Submission to the Committee on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Article 24: Implications of Implementation for People with Intellectual Disabilities
Inclusion International

Inclusion International (II) is a network of over 200 family-based organizations, with national members in 115 countries worldwide, working to promote the social, cultural, economic, and political rights of people with intellectual disabilities. II is an assembly of the voices of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families that promotes shared values of respect, diversity, human rights, solidarity and inclusion to achieve a vision of a world where people with intellectual disabilities and their families can equally participate and be valued in all aspects of community life.

Founded over 50 years ago, II is one of the largest international non-governmental organizations in the field of disability and has consultative status with United Nations. Through its national members, regional level organizations and global organization, II works with international agencies including the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Bank, United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations International Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and regional bodies to promote inclusive approaches to policy, practice and investment strategies.

II is one of the founding members of the International Disability Alliance.

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Introduction

Inclusion International promotes the rights outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as the basis for the full development of the person and as a means to enable the person to participate effectively in society. Inclusion International applauds the CRPD Committee’s recognition in its call for submissions that exclusion from education “hinders their meaningful participation on an equal basis with others in all spheres of life.”

Families and people with intellectual disabilities repeatedly tell Inclusion International that inclusive education is THE key to breaking down barriers and building inclusive communities. Research and statistics back-up the stories of families and people with intellectual disabilities and confirm that life-long patterns of inclusion begin in our local schools. The impact and value of inclusive education can be seen in the outcomes it affects:

- Children who are excluded from school are more likely to experience exclusion throughout their lives;
- Children who are included in school are more likely to be connected to their community, have meaningful relationships beyond their immediately family;
- They are more likely to get jobs and be healthier;
- They are more likely to be engaged in the civic life of their community;
- They are less likely to live in poverty 1.

Access to inclusive education has transformative impact on the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and their families, and communities. Inclusive education is better for all children. Preparing teachers for diverse learners improves education for all students. Having all children learning together teaches children to value diversity, builds social capital and lays the foundation for inclusive communities. Interaction between disabled and non-disabled students provides a cornerstone for inclusion. It builds socially valuing relationships and sets an expectation that inclusion is the norm. Later, as parents, teachers, shopkeepers, employers, community leaders and government officials, all children will be better positioned to understand disability as part of human diversity and to put in place the conditions for the aspirations of the CRPD to be realized.

Inclusion International welcomes the opportunity to submit the following brief to the UN CRPD Committee for their consideration as part of the Day of General Discussion on education and the development of a general comment on education. In developing this submission, II consulted with its members in all regions of the globe. While some members will be making additional submissions directly to the Committee, this submission captures the overarching views and issues of our members.

Background

Inclusion International supports UNESCO’s definition of Inclusive Education as “a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through inclusive practices in learning, cultures and communities and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content approaches structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all

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1 Inclusion International, Hear Our Voices. 2006 [www.inclusion-international.org](http://www.inclusion-international.org)

UNESCO and the OECD have also determined that inclusion is the preferred approach to providing schooling for students with special educational needs. **Conditions required to allow for successful inclusion are also those that contribute to overall school improvement and high levels of achievement for all children.**

In 2008, Inclusion International released a global report, *Better Education for ALL when we’re included too*, on education. The summary of recommendations from that report are included as an appendix to this submission.

**Inclusion International Position**

Inclusion International believes inclusive education requires that schools are supported to welcome all students with adaptations made for individual needs. Quality education is INCLUSIVE education. This approach ensures the development of an education system that is better for all students. Inclusive education moves beyond integration, which is simply allowing students to be present in a regular class without any change to pedagogy, to focus on inclusion and the delivery of quality education within an inclusive education system – from primary to post-secondary and adult learning.

Inclusion international believes that effective inclusive education requires the regular school system to respect the principles of:

- Non-discrimination
- Accessibility
- Accommodation to specific needs through flexible and alternative approaches to learning and teaching
- Equality of standards
- Participation
- Support for meeting disability-related needs
- Relevance to preparation for the labour market

These principles are also secured in the CRPD. It is Inclusion International’s position that any interpretation of CRPD article 24 on education must be read through the lens of these principles and corresponding articles in the CRPD. Given the double discrimination that women and girls with disabilities experience, Inclusion International recommends a twin-track approach that has both an explicit focus on women and girls with disabilities as well as a gender lens throughout.

**Inclusion International works to promote the goal of full inclusion by advocating for**

- Progressive development of inclusive education with clear timelines
- Ensuring that one Ministry is responsible for the education of all children
- Teacher training to ensure that individual needs are met in inclusive settings
- Support to families
- Inclusive education policy development
Inclusion International welcomes innovations such as that proposed by Markku Jokinen, President of the European Union of the Deaf and professor at the University of Jyväskylä at the conference "Sign Language, Sustainable Development, and Equal Opportunities" at Ghent University, Belgium 29-30 April, 2014 which proposes bilingual schools as a way to ensure successful inclusion of students who are deaf.

**Making Inclusive Education Real**

Globally, the move towards inclusive education has been a slow journey for people with intellectual disabilities and their families. In the 1950s, the family movement mobilized to call for support for their sons and daughters. The focus of the call for action was largely centred on living in the community (that is, not in institutions) and education. In the early days of the movement, this focused on creating educational opportunities where none existed. Because the regular education system would not accept their children parents founded special schools where their children could learn. Both parents of children who attended those schools as well as the adults who had attended them as children realized that attending separate schools led to lives excluded from the rest of the community. This experience and the recognition of the right of persons with disabilities to be included in all aspects of community life has led to the call for inclusive education.

The lessons learned through the challenges and successes of this journey have developed a path to inclusive education that can help countries to reform existing education systems or build new education systems without having to repeat the failures of earlier models and approaches.

In synthesizing and reviewing the lessons Inclusion International’s members have shared over the last 50 years, we highlight three key messages for the Committee’s consideration:

**The right to education means the right to an inclusive education**

*The right to education is not simply the right to go to school; it’s the right to go to an inclusive school.*

While much progress has been made in recognizing the right to education for students with disabilities, the interpretation of this right needs to clearly articulate that the right to education goes beyond placement in an educational setting that could include segregated schools to focus on education in an inclusive school. Inclusive education is about inclusion in regular classes in regular schools.

*A quality education is an inclusive education.* Inclusive education works and contributes to better education for all children. Segregation cannot and will not achieve equality. Further, when resources are used to fund separate classes, schools or systems, these resources are drained from the regular system. The impact of this is that:

- there is not enough funding to build up the supports needed to ensure that schools can offer quality as well as inclusion;
- governments can’t afford to support inclusion unless they commit to phasing out the segregated system.

**To achieve inclusive education we need:**

- Legislation;
- Policy;

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• Human rights complaint systems; and,
• Appeals processes.

Inclusive Education means more than accommodation

_The test of inclusion is in demonstrating that the education system is able to accommodate and include ALL children._

Unless we include the most excluded, real system level change for quality education is not possible. Philosophically and practically, this means supporting education systems to move from “integration” to “inclusion”. Inclusive education is not simply placing students with disabilities in classrooms. It is about ensuring that the supports that are needed – for schools, teachers, students, parents – are effective and available. A system that is able to accommodate all children provides a better education for everyone: Teachers are better trained to meet the needs of the diverse learners in their classrooms,

To achieve inclusive education we need:

• teacher training;
• outreach to parents;
• knowledge on inclusive educational practices

Inclusive Education is Better Education For ALL

_It’s not just about changing schools, it’s about changing the way we educate all students._

CRPD Art 24 is linked to the Sustainable Development Goals and other international commitments on education. As highlighted in this submission, inclusive education provides a better system for educating all children. Not only can inclusive education provide better academic outcomes for all children, inclusive schools foster and promote social inclusion of other marginalized groups – ie ethnic minorities, child labourers, girls – as well. Moreover, it helps build social cohesion and social capital that has lasting impact in the lives of individuals and in communities.

Meaningful progress on inclusive education will require commitment to structural changes in the way that we educate all children. For this to be successful, strategies that include a commitment to teacher-training and support is needed. An overarching monitoring and reporting framework will be essential in tracking progress and ensuring commitments to inclusive education are on track.

To achieve inclusive education we need:

• SDG indicators harmonised with OHCHR's monitoring of Conventions;
• Inclusive measures and indicators in all education commitments to monitor and track progress on the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Moving Forward
Inclusion International believes the Committee has an opportunity to provide a progressive interpretation of Article 24 that anchors inclusion as a defining component of quality education.

Specific priority should be given to ensuring a CRPD-driven approach to education be used as the basis for understanding and defining education in international frameworks – such as the Sustainable Development Goals and Education for All. To do this, efforts are required to close the data gap and to develop explicit indicators that advance and support inclusion. Current proposals to define universal education in terms of a lifelong process involving not only schools but the home and local community is consistent with Inclusion International’s view of CRPD Article 24.

**Conclusion**

Inclusive education significantly determines lifelong patterns of inclusion. To fundamentally alter the marginalization and exclusion people with intellectual disabilities experience, priority focus must be placed on ensuring access to quality, inclusive education.
APPENDIX

Recommendations from Inclusion International’s Global Report on education: *Better Education for ALL when we’re included too*

1. **Strong and effective governance, policy and planning for inclusive education**
   I. Establish political leadership and government responsibility for inclusive education.
   II. Establish a national/state-level ‘Partnership for Inclusive Education’ with representatives of government, educators and civil society.
   III. Develop and implement national/state-level plans for inclusive education that focus on:
       - legislation for inclusion and non-discrimination, and guidelines for accommodation
       - ensuring government education department is responsible for education of all children
       - identifying children with disabilities and access, quality and outcomes of education
       - outreach to parents
       - training of teachers
       - providing supports
       - accessible facilities
       - transportation to/from school
       - transitions
       - public awareness
       - human rights complaints system
       - a knowledge network for inclusive education

2. **Targeted investments for education system reform – by governments, donors and international agencies**
   I. Provide public funding for making education systems inclusive (partnerships, planning, needed investments in a public system for all, transitioning from separate special education systems based on disability, delivering inclusive education at the school and school district level, and monitoring and reporting on access, quality and outcomes).
   II. Donor agencies should invest in partnerships for inclusive education planning, and provide aid only for education plans that are inclusive.
   III. The OECD and World Bank should develop guidelines so that aid for education goes to inclusive systems.
   IV. UNICEF and UNESCO should assist countries in developing national/state plans and strategies for inclusive education, and help create a global

3. **Effective implementation and delivery systems at the school district level**
   I. Identify all children with disabilities and reach out to parents.
II. Provide resources to parent/family groups to develop their leadership for inclusive education.

III. Provide training in inclusion to ECCE programs and teachers.

IV. Create accessible ECCE programs and schools.

V. Create programs that assist children and youth make the transitions through the education system.

VI. Provide teachers with access to information and knowledge about how to make inclusion work.

   I. Governments should Report on EFA – using the UN Convention benchmarks and indicators for inclusive education – with a focus on access to education, quality, and outcomes for children, youth and adults.
   II. The UN should work with Governments to create a common definition of disability that can be used in national surveys.
   III. UNESCO should do more to report on disability and education in their Global Monitoring Reports on children and education.