



About Handicap International

"Handicap International is an independent and impartial international aid organisation working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster. Working alongside persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, our action and testimony are focused on responding to their essential needs, improving their living conditions and promoting respect for their dignity and their fundamental rights."

www.handicap-international.org

About this policy brief

Editor

Technical Resources
Divison
Knowledge Management
Unit
14, avenue Berthelot
69361 Lyon Cedex 07
France

publications@handicap-international.org

Author

Hannah CORPS

Editing & Layout

Michael GUY
Stéphanie DEYGAS

This policy brief is an introduction to Handicap International's 2012 Policy Paper on Inclusive Education, the full version of which can be downloaded from Skill:

http://www.hiproweb.org/uploads/tx_hidrtdocs/PP08IE.pdf



Key messages from the Policy Paper

Inclusive Education is a process for increasing participation and reducing exclusion, in a way that effectively responds to the diverse needs of all learners. It takes into account the individual teaching and learning needs of all marginalized and vulnerable children and young people: street children, girls, children from ethnic minorities, children from economically disadvantaged families, children from nomadic / refugee / displaced families, children with HIV/AIDS and children with disabilities. Inclusive education aims to ensure that these children are afforded equal rights and opportunities in education.

Handicap International has been working in the field of education since 1998, and prior to that, with development partner Action Nord Sud from 1989 to 1997. Handicap International's actions in education have a specific focus on **children with disabilities**, who represent some of the most vulnerable and excluded young learners worldwide. Our work is implemented in low income countries, in both emergency and sustainable development contexts, and is underpinned by the following key principles:

- Children with disabilities have the right to access a quality, inclusive education.
- Learning environments must respond to the physical, social, intellectual and emotional needs and personal aspirations of individual children and young people.
- Education policy and practice must reflect and respect the diversity of learners, especially children with disabilities.

Key figures

- The 2011 World Disability Reports estimates that people with disabilities comprise 15% of the global population, equivalent to over 1 billion people.
- Estimates show that one third of the 77 million children still out of school are disabled (Education For All, Global Monitoring Report 2010).

Why does Handicap International work in the field of Inclusive Education?



Definitions

Special education system - means children with disabilities receiving an education in a segregated learning environment such as a special school that is often isolated from the community, from other children, or from the mainstream education schools.

Integrated education system - means classes for children with disabilities that are located in mainstream schools but in a separate classroom with other disabled learners and with a dedicated teacher. These children will often have little contact with their non-disabled peers.

Inclusive education system - means that the whole education system considers the measures it must take to be able to provide an appropriate education with all children learning together. Links are made with support services both special and mainstream. The inclusive education system takes a systematic approach to change rather than a school by school approach.



Education is both a right in itself and the means for realising other rights. Inclusive education is necessary to realise the civil, political and economic rights of all children and young people. A quality inclusive education is the main method of human, economic and social development, benefiting both the individual and society at the same time.

Importance and context

It is widely acknowledged that education can have extensive positive social and economic impact for both individuals and communities alike. However, it is estimated that 77 million children are currently excluded from education globally, and of those, one third are children with disabilities.

Exclusion from education further perpetuates the vicious cycle of disability and poverty. Children living in extreme poverty are denied access to basic services and often experience hazardous living conditions. This significantly increases the likelihood of developing serious health conditions and impairments. In turn, children with impairments are likely to experience social exclusion and discrimination, which further exacerbates their poverty and vulnerability.

The past ten years have witnessed a significant global drive on the issue of access to education. Whilst much progress has been made, as demonstrated by a global decrease in the number of children out of school, there remain serious challenges in terms of quality of teaching, learning, retention and success in education. For children with disabilities, the situation is critical. Education systems and services worldwide are simply failing to meet their needs, both in terms of access *and* quality of education.

Education for children with disabilities in most low and middle-income countries largely consists of segregated special schools in urban areas. However, evidence is beginning to show that this type of educational system is not a viable solution over the long term and invariably excludes the poorest individuals, especially in rural settings.

The international policies which frame our actions

The International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) - The CRPD, and in particular article 24, is a key document for Handicap International's education work in terms of advocacy and good practice on the inclusion of children with disabilities in education.

The Millennium Development Goals - The second and third Millennium Development Goals are to '[e]nsure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling' and to [e]liminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015'.

The Education For All goals (UNESCO) - The six EFA goals are:

- Expand early childhood care and education
- Provide free and compulsory primary education for all
- Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults
- Increase adult literacy by 50%
- Achieve gender parity and gender equality by 2015
- Improve the quality of education

How does Handicap International work in the field of education?



Article 24 of the UNCRPD

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:

a) The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;

b) The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;

c) Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.

2. In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:

a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;

b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;

c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;

d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;

e) Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion. (...)

Three main levels of intervention

- Direct support to children with disabilities and their families as part of local inclusive community development
- Improvement of services (education, social, health)
- Inclusive education policy development at national level.

Three main expected results

- Changing attitudes for an inclusive society
- Teaching and learning for an inclusive system of services
- Inclusive education policy development.

All Handicap International projects on education are subject to extensive scoping, feasibility, design and planning phases, to ensure our actions are geared towards sustainability and building local capacities.

Cross-cutting approaches

A child-centered approach: All education projects should be centred around the needs and rights of individual children and young people with disabilities and the communities in which they live. Children with disabilities and their families can be empowered to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to improve and influence their education opportunities. Typically, Handicap International's inclusive education projects have activities to develop the self esteem, decision-making skills and confidence of children with disabilities and their non-disabled peers through inclusive children's clubs, sport and leisure activities and other school and community initiatives.

A multi-sector and multi-stakeholder approach: As education is the responsibility of many actors working at many different levels, a multi-stakeholder approach should be adopted across all education projects. Stakeholders will inevitably include a mix of individuals and groups from the public, informal, private and specialized sectors. These sectors will vary widely, according to the country context and national infrastructure. Having a common 'inclusive' strategic aim across ministries ensures that an appropriate education policy can be implemented. For some children with disabilities, access to appropriate health care and social wellbeing support is fundamental to ensure their access to education. Therefore, in all countries, inclusion in education requires restructuring government resources (human, material and financial).

A partnership approach: Working at different levels of intervention requires strong collaboration between local and national civil society organizations and government bodies. For Handicap International, work on inclusion in education therefore necessitates a partnership approach which includes both grass-roots and institutional partners. This means ensuring that all those involved in the process of education for children with disabilities are actively engaged in the design and planning phase through to implementation and evaluation.



Objectives for 2011-2015

For this period, Handicap International's priorities on inclusive education are to:

- Strengthen capacities of staff and partners
- Improve the visibility of the Federation in education networks
- Improve the relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the projects
- Revise our global strategy based on the capitalisation of project implementation experience and new capacities of staff and partners.

Moreover, the education sector is central to development processes globally.

As such it forms an important component of Handicap International's comprehensive approach to disability in our programmes.

So, projects on inclusive education should be linked explicitly with cross-cutting approaches such as access to services, local inclusive development and community-based inclusive development, to achieve maximum impact for the living conditions of people with disabilities.

A twin-track approach: The inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education requires cultivating and applying inclusive practices at all levels, rather than concentrating solely on a child's impairment. As such, Handicap International's inclusive education work requires a twin track approach, whereby the individual needs of children with disabilities are addressed at the same time as addressing societal, environmental, economic and political barriers to education.

A gender-inclusive approach: Throughout the world, and particularly in developing countries, disabled girls face considerable barriers to accessing education; the core barriers being discrimination and negative attitudes. However, these barriers will not be resolved by working with women and girls alone. Discrete projects developed for disabled girls should be complemented by a range of projects targeting other key beneficiaries at different levels - notably disabled boys, non-disabled children, mothers, fathers, families, teachers, adults with disabilities and local community groups.

Linkages with other areas of Handicap International's work

In addition to the cross-cutting approaches listed above, Handicap International's education projects also make strong connections with areas of the organisation's work, including:

Contributions to inclusive local development: This means placing a strong emphasis on awareness raising amongst parents, local leaders and decision makers to prioritise inclusive practices in education. The aim, wherever possible, is to include children with disabilities in the decision making processes towards inclusive local governance.

Links with rehabilitation services: A high proportion of children with disabilities identified by Handicap International's education projects require rehabilitation services to support their inclusion in schools. Strong links are thus encouraged between local education and rehabilitation services.

HIV/AIDS and sexual abuse: Children with disabilities are highly vulnerable to the impact of HIV and AIDS. In countries with high HIV prevalence, many children with disabilities are AIDS orphans or are living in households where someone is infected. Boys and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse and are thus exposed to increased risk of transmission. HIV and AIDS awareness is a key theme in inclusive education and can be developed as an integral part of a local level (community or school) awareness-raising session on inclusion and disability. Protection against sexual abuse and violence and creation of safe environments for vulnerable children should be an integral part of any inclusive education project.

Inclusive education in emergencies: The key activities of inclusion in education will remain the similar, whether working in a development or emergency context. However, in some countries affected by disaster or serious conflict, there can be good opportunities to propose and develop inclusive frameworks for education, particularly when there is scope for complete re-design and re-building of the education system.