a positive transition.

Ensure access to and availability of inclusive education for all children, supported by resources, measures and adaptations within schools to accommodate differing needs.

Create inclusive learning environments for children to learn together, and which enable children with disabilities to acquire the core academic curriculum and basic cognitive skills, together with essential life skills.

Right to quality education

Positive learning opportunities providing appropriate support for all children.

Investment and support for teachers so they can teach in inclusive environments.

Rights-based learning and assessment in which assessment processes are sensitive to the situation of children with disabilities, including their language and culture.

A child-friendly, safe and healthy environment to enable all children to reach their full potential, and which adopts a holistic approach to their education, health and well being.

Respect for rights within education

Respect for identity by recognising, for example, the right of children with visual and hearing disabilities to respect for their culture and language through provision of learning in sign language.

Respect for participation rights – the right of children, including children with disabilities, to be involved in matters concerning their education, at the level of individual decisions affecting them, in the way that their school is run and in relation to broader education policy and delivery.

Respect for integrity – children with disabilities have the right, both within school and when travelling to/ from school, to be protected from all forms of violence, bullying or harassment, and to school discipline which is respectful of their dignity.

EVERYONE INVOLVED

Action from everyone, at every level

Inclusive education needs to be driven by strategic partnerships between diverse actors, including families and communities, local and national NGOs, international organisations and governments, and in particular organisations of people with disabilities, families and children with disabilities themselves.



Local authorities: The development of local policies for implementation of inclusion; appropriate support for individual schools; provision of funding; securing the necessary building adaptations and the provision of resource centres.

Individual schools: The introduction of an inclusive educational environment which addresses the culture, policies and practices of the school to ensure that the basic conditions exist in which all children can participate and learn.

Parents: Sending all their children to school, and supporting them both in their education, and in helping ensure that schools comply with the principles of an inclusive approach.

Children: To take advantage of opportunities to participate and learn, support their peers and co-operate with the values of inclusive schooling.

Civil society: Supporting the development of community-based inclusive education and contributing to an environment of respect and acceptance.