

Committee: Human Rights Council

Issue: Ensuring access to education for people with disabilities

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Introduction

According to the World Report on Disability approximately one billion people in the world are living with a disability, and within the 1 billion at least 1 in 10 are children and 80% living in developing countries. Children with disabilities are less likely to start school and if they do, they are unlikely to transition to secondary school. Access to school for children with disabilities is often limited by a lack of understanding about their needs, and a lack of trained teachers, classroom support learning resources and facilities.

Despite the fact that education is a universal human right, it is still common for the 93 million children with disabilities to be denied the right to education. Denying children and adults with disabilities their right to education has a lifelong impact on learning, achievement and employment opportunities, hence hindering their potential economic, social and human development.

To ensure that everyone is able to gain benefits from their basic human rights without discrimination, disability inclusion should be mainstreamed in all policies and plans. This applies to education systems, which need to promote inclusion by ensuring the presence, participation and achievement of all people with disabilities

There can be various reasons why education for people with disabilities is very limited and they can include: Lack of accessibility, both in terms of physically inaccessible school buildings and unsuitable learning materials, discrimination and prejudice which prevents people with disabilities from accessing education on equal terms to others, exclusion or segregation from mainstream school settings (also referred to as 'regular schools') as well as inferior quality of education, including in mainstream settings where children with disabilities have been 'integrated' into the existing non-inclusive system etc.

Definition of Key Terms

Disability

A disability may be generally defined as a condition which may restrict a person's mental, sensory, or mobility functions to undertake or perform a task in the same way as a person who does not have a disability. Disabilities can affect people in different ways, both physically and psychology.

Aphasia

The impairment of language in which directly affects the construction or understanding of speech as well as one's ability to read or write. The cause of aphasia is due to brain injuries, many of them in which are stroke

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

ADHD is a brain disorder which which affects one's attention span and is one is usually categorized as having ADHD when having symptoms such as inattentiveness, impulsivity and hyperactivity, however, the symptoms differ for each individual. ADHD was formerly ADD, or attention deficit disorder. Additionally, ADHD may start in childhood and continue in adulthood

Dyscalculia

A brain disorder in which results in difficulty in learning and understanding basic arithmetics as well as mathematics. Dyscalculia also affects one's basic skills such as estimation, telling time, remembering phone numbers or sequence of numbers, counting money etc.

Dysgraphia

Dysgraphia refers to a problem with the nervous system which affects motor skills in which is needed for writing. People with this learning disability will have difficulty thinking and writing at the same time, thus leading to further difficulties with creative writing tasks. Many with Dysgraphia often have irregular, moderately illegible and inconsistent handwriting, additionally how lower and upper case letters are presented may also vary.

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a learning disorder in which has an effect on one's ability to read, spell and speak as well. For children who have dyslexia, the brain has difficulty connecting letters to sounds that each one make leading to the sounds mixing with each other therefore leading to frequent spelling mistakes and slower rate of reading.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is the combination of different and diverse students learning together in the same environment regardless of their race, gender, religion and if they are disabled or not. Inclusive education values diversity and the unique contributions each student brings to the learning environment. Students and their parents participate in setting learning goals and take part in decisions that affect them. Furthermore, school staff have the training, support, flexibility, and resources to nurture, encourage, and respond to the needs of all students.

Specific Learning Difficulty/ Difference (SpLD)

A term used to refer to a difference or difficulty that one may have with certain aspects of learning. Some of the most common SpLDs are dyslexia, apraxia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dysphasia, aphasia.

Background Information

Relevant Countries

Australia

Following the Disability Discrimination Act in 1992, the Australian government established the [Disability Standards for Education in August 2005](#) (reviewed every 5 years) which ensured students with disabilities are able to access and participate in the same educational standards as other students. The Disability Standards for Education includes standards for consultations, adjustments to the education system as well as requirements of compliance and elimination of discrimination against students with disabilities. Furthermore, the document provides specific rights and specifications on enrolment, participation, curriculum development, student support services and prevention of harassment and victimisation.

Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, many vulnerable children, including from the Roma community, reach school age without the basic knowledge in which educational programs provide to other children. Although, through the Bulgaria Social Inclusion Project, children from marginalized backgrounds and those with disabilities have been receiving more inclusive opportunities at an early age. The project has helped these children enroll in kindergarten and receive the integrated social, health, and childcare services that is so critical to their future. Over 1,700 children with disabilities have

benefited from early intervention services, and over 360 of them have been enrolled in mainstream kindergarten and preschool groups.

Vietnam

The Intergenerational Deaf Education Outreach program in Vietnam which operates in Hanoi, Thai Nguyen, Quang Binh and Ho Chi Minh City, supported by the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) has brought families, institutions, and service providers together in an integrated effort to teach deaf children sign language at a very young age, helping them to get ready to learn when they enter formal primary school. Through this program, over 260 deaf children have been served by family support teams, with dramatic progress in cognitive and language development. Over 100 deaf family mentors and sign language interpreters have been certified by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, and twice that number of hearing teachers have learnt sign language and ways to support deaf children in school.

India

With the passing of the Right to Education Act in 2009, India's nationwide Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan program has sought to bring all children into elementary school, including those with disabilities. The scale of the program is relatively large, serving 200 million children—a group that is larger than the entire population of Nigeria, the world's seventh-largest country.

One of the results indicators within this World Bank-supported national program is the enrollment of children identified as having special needs into primary and upper primary school. The share of children with special needs enrolled at this level has risen from 84% in 2012-13 to nearly 90% today. This is a total of 2.5 million children.

In addition, over 116,000 children with special needs receive home-based education, taking the total coverage of identified children to 96% or nearly 2.7 million under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Ongoing challenges include identifying and serving the remaining children with special needs in India, and raising the quality of education for them.

Indian states are innovating within this program to try to offer greater support to disadvantaged children. In Bihar state's Jehanabad district, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs)—residential school facilities that have been set up across the country for girls from underprivileged communities—are now trying to accommodate girls with visual impairment and help them catch up on lost learning.

Relevant Organisations

Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

Established in 2002, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is the only global fund in which is dedicated to developing education in developing countries. GPE aims to collaborate with other international organisations, teacher organisation, the private sector as well as individuals to increase the number of children who are enrolled in school and have access to proper education. In 2015 and 2016, GPE had adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and created a strategy (GPE 2020) based on the goals in which aim to improve education. Furthermore in 2018, GPE aims to raise \$3.1 billion to aid construction of classroom, training of teachers and purchase of materials needed for proper education e.g. textbooks, stationery etc.

Center for Education Innovations (CEI)

CEI aims to increase quality education for the less fortunate by working with organisations such as STIR (Sustainocracy, Transformation, Indexation and Research) education, the LEGO foundation, Global Giving and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and creating innovative education models. Furthermore CEI also acts as a platform for funders, governments and research institutions to learn more about educational models in which can be adapted to improve education systems in that specific nation.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description
October 1990	In October 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which is the American legislation in which ensures that students with disabilities are provided with Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that can be modified and adapted to their individual needs. IDEA requires schools to find students in which may have a disability and provide them with the appropriate educational services such as speech therapy. The aim of IDEA is to provide children with disabilities the same opportunity for education as any other students.
August 2009	In a report from the American Civil Liberties Union and Human Rights Watch, they found that students with disabilities made up approximately 19% of students that suffered corporal punishment during 2006 - 2007 school year.

Approximately 41,972 students with disabilities were subjected to corporal punishment that year, although the number is likely higher as some cases did not actually get reported.

August 2011 Along with the World Bank, Nepal began developing a strategy in which includes children with disabilities into their educational programs. The Department of Education also began to develop a curriculum for children with intellectual disabilities along with other local disabled persons' organizations.

July 2013 In this Human Rights Watch report named "As Long As They Let Us Stay In Class" documents the struggles of children and young people with disabilities to be educated in mainstream schools in their communities. Many children with disabilities are excluded from mainstream schools unless they are able to "demonstrate their ability to adapt" to the schools social and learning environment.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

As for the United Nations' involvement with the educational rights for people with disabilities as well as general disability rights in general, an international human rights treaty of the UN was drafted in December 2006, signed in March 2007 and effective in May 2008. With 20 ratifications, 160 signatories and the involvement of 175 parties, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was established in order to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities. Specifically with education, The Convention states that all individuals with disabilities should be guaranteed the right to inclusive education at all levels without discrimination and regardless of age.

Date	Description
9 December 1975	The General Assembly resolution 3447 (XXX) of 9 December 1975 which was the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons included clauses in which clarifies the term "disabled", ensures the rights of people with disabilities are granted and protected regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion and other opinions or preferences and stating economic, social and educational rights of people with disabilities.

- 17 December 1991 General Assembly Resolution 46/119 - Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and the Improvement of Mental Health Care. Mental illness is a disability in which can prevent some from their full potential in education, thus this resolution protects the rights of those individuals and provide medical, education, economic etc. assistance to those individuals if necessary.
- 3 December 1992 The annual International Day of Disabled Persons was proclaimed in 1992 through the UN General Assembly Resolution 47/3 which aimed to promote rights of people with disabilities in all political, social, economic and cultural aspects of life. Based on the 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2017 theme of 'Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all', the UN encourages all governments, academic institutions and persons with disabilities along with their representatives along with relevant organisations to 'leave no one behind'.
- 20 December 1993 General Assembly Resolution 48/96 - Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. This resolution provides background information, need and relevant international actions on the issue of the rights of people with disabilities. The resolution itself aims to raise awareness as well as ensuring general accessibility and rights including education; specifically Rule 6 states that 'States should recognize the principle of equal primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities, in integrated settings. They should ensure that the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the educational system.'

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