

## Position Paper – Inclusive Education

Position papers explain what Inclusion International members think about issues that are important to people with intellectual disabilities and their families. The position papers explain what we want the world to look like.

Every country is at a different point in their journey towards inclusion. The steps we take will look different in every part of the world, but Inclusion International members around the world agree that full inclusion is our goal.

### **What inclusive education means:**

Inclusive education means that education systems are inclusive of all students with and without disabilities from the beginning. This means that special or separate programmes for students with disabilities are not necessary. Inclusive education means all students learn together. Inclusive education does not mean segregation, exclusion, or integration.

Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)<sup>1</sup> says that countries which have ratified (agreed to follow) the CRPD must provide an inclusive education system.

Article 24, together with general comment 4<sup>2</sup>, makes sure that every learner with disabilities has the right to attend the same schools as learners who do not have disabilities. It says that people with disabilities should be provided with the support they need to enjoy their right to education.

Inclusive education makes sure that learners with disabilities have opportunities to learn, take part, and develop. Inclusive education leads to persons with disabilities contributing to their communities. Inclusive Education benefits all children. Inclusive education helps to build fair societies, where differences are valued, celebrated, and supported. People with intellectual disabilities have a right to be included in education systems and settings that are inclusive of **all**.

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<sup>1</sup> UN CRPD: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/ConventionRightsPersonsWithDisabilities.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> General Comment 4 (on UN CRPD Article 24): [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD/C/GC/4&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD/C/GC/4&Lang=en)

The right to inclusive education means that all learners, including learners with intellectual disabilities:

- are taught in the schools in their communities
- receive the support they need to learn together with learners with and without disabilities in the same class.
- receive a good quality inclusive education, so that they can participate, learn and progress.
- are accepted, valued and feel like they belong at school.
- are safe from abuse, exclusion, and restraint at school.

Restraint means controlling someone's behavior and movements. For example being held down by another person.

- recognise the extra challenges faced by girls and women with intellectual disabilities. Inclusive education systems should make sure girls and women are also protected.
- have the same opportunities to learn in the classroom, and the same opportunities to do activities with the school community

as all other students from early childhood throughout their life-long learning path; and

- are not discriminated against, excluded, or segregated. STo be segregated means that the learner with intellectual disabilities goes to separate classes without their classmates without disabilities.

### **Where we are:**

Learners with intellectual disabilities are at the highest risk of being excluded from education. Learners with intellectual disabilities are also at risk of being excluded from other learners.

People with intellectual disabilities have the right to an inclusive quality education – where everyone can learn together and progress with a sense of well-being and belonging.

Some of the current problems are:

- General lack of understanding of inclusive education and what this means for school leadership, how the school is run and

how money is spent. Society may have low expectations of learning and inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities.

- Families of children with intellectual disabilities need to see good examples of inclusion to know why and how they should advocate for it. At the moment, families might not advocate for inclusion because they do not know what inclusive education looks like in practice.
- There are many segregated education settings (also called ‘special education’). These places prevent learners with intellectual disabilities from learning with classmates who don’t have a disability. In many countries there are still too many persons with intellectual disabilities who are and have always been out of school.
- Bullying and discrimination is a challenges faced by learners with intellectual disabilities.
- Inclusive education must be supported in law and policy.
- Teachers are not trained or supported to teach in ways that are good for all learning styles.

- Many teachers and school managers believe children with intellectual disabilities cannot learn. Even when learners with intellectual disabilities attend mainstream schools, they are not supported to learn and take part.
- Parents are often asked to pay extra fees for their children with intellectual disabilities to attend school to cover support services. Or parents are asked to come to the class to play the role of a support teacher.
- In some countries, informal education is still present and it is difficult to check what is inside or outside the formal education system.
- Lack of funding to pay for support, reasonable accommodations<sup>3</sup>, and accessible learning material and opportunities to learners with intellectual disabilities.

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<sup>3</sup> As explained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), "Reasonable accommodation" means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms", link to the full Convention: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

## **Our Goal :**

We support and advocate for people with intellectual disabilities to have their right to inclusive, good quality and equal education for all.

This is in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development

Goals and the principles of the UN CRPD. We call on

governments to take action on inclusive education – just

agreeing with the idea of inclusive education is not enough.

Governments who believe in inclusive education must also do

the work to change education systems.

Education systems that are inclusive of all learners make sure there

are good learning, progress and social outcomes for all learners

including those who have a disability.

Inclusion International calls for inclusive education systems that:

- Allow access to quality education and life-long learning opportunities for all. This should start from early-childhood,

- Allow access to related services, for example, communication support and learning material that has been adapted so that is accessible for each learner,
- Provide access to the support they need to fully take part and learn,
- Train teachers to teach in ways that fit the different ways that people learn, these are called *learning styles*,
- Are designed to include and support the learning, respect the ability and potential of all learners, no matter their background, gender, or disability,
- Value, listen to, and learn from people with intellectual disabilities and their families,
- Provide care, support and other accommodations that are needed to make sure learners with intellectual disabilities are safe in schools,
- Does not divide learners into separate classrooms, schools or groups based on their disability, their diagnosis, their achievements at school, or any other label,



- Provides access to all students to curricular and extra-curricular<sup>4</sup> activities and learning opportunities and internship programs that can link them to the world of work, so that inclusive education can lead to equal jobs,
- Provides opportunities for everyone to academically compete<sup>5</sup> in different ways so that everyone can show their achievements,
- Does not require families to pay extra fees to cover the costs of in-class support and matriculation<sup>6</sup>, while other families of children without disabilities do not have to pay.
- Check inclusive education on a regular basis and collect detailed data and evidence about inclusion. Make sure that segregation or integration is not happening either formally or informally. Segregation means that the learner with intellectual disabilities goes to separate classes without their peers without disabilities. Integration means that they learn in the

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<sup>4</sup> “Extra-curricular” means activities that are not included in the core education set of activities that are planned in the education curriculum. This could be accessing to the Erasmus programme or joining a sports team.

<sup>5</sup> “Academically compete” means that persons with intellectual disabilities can join writing contests and other types of competitions that are based on skills acquired at school.

<sup>6</sup> “Matriculation” is when you sign up to join a school.

class with their peers with and without disabilities but without support to participate and achieve. **Both segregation and integration are against the principle of the UN CRPD, therefore they are a human rights violation.**