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TOWARDS A DISABILITY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Background paper for the Oslo Summit
on Education for Development

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Towards disability-inclusive education

As preparation for the Oslo Summit on Education for Development, *Addressing the Unfinished Agenda – Delivering Quality Education for All*, to be held on 7 July 2015, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs appointed an expert group in March 2015 to prepare a paper on mainstreaming disability in education.

This paper covers the four topics of the Oslo Summit: investment in education, quality of learning, education in emergencies and girls' education.

Disability continues to be one of the primary causes of educational disadvantage and exclusion, creating the largest single group of girls and boys who remain out of school. Even in those countries close to achieving universal primary enrolment, children with disabilities are still not in school, accessing opportunities to meaningful employment and on sustainable routes out of poverty.

Action at national and international levels to address exclusion has been hampered by the absence of disability-disaggregated data needed to assess, monitor and advance the inclusion of children with disabilities into regular schools. In addition, the lack of evidence of learning outcomes in low income settings for girls and boys with disabilities in particular, remains a challenge in understanding how school systems can be more responsive to children with different learning needs .

The economic and social costs of exclusion are high. Many low and middle-income economies incur significant losses by having large out of school populations. Increased public spending to achieve universal primary enrolment of all children would offset some of the costs of exclusion. The enrollment of children with disabilities in basic education is a smart investment and carries high returns.

As of today, 155 countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This commitment by countries to promote and safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities, including the right to education, is reflected in the newly adopted Incheon Declaration¹ from the World Education Forum 2015 in Korea, which includes the statement:

'No education target should be considered met unless met by all. We therefore commit to making the necessary changes in education policies and focusing our efforts on the most disadvantaged, especially those with disabilities, to ensure that no one is left behind'.

Oslo, 15 June, 2015

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¹ <https://en.unesco.org/world-education-forum-2015/incheon-declaration>

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Key messages

- *The inclusion of children with disabilities is a moral issue as well as an economic and social issue: the costs of exclusion are significant for both for the individual and for society. Moreover, excluded children will grow up to be adults who are less likely to work, have poorer health outcomes and who are more dependent on their families and on government services.*
- *Disability inclusion should be mainstreamed in all policies and plans. Accessibility standards should be implemented and supported by international development cooperation.*
- *Currently, 1/3 of the 58 million out of school children are children with disabilities. Planning and budgeting by national governments and development partners needs to include children with disabilities to ensure they are not left further behind.*
- *There is an immediate need for inclusive reporting and monitoring, for applying disability specific education indicators as well as a need for systematic collection of disaggregated data on disability, age and gender.*
- *To achieve quality disability inclusive education we must :*
 - *Require minimum standards of accessibility for all schools, including in emergency settings*
 - *Invest in teacher training that will equip all teachers to respond to diversity in the classroom and disability inclusion in particular.*
 - *Ensure that learning materials/resources are available in accessible formats and are easily adaptable.*
 - *Invest in assistive technology and devices for children with disabilities*
 - *Ensure participation of Disabled People's Organisations in education planning and monitoring.*
- *To facilitate this ambition, we call for the establishment of a global inclusive education facility. This facility will have the primary mandate of coordinating responses to support the implementation of the disability targets in the EFA Framework and the SDGs thereby ensuring children with disabilities are able to fully benefit from global progress in education development.*

1 Introduction

At the global level, children with disabilities are disproportionately represented among out-of-school children. Their exclusion is often directly linked to their disability. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ‘persons with disabilities include 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’². Most of the barriers experienced by people with disabilities are manmade. However, aside from the physical barriers, the most difficult barriers for people with disabilities are arguably those that are attitudinal and financial in nature. Their removal requires awareness, political will, legislative action and adequate funding.

The data on out-of-school children remains imprecise. The widely cited estimates, suggest that children with disabilities make up one third, or around 19 million of the 58 million out-of-school children.

Their vulnerability extends beyond their enrolment, to issues of quality of schooling received, retention and progression throughout the school system.

The international legal framework on human rights clearly highlights the rights of children with disabilities to education. This is affirmed in, inter alia, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD),³ the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Importantly CRPD, article 24, on the right to education, emphasizes the right to inclusive education and prohibits disability-based discrimination in education. This right applies to all children with disabilities, including children with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. The CRPD Article 32 further recognizes the importance of international cooperation including children with disabilities in programming as well as in its role in support of national governments.

The economic arguments for including children with disabilities are compelling. The estimated costs of exclusion vary across countries, reaching up to 7% of GDP.⁴ Exclusion from education – and the economic opportunities that schooling creates for individuals – often leads to poverty. Educating children with disabilities reduces welfare costs and future dependence; releases other household members from caring responsibilities, allowing them to engage in employment and other productive activities; and increases children’s potential productivity and wealth creation which in turn helps to alleviate poverty.⁵

The development agenda has given little attention to the education of children with disabilities. The issue of inclusion has received minimal prioritisation, in part due to the lack of data on children with disabilities. Without reliable data, children with disabilities are frequently invisible in policy discussions, and when they are addressed, this is usually through mainstreaming efforts that lack resources, funding and political will. A recurrent explanation by international donors is the lack of technical expertise. This has led to the further marginalisation and systematic exclusion of children with disabilities in accessing education.

² UN CRPD, Art. 1

³ UN CRPD, Art. 24 on the right to education

⁴ Backup, 2009

⁵ Peters, 2003

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an excellent opportunity to redress the shortcomings of including children with disabilities. The suggested goal four on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, if implemented, will strengthen emerging good practices in inclusive education taking shape across the world. This has the potential to significantly change the landscape of education for children with disabilities by ensuring scale and systemic reforms. For this to have traction and show impact, disability specific targets and indicators are essential. Disability specific targets and indicators must be part of comprehensive national education planning, monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

International cooperation, domestic resource mobilization as well as private/public partnership on financing for education must guarantee that the costs associated with the inclusion of children with disabilities form part of the overall education budgets.

This paper highlights the vulnerability and exclusion of children with disability in the basic regular education system. However, there is a need to emphasize that inclusive education has to go beyond primary education to secondary, tertiary, vocational training and lifelong learning opportunities.

2 Ensuring disability inclusive investments in education

2.1 Introduction

Investing in the education of children with disabilities is fundamental to the fulfilment of every child's right to education, reduces their chances of a lifetime of poverty, and has a strong economic rationale. Failure to finance these investments will result in millions of children continuing to be excluded from education, and following on from that, society.⁶

The current lack of funding and investment is primarily due to three main factors: (1) a widely held misbelief that it is too expensive to include children with disabilities; (2) perceptions of low expected returns to schooling; and (3) a lack of reliable data on incidence, educational participation and achievement of children with disabilities.

Exclusion of people with disabilities in education may generate significant costs for states and limit national economic growth⁷. The ILO estimates that the cost of excluding persons with disabilities can range up to 7% for low-and middle-income countries⁸, a figure that is most likely an understatement because it does not account for the impact on family members' work experiences.

In nine countries with high out-of-school populations, the economic benefits of including all children in primary education are greater than multiple years of economic growth. This includes Nigeria and Mali where the cost of out-of-school children is estimated to be more than 'two years of average GDP growth'⁹. Even in countries such as Brazil and Indonesia, where there are relatively low out-of-school populations, the estimated economic gains of including marginalised groups in education are still greater than the public spending costs of enrolment¹⁰.

A study looking at the relationship between schooling, disability and poverty highlighted that 'adults with disabilities typically live in poorer than average households: disability is associated with about a 10-percentage point probability of falling in the two poorest quintiles'. Moreover, each additional year of schooling is associated with about a 2 to 5 percentage point reduction in the probability of being in the two poorest quintiles¹¹. Children with disabilities are less likely to attend school and acquire the human capital that will enable them to earn higher incomes than other children, suggesting that disability is associated with long-term poverty¹².

Similarly, the findings of a systematic literature review on the economic costs of exclusion (focusing on health, education and employment) provide 'a robust empirical basis to support the theorised disability-poverty link', as a link between poverty and disability was reported in 80% of the studies¹³.

The evidence demonstrates that wage returns to education associated with increased schooling for children with disabilities are substantial, with one study from Nepal estimating returns to education for people with disabilities ranging from 19.3% to 25.6%¹⁴. A similar study in the Philippines found

⁶ Filmer, 2008:141, Liao & Zhao, 2012, Lamichhane & Sawada, 2013, Buckup, 2009

⁷ Banks & Polack, 2014

⁸ Buckup, 2009

⁹ Banks & Polack, 2014

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ Filmer, 2008: 150

¹² *ibid*

¹³ Morgon Banks and Polack, 2014: ii

¹⁴ Lamichhane and Sawada, 2013: 86

that higher earnings among people with disabilities were associated with increased schooling, generating returns of more than 25%¹⁵; and in China each additional year of schooling results in wage increases for people with disabilities of around 5% for rural residents and 8% for urban residents¹⁶. Studies have shown that not only are the benefits of education to children with disabilities higher than those to people without disabilities, but also that returns diminish when learners with particular impairments (such as hearing impairments) do not receive the required support¹⁷.

The global community must ensure that investments in education to support the achievement of the proposed goal on education (Goal 4) of the Sustainable Development Goals are inclusive and that indicators specifically target children with disabilities. Going forward there is a need for better coordinated funding efforts at international and national levels, greater cooperation in implementation plans and rigorous monitoring and accountability frameworks. A proposed mechanism to operationalize the goals is through the establishment of a Global Inclusive Education Facility for children with disabilities to facilitate coordination, build evidence, contribute to a better policy dialogue and monitor progress.

¹⁵ Mori and Yamagata, 2009

¹⁶ Liao and Zhao, 2013

¹⁷ Lamichhane and Sawada, 2013

2.2 Recommendations

- **Global funding mechanisms for education must recognise the rights and resources required to meet the additional needs of children with disabilities.** Guidance on submitting funding proposals provided by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)¹⁸, the proposed Global Book Fund¹⁹, and the proposed Education in Emergencies Fund must include children with disabilities. Reporting formats must include disaggregated data on key variables such as gender, types of disabilities, and socio-economic status. GPE through its current guidelines and revised funding model for education sector analysis and planning can support countries to make the necessary changes in education policies and in a more targeted manner include children with disabilities. Results based financing mechanisms provide a valuable opportunity to reward countries focusing on inclusion of children with disabilities.
- **National education sector plans and investments must specifically include children with disabilities** and respond to national and local needs through the development of more equitable and disability inclusive strategies. By taking account of children with disabilities in the planning stages the potential costs of exclusion will be minimised later. Ministries of Finance through domestic resource mobilization efforts and budgetary provisions should support Ministries of Education to make targeted investments in schools and communities to meet the needs of children with disabilities.
- **Investment in cost effective technology to ensure the living and learning needs of children with disabilities are met.** There is a need to make low cost assistive devices widely available to support access to schooling and learning. Greater investment is needed in the provision of accessible and effective teaching and learning materials to deliver quality education and boost the learning outcomes for children with disabilities. A Global Book Fund could play a key role in supporting the development and wider distribution of accessible teaching and learning materials. All investments should adhere to Universal Design²⁰ principles.
- **Broader engagement with the private sector and other non-traditional donors is needed to maximize external resources for inclusion.** Private sector investments in education are increasing and more can be done to specifically address the needs of children with disabilities. The private sector through corporate social responsibility programmes and other approaches can finance assistive technology and support innovative approaches to inclusion.
- **Investment in reliable data collection systems** which capture information on children with disabilities disaggregated for age, gender and type of impairment. Institutions such as OECD, UNESCO and UIS should be mandated to gather disability disaggregated data. At a national level there is a need to strengthen national education management information systems (EMIS). Work is currently underway to develop survey modules to identify children with disabilities by the Washington Group and UNICEF to better understand their needs, support

¹⁸ www.globalpartnership.org

¹⁹ This has not yet been established, but a feasibility study is currently underway to establish its viability

²⁰ Universal Design refers to the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people (including persons with disabilities), to the extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

inclusive planning and monitor their progress. These efforts can help inform the development of inclusive national education plans and eventually provide robust cross-national comparative data.

- **Establish a “Global Inclusive Education Facility for children with disabilities”** – The Facility will aim to fill the current coordination gap between governments and agencies, contributing to a better policy dialogue as well building evidence and providing support for learning and innovation. The Facility will work to sustain and follow-up on the renewed commitments to inclusion emerging from Incheon World Education Forum and promoted in the new Sustainable Development Goals. The Facility will draw on the experiences of initiatives such as the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative, UNGEI, in strengthening partnerships and ensuring a robust policy dialogue.



Jafeti attending school in Malawi. Photo: Torgrim Halvari

3 Quality of learning for children with disabilities

3.1 Introduction

The global debate on the need to improve student learning, particularly in the early grades to ensure a strong foundation for higher learning, is important. However, whilst access to school has increased dramatically in the past 15 years, around 58 million children, two thirds of whom are children with disabilities, remain out of school. Unable to overcome the disadvantages and barriers preventing their entry to school and denied the opportunity to learn, they face elevated risks of poorer health, lower earnings and a lifetime of poverty. Analysis of the 2011 World Health Survey data from 51 countries suggests that education completion gaps are found across all age groups and are statistically significant for both low and high-income countries²¹. A study across 15 low-income countries, of adults with disabilities, noted the link between higher levels of multi-dimensional poverty and disadvantage and lower educational attainment²².

A renewed emphasis on how to get children with disabilities into school, help them to stay in school and best support their learning is vital. Planning a quality education for children with disabilities starts well before the first day at school. An enabling environment at home and in the community is also critical to ensuring that children with disabilities are not left behind. An accessible school, the availability of assistive devices, well trained and supported teachers and appropriate teaching and learning materials are pre-requisites if we expect children with disabilities to go to school, stay in school and have successful learning experiences and expanded livelihood opportunities. Radical reforms and significant resources will be needed to ensure that education systems, infrastructure and school environments are designed to benefit all children.

This section expands on how to ensure equitable learning for children with disabilities and equal opportunities for children with disabilities to demonstrate their learning. The recommendations are based on experiences on implementing inclusive education for children with disabilities in a range of contexts and countries across the globe and obligations laid out in the UNCRPD.

3.2 Professional development of teachers, education managers and leadership

All children benefit from having well-trained teachers, schools benefit from professional management and education systems benefit from visionary leadership. After family characteristics, teacher quality and textbooks can be critical determinants of the quality of education²³.

Teachers are not necessarily negative in their attitudes to students with disabilities²⁴. They tend to focus on their lack of professional expertise, competency and confidence to teach in challenging classroom conditions, rather than on rejection of the child with disabilities²⁵. Teachers would benefit from national standards and curricula for initial teacher training and continuous professional development programmes that reflect research findings on what works in inclusion, taking into consideration national and local contexts and supporting personal and professional reflection and practice.

Professionally, well-trained inclusive teachers are central for delivering on the promise of inclusive, equitable quality education and life-long learning for all.

²¹ WHO, 2011:206

²² Mitra et al. 2012

²³ OECD, 2005, Nannyonjo, 2007, White and Masset, 2004

²⁴ Donohue and bornman, 2015

²⁵ Das et al, 2013; Bhatnagar and Das, 2013

3.2.1 Recommendations

- **Upgrade and include curricula on inclusive education for learners with disabilities in the national standard for teacher training** and enhance the capacities of teacher training institutions. Pre-service training needs to be practical and newly qualified teachers need mentoring. There is also a need for continuous professional development programmes (in-service teacher training) which are comprehensive, contextually relevant and provide teachers with the space to learn, do and reflect on their practices.
- **Work on developing effective support models for teachers**, such as itinerant teachers which move from school to school, pedagogical resource centres etc., which are adequately funded, and have personnel which are well trained and support collaboration with mainstream teachers.
- **Develop the understanding and capacities of education managers, leaders and support staff** to effectively account for the needs of children with disabilities. New technology and innovation can provide learning and professional knowledge platforms for teachers and offer teacher training at scale, via courses in digital formats that could be delivered to mobile phones, etc.
- **Robust research into pedagogical practices is needed** to help policy makers, planners and practitioners understand how good teachers teach all children and in particular those with disabilities. Such empirical insights will enable strong evidence based recommendations to be made, improving teacher training and teaching and learning practice, particularly in low-income contexts.
- **Cooperation with Disabled People’s Organisations** to facilitate inclusive approaches, build and share best practices.

3.3 Accessible learning and teaching materials

All children need access to high quality, appropriate teaching and learning materials. Children with disabilities and their teachers may also need access to alternative and additional teaching and learning materials.

The principle of Universal Design for all learning materials is gaining in interest and momentum. The knowledge and technologies needed are in use and could be scaled up. In some countries and contexts, digital textbook provision may be a sound investment that may include video versions in sign language, simplified language, audio, Daisy and other formats accessible to a range of learners with and without disabilities. The costs of producing digital textbooks and the price of mobile readers and tablets have declined rapidly over the past fifteen years making digital materials potentially available to significantly more school age children. Alongside these new and exciting developments, it will continue to be important to make physical text books and teaching and learning materials available.

3.3.1 Recommendations

- **Learning material developers voluntarily adopt Universal Design principles and protocols with internationally agreed, open access, technical standards.** A Global Book Fund should adopt and promote these protocols and standards.

3.4 Assistive technology and devices

Currently only 5 - 15% of children in low income countries have access to the assistive technologies they require, thereby hindering their access to school, reducing their ability to participate, impacting on their learning achievements and holding back their independence and social inclusion²⁶.

Assistive technology/devices include any product, instrument, equipment or technology adapted or specially designed for improving the functioning of a person with a disability.²⁷ They have the potential to radically enhance the experience of learners with disabilities, by providing access to learning and teaching materials, promoting better learning, and supporting independence and social inclusion.

Assistive technology supports individual children to become mobile, communicate more effectively, see and hear better, and participate more fully in learning activities. It provides the means of access to participate in educational, social and recreational opportunities; empowers greater physical and mental function and improved self-confidence; and reduces costs for educational services and individual support²⁸. Many mainstream computing devices now come with accessible features which decreases the cost factor. Furthermore, there is a growing investment by countries in e-learning and digital learning for general classrooms that has vast potential to benefit children with disabilities if Universal Design principles are adopted. By improving access to education and increasing achievement in school, assistive technology can have positive socioeconomic effects on the lives of children with disabilities

3.4.1 Recommendations

- **Support current efforts aimed at the establishment of a Global Assistive Technology Fund,** expand access to and enhance the quality, availability and affordability of assistive technologies and devices particularly for school age children.

3.5 Enabling environment at home and in the community

Conditions at home and in the communities of children from poorer and more disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and particularly children with disabilities, have a significant bearing on their learning achievement levels and future life opportunities²⁹.

²⁶ UNICEF, 2013

²⁷ Common examples of assistive devices (products) are eye-glasses, hearing aids, visual aids, wheelchairs, orthoses, prostheses, crutches, tri-cycles, specialized computer software and hardware and also specialized mobile phones and their applications.

²⁸ The technology can provide a voice to those with speech difficulties via text-to-voice applications and picture based communication. Face-to-face chat options and video recordings allow sign-language users to communicate with each other. Curriculum material can be produced in accessible formats such as Braille, audio or adjustable text size for those with visual impairments and dyslexia. Voice commands or speech-to-text and other add-ons (e.g. pointers) make it easier for those with literacy and or physical challenges to use the computers and express themselves. The exorbitant cost and lack of awareness about the benefits and accessibility functions and applications available on everyday technologies (e.g. laptops, tablets, and browsers) are just some of the barriers.

²⁹ DFID-funded Ed Qual consortium (2010 a&b cited in HEART, 2014)

Whilst some parents and communities continue to prevent school access, citing child safety and health concerns³⁰, research in African and Asian contexts³¹ reveals growing demand from parents, even amongst low-income families, for access to education for their children who have disabilities. Parents are making choices as to what kind of schools they choose for their disabled children based largely on perception, prevailing cultural attitudes, availability of schooling choices and experience.

Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR), where CBR workers collaborate with teachers and the school administration team to prepare for an inclusive environment enabling all children to go to school is one approach that has proven effective in developing an enabling home and community environment and promoting access to health, education and social protection services³².

3.5.1 Recommendations

- **Cross ministerial and cross sectorial strategies and plans can help parents and communities to access services and support**, enabling more children with disabilities to go to school. Targeted awareness-raising campaigns in communities can contribute to reducing stigma.
- **Donors, implementing agencies and governments should specify accessibility standards and Universal Design** in all education-related programmes involving construction of schools, water and sanitation, urban development, transportation and other built environments funded by development and humanitarian aid.
- **Fund research to provide evidence** on how community based approaches and disability inclusive education impact on learning outcomes, livelihood, well-being and prosperity.

3.6 Access to Early Childhood Development

Access to early childhood development interventions can provide a critical entry point to reach vulnerable children, offering a firm foundation for subsequent health outcomes, socialisation, school performance, future earnings and helping to overcome social disadvantages³³. Early detection and intervention can diminish the effects of impairments or chronic diseases; by providing eyeglasses and hearing aids. Moreover, it can also help to identify cognitive development which is critical for learning. However, more systematically integrated ECD programming is needed, as existing programmes seldom accommodate children with disabilities and referral systems and services to address the needs of children identified early on with a disability are often not in place³⁴.

3.6.1 Recommendation

- **National Early Childhood Development policies and strategies should systematically include early screening and assessment for childhood disabilities** such as vision and hearing.

3.7 Improving learning outcomes

There is limited data and evidence around learning achievements and outcomes for learners with disabilities. This makes it difficult to enact systemic changes to the education system that would

³⁰ 51 country study, Plan, 2015

³¹ Ghana (Botts and Owusu, 2013, Singal et al, 2015); India (Singal et al. 2013); Kenya (Mutua and Swadener, 2011), Pakistan (hammad and Singal, 2015)

³² Ministry of Education and VSO Kenya good experience at scale with CBR over several years

³³ ECD report, WB 2015

³⁴ WHO/WB, 2011

improve learning achievements for children with disabilities. Examinations and tests rarely make the necessary accommodations for learners with disabilities, putting them at a disadvantage. Most international achievement tests often exclude students with disabilities. This reinforces attitudes of low expectations, and that students with disabilities do not belong in a culture of achievement³⁵.

Integrating qualitative and quantitative studies is a powerful way to inform policymakers on how best to develop educational systems that are respectful of and responsive to the learning needs of all children. Understanding how children and young people with disabilities are experiencing these learning processes and their impact on short- and longer term learning outcomes requires integrating quantitative and qualitative research, sometimes in innovative ways.

3.7.1 Recommendations

- **Classroom based assessment for individual learning**, regional and national examinations and international learning assessments must systematically include and make reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities where necessary.
- Work towards assessment tools which are not solely focused on literacy and numeracy but are also in line with individualised learning approaches, need to adhere to Article 24(1) of the UNCRPD, which stresses the *“full development of human potential, personality, talents and creativity*.



Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Photo: Torgrim Halvari

³⁵ Schuelka, 2013

4 Children with disabilities' access to Education in Emergencies

4.1 Introduction

There are about 8 million displaced persons with disabilities globally³⁶. In conflicts and emergencies, children and youth with disabilities are particularly vulnerable and often have no or limited access to education and protection programmes. This vulnerability is often linked to loss of caregivers, being unable to recognize and escape from danger, lack of assistive devices for mobility and communication as well as a high risk of physical violence and abuse³⁷. Indeed, studies have highlighted that children with disabilities are nearly twice as likely to be subjected to violence and abuse than their non-disabled peers.³⁸ Conflicts and emergencies also result in greater numbers of disabilities due to factors such as increased rates of injury (i.e. from landmines, small arms injuries), lack of medical care, and disruption of preventive health care programmes such as vaccination campaigns.

Protection measures are very important for children and youth with disabilities in order to overcome their vulnerability. Education in Emergencies (EIE) programmes may support access to protection measures such as feeding programs, psychosocial support services, assistive devices and safe child-friendly spaces for interaction with other children without fear of abuse and exploitation³⁹. However, children with disabilities are often overlooked in emergency registration systems, and often fail to receive such basic entitlements as food, water, clothing and access to educational activities⁴⁰.

The lack of data due to weak registration and reporting systems remains a challenge. With this lack of systematic reporting on disability in Education in Emergencies programs, it is difficult to get a clear estimate of the number of children being denied their right to education and to plan and budget accordingly. Meanwhile EIE budgets are often not flexible enough to ensure accessible and disability friendly programs.

Although many humanitarian organizations and the UN have policies addressing vulnerable children including children with disabilities, translating policies into realistic plans and effective practices can be elusive⁴¹. Whilst some good guidelines exist, these are not systematically utilized, leading to further exclusion of children with disabilities in conflict and emergency settings⁴².

Whilst there is a significant amount of information about the barriers facing children with disabilities in emergency situations there is a huge information gap when it comes to documented best practice. An upcoming rigorous literature review of what works to promote children's educational access, quality of learning and well-being in emergencies found no studies of children with disabilities in emergency situations that met their methodological standards. This is particularly striking given the rates of exposure among children in emergencies and the fact that children with disabilities are disproportionately affected.

³⁶ UNICEF, 2011

³⁷ UNICEF, 2013

³⁸ American Academy of Pediatrics. 2001. Assessment of Maltreatment of Children with Disabilities. *Pediatrics*, 108:2:508-52. See also

http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/PDFs/UNICEF_Violence_Against_Disabled_Children_Report_Distributed_Version.pdf

³⁹ Trani, Kett & al. 2011

⁴⁰ IDDC, 2010

⁴¹ Trani, Kett & al. 2011

⁴² INEE Pocket Guide to inclusive education in emergencies. www.ineesite.org

One report on Syrian refugees with disabilities points to challenges often related to inaccessible infrastructure, teachers reluctant to accept children with disabilities in classes and the lack appropriate training and knowledge⁴³. This report also highlights the economic challenges of parents as a huge obstacle in sending children with disabilities to school. Access to education in emergencies for children with disabilities, should therefore also address health and rehabilitation needs and identify physical as well as social and economic barriers.

4.2 Recommendations for disability inclusive Education in Emergencies

- **Humanitarian response plans, appeals mechanisms and needs assessments need to ensure that children with disabilities are included in planning and reporting processes.** This may require revision of various guidelines and reporting formats in order to ensure that disaggregated disability data is collected consistent with Sphere standards, Child Protection Working Group Minimum Standards, and INEE's Education Minimum Standards (Preparedness, Response and Recovery). This could be combined with further training of staff about the importance of including children with disabilities.
- **All humanitarian programmes need to make budgetary provisions for the inclusion of children with disabilities in their EiE programming.** These provisions include inclusive education needs assessments, assistive devices, accessible transportation, inclusive learning materials, capacity building in inclusive pedagogy, accessible information and management systems and accessible physical infrastructures including for water & sanitation.
- **Donors to UN agencies and NGOs operating humanitarian programmes should request disaggregated data on disability as part of their reporting frameworks.** Appropriate timelines should be established for the submission of this data, with clear consequences for actors who fail to provide this data.
- **Disabled People's Organizations must be involved** and engaged in ensuring that governments' plans and programmes, as well as UN organizations, INGOs and donors, include disability inclusive programming. Furthermore, Disabled People's Organizations should also be involved in identification, interventions, awareness raising, and facilitating school participation
- **In the post-emergency phase it is important to "build back better"** – to ensure that school buildings are built according to Universal Design principles and that that learning materials, tests and exams are provided in accessible formats. Construction guidelines and building standards should be revised, whilst future education sector plans should be developed with accessibility in mind. Local education groups consisting of donors, UN agencies, civil society and Disabled Peoples Organisations can play an important role in assisting governments.
- **Invest in rigorous research to learn more about the best interventions** to support educational access, quality of learning, and wellbeing for children with disabilities in emergency settings.

⁴³ Gillan, 2014

5 Girls with disabilities' access to education

5.1 Introduction

The 2011 World Report on Disability⁴⁴ indicates that the disability prevalence rate for women is almost 1 in 5 and just over 1 in 10 for men (19.2 per cent vs 12 per cent). Increased female rates of disability are also linked to gender discrimination and discriminatory practices such as early and child marriage, early pregnancy and genital female mutilation⁴⁵. Whilst the right of girls to education is almost universally acknowledged and the multiple benefits of girls' education are well researched and widely known, gender gaps in education remain, even after 15 years of focused effort during the MDGs (2000-2015). This is particularly true for girls with disabilities.

Data on girls enrolment and learning over time points to the largest gender gaps in the poorest countries, amongst poorer families and when girls face multiple disadvantages of poverty, ethnicity and location. Studies and common knowledge on girls with disabilities suggests that there are multiple additional factors affecting whether girls with disabilities go to school. These factors may include accessible transportation and school infrastructure, water and sanitation facilities as well as assistive devices, teaching and learning materials. Further factors might be low expectations and low perceived returns to schooling by the child, her family and her community.

Girls with disabilities face additional barriers due to their disability, placing them at higher risk of being out of school or dropping out. This is particularly true for girls with intellectual or developmental disabilities⁴⁶. Women and girls with disabilities experience higher rates of gender-based violence, sexual abuse, neglect, maltreatment and exploitation than women and girls without disabilities.ⁱ Studies have shown that women and girls with disabilities are three times more likely to experience gender-based violence compared to non-disabled women⁴⁷. Such violence may happen in all settings including in homes, schools and institutions. One survey of 3706 primary school children aged 11–14 in Uganda found that 24% of disabled girls reported experiencing sexual violence at school compared with 12% of non-disabled girls.⁴⁸

Given these multiple, compounding factors impacting on their education, it is not surprising that a UNDP study found the global literacy rate is as low as three per cent for all adults with disabilities, and one per cent for women with disabilities.⁴⁹ These shockingly low literacy rates translate into further disadvantage. Although all persons with disabilities face barriers to employment, men with disabilities have been found to be almost twice as likely to be employed as women with disabilities.⁵⁰

In spite of this inequality and repeated commitments from policymakers, strategies targeting girls seldom refer to girls with disabilities, thus making girls with disabilities invisible in plans, monitoring reports and statistics.

The high rate of non-completion of primary school for girls with disabilities means that they are not qualified to enter secondary and tertiary education. Hence, there need to for a continued and

⁴⁴ WHO/World Bank

⁴⁵ Background Paper for Informal Session on Women with Disabilities, Note by the Secretariat, Fifth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention, on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (New York, 12-14 September 2012), cites: Helander E, Prejudice and dignity: an introduction to community based rehabilitation, 2nd Edition. New York: UNDP, 1998, available at: <http://hrw.org/women/disabled.html>. N Women, 2011

⁴⁶ WHO/World Bank, 2011

⁴⁷ UNFPA, *Sexual and Reproductive Health of Persons with Disabilities*, 2009

⁴⁸ Devries et al., 2014

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Arthur O'Reilly, *The Right to Decent Work of Persons with Disabilities* (pp. 31-33), Skills Working Paper No. 14, Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2003

strengthened focus on preschool and primary education as well as making secondary and tertiary education accessible for girl with disabilities

5.2 Recommendations:

- **Reduce the cost of schooling for girls with disabilities**, exploring options including targeted cash transfers, school fee waivers, scholarships and stipends.
- **Strengthen the systematic collection and analysis of national disability data and statistics**, disaggregated by sex and age, using existing guidelines on disability measurement.⁵¹
- **Ensure the provision of safe school routes** to reduce the risk of girls with disabilities being exposed to sexual and physical violence
- **Sensitisation of parents and communities** on the importance of sending their girls with disabilities to school, whilst also acknowledging parents as enablers.
- **Disability and gender sensitisation** of curriculum must be included as a reflection of diversity in the classroom.



Deaf school girls in Zanzibar greeting in sign language. Photo: The Atlas Alliance

⁵¹ These include (a) *the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2*; (b) *the Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics*; (c) the work and methods on disability statistics as approved by the Statistical Commission; and (d) other recently revised tools, such as the WHO disability assessment schedule 2.0.

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List of abbreviations

AT – Assistive technology

CBR – Community based rehabilitation

CEDAW – Convention on elimination of discrimination against women

CRC – Convention on the rights of the child

CRPD – Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities

EFA – Education for all

EIE – Education in emergencies

GPE – Global partnership for education

ICESCR – International covenant on economic, social and cultural rights

INEE – An international network for education in emergencies

INGO – International non-governmental organisations

MDGs – Millennium development goals

NGOs – Nongovernmental organisations

OECD – The Organisation for economic co-operation and development

SDG – Sustainable development goals

UN – United Nations

UNESCO UIS – United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organisation, Institute for statistics

UNHCR – United Nations high commissioner for refugees

UNICEF – United Nations children’s fund

WASH – Water, sanitation and hygiene

ⁱ In his 2006 *In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women*, the Secretary-General observed that surveys conducted in Europe, North America and Australia have shown that over half of women with disabilities have experienced physical abuse, compared to one third of non-disabled women. A/61/122/Add.1, para. 152, citing to Human Rights Watch, “Women and girls with disabilities”, available at: <http://hrw.org/women/disabled.html>.

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