

# **Inclusive Education: From Right to Practice**

**Side Session at the CRPD Committee Sponsored by: Inclusion International**

**Geneva, August 28, 2015**

Since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, education systems have been working to comply with Article 24 on the right to inclusive education. Inclusion International was an active participant in the negotiation of the CRPD and gave priority to Article 24 on the right to education. In advance of the CRPD Committee's development of a General Comment on Article 24 Inclusion International organized a side session to:

- Examine the evolution of the understanding of what "inclusion" means for persons with intellectual and other disabilities;
- Highlight examples from all regions of the world; and
- Review the new position of the International Disability Alliance and Inclusion International on inclusive education and its implications for the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

This document contains summaries of the presentations made as well as a synthesis of the responses to the questions posed by Committee Members.

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Opening Remarks

by Klaus Lachwitz, President, Inclusion International

Dear Members of the CRPD – Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon! We are pleased and grateful that you are taking part in our Side Event on Inclusive Education: From Right to Practice. My name is Klaus Lachwitz. I am a human rights lawyer from Germany and President of Inclusion International which is one of the oldest global DPOs representing more than 200 member organisations of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families in 115 countries.

Inclusion International is a founding member of the International Disability Alliance (IDA), Geneva and New York City, which just has adopted a position paper on Inclusive Education.

We want to present some of the basic ideas and goals of this paper from the perspective of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families.

Another reason for this Side Event is that the CRPD Committee is drafting a General Comment on Art. 24 CRPD. It, therefore, might be useful for the members of the Committee to learn that we have collected examples of inclusive education practice from many parts of the world and we are proud that the speakers enlisted in our Side Event Flyer are representing Africa, Asia, Europe and North America. They will summarize the situation in these regions with regard to inclusive education and Dr. Michael Fembeck, Director, Essl Foundation, Austria, will report on the interim results of the Zero Project “Inclusive Education” covering nearly 400 nominations worldwide.

I regret to state that it was not possible to invite a speaker from Latin America, but we have just received the great news that a Latin American Regional Network for Inclusive Education was founded with members from Argentina, Columbia, Peru, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Our first speaker is Diane Richler, Canada, Inclusion International's Past President. Nagase Osamu, Visiting Professor, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan, will follow her. He is the Asia Pacific Regional Representative in the Council of Inclusion International. The next speaker is Fatma Wangare, Nairobi, Kenya, member of the Council of Inclusion Africa and the Interim Board of the African Disability Forum. Then Maureen Piggot, Belfast, Northern – Ireland, will take the floor in her capacity as President of Inclusion Europe and Council member of Inclusion International representing the European region. And finally it's Dr. Michael Fembek who will summarize the results of the Zero Project on Inclusive Education.

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Comments by Diane Richler, Past President, Inclusion International

The General Comment which is being prepared by the CRPD Committee will shed light on its interpretation of Article 24. While the Committee is preparing its legal interpretation the International Disability Alliance (IDA) felt it was important to clarify its understanding of the article in order to assist the committee. The IDA position has been finalized and will be officially launched as soon as it is available in several alternate formats. This presentation will provide a “sneak preview” of several of the elements of the position and highlight Inclusion International’s position.

The IDA and its members were active participants in the negotiations of the CRPD and the discussions about education were among the most contentious amongst members of the disability community. Consensus was reached by agreeing that no organizations that was a member of the International Disability Alliance or the broader International Disability Caucus would advocate a position that was seen as harming the position of another member. While this consensus was a major success it also meant that the wording of Article 24 was open to much interpretation and differing understandings.

The IDA position clarifies our intention of the meaning of Article 24 of the CRPD which calls for “an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning”. The implication of Article 24 is that **all national and global efforts to educate persons with disabilities must contribute to achieving an inclusive system** which respects the following:

- Adoption of a coherent, comprehensive strategy/plan to foster fully inclusive education systems through the coordinated action of the Ministry of Education
  - One system is responsible for all students (e.g. preschool, primary, secondary and higher education, as well as the nature of education –public, private, formal, non-formal, lifelong learning)
  - Delivery at the national, regional and local level is by one system

- All stakeholders are coordinated by the Ministry of Education, including across Ministries and in the context of international cooperation
- Schools welcome all students from their community and arrange for individualised supports
  - There is a no-rejection clause within legislation and policy, constituting an essential element of non-discrimination on the basis of disability in education, and an obligation to provide reasonable accommodation in education as one of immediate effect.
  - There is the establishment of available and effective and legal remedies to enforce the right to inclusive education and have access to timely adjudication by independent bodies
  - Inclusive pre-school programs and early intervention support is provided to children and parents
- Schools are accessible: including sign language environments, materials and methods, Braille, augmentative and alternative modes of communication, easy-to-read materials
- Schools are based on the principles of universal design including spaces for sports, recreation and leisure
- Children go to a regular school
  - Teachers are trained to teach children with diverse learning styles
  - Supports and resources are available to teachers and students for specific needs, e.g. adapting the curriculum, orientation skills, Braille, sign language training, hearing loops, speech-to-text
  - Teacher training on inclusive education is integrated into compulsory core curricula
- Multilingual education is available to respond to the linguistic needs and culturally diverse backgrounds of students
  - Students who are deaf have the right to be educated in their national sign language.
  - Deaf education can be bilingual and bicultural.
  - Classes or schools for students who are deaf are based on the perspective of language and culture and not on special education.
  - For students choosing to attend non-signing classes there must be reasonable accommodation using professional sign language interpretation
  - There must be engagement of a diversity of teachers, including teachers with disabilities; deaf teachers; teachers with indigenous background.

The IDA position paper also recognizes that many other articles of the CRPD contribute to achieving inclusive education.

The input to the Day of General Discussion in April 2015 demonstrated a growing consensus on the meaning of inclusive education. It also highlighted some fears, with some submissions arguing in favour of “special schools” that would guarantee certain standards. However, the disability community worked very hard to keep the notion of “special schools” out of the wording of Article 24 and any support of such a position would be a backward step from the CRPD itself.

Questions were also raised about progressive realization. The IDA position does not suggest that all special schools should be closed overnight, but it does argue that all investments should strengthen inclusion. The implication is that states need to establish reasonable time frames for the transformation to fully inclusive systems.

Many members of the IDA are nervous about the changes that will be made in the name of inclusion and whether they will lose the individual supports some students now can access. For example, people who are deaf want to be guaranteed education in sign. The IDA position recognizes that sign language is a language and therefore our position recognizes the legitimacy of schools or classes where sign language is the language of instruction and deaf culture is preserved and promoted. People who have visual and hearing impairments want guarantees of individual supports which our position endorses. People who have psycho-social disabilities want to be able to receive supports without undue labelling which would be a hallmark of an inclusive and welcoming school.

Inclusion International was the first global DPO to strongly advocate for inclusive education, although even in our own movement there were some sceptics. But the more we learn about how inclusive systems can and do work, the more people see them in action, the more support there is for the concept.

We are especially pleased that the current Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education. Furthermore, the recent Oslo Summit on Education for Development demonstrated the commitment of donors to invest in inclusive education.

Inclusive education is one of the best contributions the disability community can make to society. A better learning environment for all students contributes to better mutual respect and understanding, a more inclusive society, and better education for all.

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Comments by Nagase Osamu  
Asia Pacific Regional Representative  
Inclusion International

In my brief presentation today, I will share with you one good practice from Asia and also present one policy challenge facing the region and the world in putting inclusive education into to practice.

First I will briefly share with you a good practice from China. This case has been nominated as a good practice of inclusive education for Zero project, Dr. Michael Fembek, Director, will talk about later. In fact, in addition to this submission from China, our partners have made submissions on inclusive education at the community level from Cambodia by Komar Pikar Foundation (KPF), and on Supporting Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Post-secondary Education by Parents' Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability, Taiwan (PAPID), Taiwan.

With the limited time frame, I just focus on the initiative in Guangzhou, close to Hong Kong, which is “Inclusive Education Action: supporting children with disabilities to study in mainstream schools”.

This initiative started in 2008, initiated by parents of children with disabilities studying in mainstream schools, Guangzhou Yang'ai Parents Club of children with Special Needs and Guangzhou Children's Palace Special Education Centers started “Inclusive Education Action”. In 2012, actively advocated by parents, this plan became a pilot program of Guangzhou Municipal Bureau of Education and was jointly operated by mainstream schools, special education schools, NGOs, and parents' organizations. Special education assistants provide daily support to children with disabilities, and develop IEP plans and promote better school lives in mainstream schools. At the same time, special education assistants also support students with disabilities

to develop relationships with classmate. In this process, teachers from special education schools play the role as supervisor of special education assistants.

The initiative is also involved in the promotion of policy change. It actively promoted the introduction of the Opinions on Strengthening Special Education of Guangzhou from 2012 to 2016, and got involved widely, laying a foundation for inclusive education. The effective advocacy strategies led to successful systematic advocacy cases.

In my view, this initiative is important because of two features. First, more senior members of the Committee may recall the review of China in September 2012 which Prof. Hyung Shik Kim served as the country rapporteur with strong leadership and your Concluding Observations on article 24 on education which expressed concern “about the high number of special schools and the State party’s policy of actively developing these schools.

The Concluding Observation continued “the Committee is especially worried that in practice only students with certain kinds of impairments (physical disabilities or mild visual disabilities) are able to attend mainstream education, while all other children with disabilities are forced to either enroll in a special school or drop out altogether. Therefore, the Committee wishes to remind the State party that the concept of inclusion is one of the key notions of the Convention and should be especially adhered to in the field of education. In this regard, the Committee recommends that the State party reallocate resources from the special education system to promote the inclusive education in mainstream schools, so as to ensure that more children with disabilities can attend mainstream education.”

Thus, this project in Guangzhou promoting inclusive education is in fact one of the steps to implement this important concluding observation, having the potential to serve as a catalyst to promote inclusive education in China and beyond.

The second feature relates to another important message from this Committee which strongly recommended the State Party of China to allow broad range of NGOs, not only the one designated by the government, to represent persons with disabilities in China.

Guangzhou Yang’ai Parents Club of children with special needs, which is taking this initiative, is part of the national network of family-based grass-roots organization which works with us.



Now I move to the second and last point, which is the policy challenge facing us in the promotion of inclusive education. The question is simple. Is the ministry of education responsible for the education of children with disabilities? Yes or No? In many parts of Asia and the Pacific and beyond, the responsibility of education of children with disabilities still lies with the social ministry. As long as one single ministry of education is NOT responsible for the education of all children with or without disabilities. Inclusive education is impossible. I ask, “Which country will be the first in Asia and the Pacific or in the world, to shift the responsibilities of education of children with disabilities from the social ministry to the education ministry in line with the CRPD?” This is the policy question and challenge we have.

In closing, let me say that good practices, including the one in China, make the right real and the right leads to more good practice. We hope to promote both good practices of inclusive education on the ground and innovative policies in line with the CRPD as part of the overall effort to make the right real and turn right into practice.

Thank you.

# **Inclusive Education: From Right to Practice**

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Comments by Fatma Wangare

Chief Executive Officer,

Kenya Association for the Intellectually Handicapped (KAIH)

Africa has a great potential for enhancing education for learners with intellectual disabilities. The fact that most African governments have recognized principles on education for all which also includes quality education for children with disabilities is worth commending. However deep rooted beliefs and stereotypes are still rampant and common towards education for learners with intellectual disabilities, one common belief is that investing in the education of individuals with intellectual disability is waste of time and resources.

In the recent past self-advocacy and family movement in the region is arousing attraction and attention in communities and governments. Concerted efforts to lobby their government to exert efforts for providing more human and financial resources for learners with intellectual disabilities in inclusive education programs is growing by the day. Therefore African governments can no longer afford to ignore the voices of a group of population who are the most vulnerable and excluded in their countries.

All said and done, in Africa people with intellectual disabilities and their families strongly believe that inclusive education for people with intellectual disabilities is a crucial tool in building inclusive societies and communities. It is a tool to promote respect, choice, dignity, diversity and assertive skills which will promote supported decision making process. (This has been proven and documented in pilot projects on inclusive education in Zanzibar, South Africa etc.

In this regard I humbly request the committee to continue strongly in recommending to African state parties on the importance of investing heavily on the realization and implementation on article 24.

Strong recommendations from the voices of people with intellectual disabilities and their families in Africa include:

1. Redirecting budgets and financing of segregated and special needs education to facilitate inclusive education and provision of supports and services in mainstream schools. Discrimination due to lack of reasonable accommodation in mainstream schools expose learners to face discriminatory physical and attitudinal barriers they need to overcome in order to receive an education.
2. Prioritize and invest in inclusive early childhood education programs and early identification.
3. Many learners with intellectual disabilities come from low socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, in rural areas, medical referrals and transport facilities are inadequate which then translates to majority of people with intellectual disabilities having greater barriers in accessing quality education. Therefore State Parties should invest in creating awareness among families as well as facilitate and support them to effectively carry out their parental roles.
4. Lack of preparation for life after basic education: the consequences of a lack of inclusive quality learning are particularly visible when adolescents and young adults with intellectual disabilities leave school, we therefore recommend that governments to also invest in article 24. 5 of the CRPD which recognizes access to tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning
5. Adequate consultation with children and their families to determine a school placement that will maximize their academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion should be put in place.
6. Finally Governments should be open and transparent in reviewing discriminatory education laws and policies to be in line with the CRPD.

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Comments by Maureen Piggot  
President, Inclusion Europe  
Council Member, Inclusion International

The European members of Inclusion International welcome the decision of the CRPD Committee to issue a General Comment, amid fears that inclusive education in Europe may be sliding backwards for a number of reasons. Today we would like to share with you what we see as the challenges, trends, and some positive examples from the European region.

## **Definition**

For Inclusion Europe and our members, inclusive education means the right to education at all levels (early years, primary, secondary, tertiary, adult and vocational education) for all persons with a disability, without discrimination, on the basis of equal chances, in mainstream schools in the neighbourhood and in classes where peers without disabilities study, with the support the individual requires to succeed.

## **Regional social context**

Looking at the status of inclusive education in the context of the predominant concerns of Europe as a whole, there is a focus on jobs, economic growth and competitiveness with a particular anxiety about youth unemployment and exclusion which has been exacerbated by the recession. Academic qualifications are seen as the passport to a better future and are the priority of education systems and government targets. The economic rather than social agenda and the emphasis on academic attainment further excludes people with disabilities from resources and within the education system discourages the inclusion of people with intellectual disability.

## **Inclusive education in Europe**

Inclusion Europe's research and the experiences of our member organizations demonstrate that policies in many countries in Europe are formally geared towards inclusive education. Yet, these policies are usually not comprehensive, not always aimed at systemic changes, and they

lack careful planning, special monitoring mechanisms and the necessary reallocation of resources.

According to country reports by the Academic Network of European Disability Experts ANED, European countries offer education to students with disabilities following three patterns:

- students may be placed mainly in the same classes as non-disabled pupils (Italy, Norway, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Cyprus, Slovenia, Estonia, Malta, Ireland, United Kingdom)
- in special classes located in regular schools (Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark) or mainly in segregated special schools (Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Bulgaria, Latvia, Luxembourg)
- in some countries all three options may be offered (Finland, France).

In some countries legislation does not grant unconditional access to mainstream education for all. Often, legislation lacks a firm non-rejection policy. In some countries, such as Spain and Sweden, access is granted but there is a lack of resources and support. Sometimes access and support is theoretically available, but the school environment is not made accessible for all, and educational programs are not adjusted to the needs of all students. An example is Hungary.

### **Deteriorating picture**

Overall statistics from European countries show that the segregation of students with disabilities has been increasing since 2008, although there are huge differences between countries. Italy has almost 0% segregation where Switzerland, Belgium, Germany and the Czech Republic have high percentages. It is worrying that European average has increased from 2 % in 2008 to 2.25 % in 2012.

### **Complex Needs**

Children with intellectual disabilities and children with complex needs are frequently excluded from the right to inclusive education. The exclusion may not be intentional, but is the actual result of implicit policies which regard children with intellectual disabilities and complex needs as “in-educable”, or too difficult or too expensive to include in the general educational system.

The CRPD Committee in its analysis of country reports flagged up their concern about the continued use of special schools including boarding schools. European member states already reviewed were on the list and we know that that list will grow as countries are reviewed. This is a concern we share as the numbers of children with complex health needs including children who are technology dependent grows.

Another growing concern is the exclusion of children from school through individual schools' expulsion or formal exclusion mechanisms. Young people with autism and emotional or behavioural difficulties are the most vulnerable to these exclusions. Although we don't yet have the research data to confirm it, our experience is that where the systems are more inclusive the numbers of children with these difficulties is lower. Early inclusive childcare and education is

therefore a priority. It is an investment that would pay off by reducing the need for extra support costs to both the education and health systems not to mention the benefits to the child and the family.

### **How can we change the picture and what is the EU doing?**

#### **What the EU is doing and could do to promote inclusive education**

- The EU has only supporting competence in the area of education, and education systems. There are examples of where inclusive education has been supported through positive use of funding such as Erasmus+. There are also a number of projects funded by the European Social Fund to improve education and training for young people to decrease drop-out rates and improve vocational and tertiary education. These programmes could bring a positive change in the lives of young people with intellectual disabilities if there were better targeting. In recognition that students with disabilities face serious barriers in their mobility when they want to study abroad as part of the Erasmus programme, the European Commission is supporting a project ('ExchangeAbility') to help increasing the number of students studying abroad. Currently, only 0.14% of all Erasmus students receive supplementary grant as a form of reasonable accommodation.
- Another project, EADHE:European Action on Disability within Higher Education Erasmus Multilateral Project [www.eadhe.eu](http://www.eadhe.eu) EADHE Project ACTS aims to improve the participation of persons with disabilities in tertiary education through inclusive approaches, actions and measures.

Furthermore, there is an EU Agency dedicated to special needs and inclusive education and the European Network on Inclusive Education & Disability co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Operational Programme "Fight Against Discrimination 2007-2013". These are examples of positive action that could be developed to ensure they are inclusive of all disabled people.

### **How other policy areas also contribute to inclusive education:**

#### **DG Employment**

- Competence in employment issues has meant funding flowing into programmes to build employability, reduce economic inactivity and promote equality some of these have funded the additional support for young people with disabilities including intellectual disability, to have a more inclusive, outcome focused vocational element in secondary and post secondary education.
- Lifelong learning has objectives including, 'to reinforce the contribution of lifelong learning to social cohesion, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, gender equality and personal fulfilment' and «To contribute to increased participation in lifelong

learning by people of all ages, including those with special needs and disadvantaged groups, regardless of their socio-economic background»

- Childcare policy linked to gender equality in the labour market could promote inclusive preschool programmes promoting diversity
- The Disability Strategy 2010-2020 was an opportunity to set some education targets that produced meaningful outcomes for all disabled people. The targets set and indicators used unfortunately are part of the problem not a solution as they exclude those who cannot achieve academic examination success and drive the school systems to focus their efforts on those who will succeed.

Programme objectives and associated funding direct attention and produce results which spread and which feed back into policy development. The EU has powerful influence whether or not it has the power to legislate and could use it to promote greater inclusion in all forms of education.

### **Conclusion and action**

At the EU level we call for the European Commission to support Member States and to allow the use of European funding instruments to develop inclusive education systems by funding both training for staff and accessibility. Reasonable accommodation for children with intellectual disabilities in education should also be possible to fund from European funding programmes.

The EU should have a special focus and develop specific measures on the participation of children with intellectual disabilities in the education system when pursuing the target of the Europe 2020 strategy on education.

Inclusion Europe advocates for real inclusion in all EU Member States that means

- supporting a dedicated Working Group on Inclusive Education,
- raising awareness among parents who are key actors in ensuring and supporting inclusion. Without their advocacy and practical daily support children are too easily diverted into special schools,
- sharing knowledge of what works in the organization of school systems and environments,
- focusing on the diversity of learning needs and abilities of the learners, and making sure that learners with more complex needs are not left behind or indeed left out altogether,
- working with a range of partners to develop better approaches and to advocate for practical inclusive solutions and confident policy making on Inclusive Education.

DPOs working together and in engagement with the European agencies can do more to keep moving inclusive education forward and to reverse the trend to greater segregation.



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Comments by Dr. Michael Fembek, Zero Project, Director

I am trying to be as much to the point as possible, so I cut out all the information, what the Zero Project is, or how we work, and fully concentrate on the results of the current research process as of today – yesterday evening, to be precise.

We are currently in our fourth annual research cycle, this year looking for the most Innovative Practices and Innovative Policies in education (we are also researching Information and Communication Technology and also Social Indicators that compare countries in the implementation of the UN CRPD, but I leave that aside).

We are looking at inclusive education models, access to education, quality education, through the lens of three criteria. First: innovation, second: measurable impact and third scalability, meaning the potential to scale, to grow or to be copied elsewhere.

We dispatched our Call for Nomination in June and by the end of July we had collected an astounding number of 337 nominations from 98 countries worldwide.

Looking at the countries of origin, more than 50 percent come from Europe, with Austria – our home country and Italy as the top nominators, but 54 were sent from Asia Pacific countries, 29 from Africa and 27 from Middle East countries. Countrywise we got 11 from India, 7 from South Africa and 6 from Tanzania, to mention some highlights.

We are right now in the process of shortlisting the nominations to roughly 200 (including ICT which make up for approximately a quarter), and at the same time to cluster and categorize them.

There are obvious ways to categorize, for example along the different forms of education, in early childhood care, primary and secondary education, tertiary education and university, vocational education. Or also the focus of the projects, practices and policies, like teacher education, inclusive curricula and learning materials, non-formal teaching, peer support, and so on.

We, of course, also categorize along country incomes. What works in Denmark will most probably have no chance to be scaled in the least developed countries, and what is an innovation in Burundi (and we got some nominations from) will most probably have no impact here in Switzerland.

But what keeps us on our toes right now, is the question: Ok, here we have something that obviously works, because

- a. they have the data to prove it, and
- b. the expert networks of the Zero Project are supporting it.

So the most important questions that we ask is: What exactly are they doing? What is different to all the others that exist or that have tried? What is their method, their solution? What do these most innovative Practices and Policies have in common?

And here are some first insights that I can share: Categories, clusters, of methods that are highly represented in our nominations, and most probably also in the shortlisting and final selection. I will name some of them.

Digital Literacy: Technology, Web tools, the internet, new devices are tools that make education more accessible every year. So digital literacy is a door opener, not only for persons with disabilities, but for trainers, teachers, and developers of learning material as well.

We got nominations in that field, among others, from India, Italy, Kenia, Poland, Portugal and Tanzania.

Databases for accessible learning materials, like audiobooks, videos, in easy language. They are out there for early childhood in the form of pictures and pictograms, for vocational training and university courses, and we have them from Bangla Desh, Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Japan, Sri Lanka and the United States. We are also looking into curricula, textbooks, guidelines and standards, all of which are obviously solutions that work already in many countries.

Sign language. Developing methods to make sign language more popular, accessible, cheaper or even more fun are all around the globe, literally, from Canada to Israel, from Jordan (where they are used in an emergency hotline by the way) to Tanzania.

I got a lot more like that, but you are probably to ask right now, that is all very good, but what about fully inclusive education systems, universal design etc. Isn't that what everybody is looking for? What is out there, in huge numbers, are individual schools, universities or also preschool-arrangements, groups of them or also smaller regions that want to get everything right at the same time. In some cases they are dedicated pilot projects that are closely watched by governments and administrations to build up inclusive education policies from their learnings.

Fully inclusive schools, or even smaller regions as pilot projects were nominated from Austria, Belarus, Ethiopia, Israel, Tunisia and the United Kingdom.

Inclusive school models that are created to influence public policies have been nominated from Bangladesh, Canada, India, United States, Iraq, Norway or Armenia.

Let me finish with two remarks. First, from what we see and feel, there are hundreds, thousands of promising innovations out there, where most of them have found something, often something tiny like a funny way to learn sign language, or an automated translation into easy language. It is here, that will create real change in the long run, when they grow, step by step, when they connect to existing solutions and develop them, when they interconnect and inspire, and pushed by new technologies and paradigm shifts in human rights. Politicians, administrators, planners and we all love to believe that the only, one, real, big solution is out there, but it isn't. Inclusive education, is an ongoing process, that has just started and will develop dynamically, for a very long time, that is my personal belief.

And secondly, we as the Zero Project, believing in the procedural nature of inclusive education and arguably all human rights, are currently exploring new ways to speed up slow innovation processes: This year, for the first time and co-funded by the EU, we have localized the aggregated knowledge and organized conferences in all Austrian nine country states, inviting innovative practices, targeted and trimmed to the regional context.

And secondly, we are currently exploring the possibility for a Zero Research Project. It will look at those inflection points that everybody is interested in, like scaling up Innovative Practices, like creating sustainable employment models, like inclusive school systems, and do an in-depth research on the 10 most innovative solutions that work in that field.

Thank you for the attention.

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Closing Comments by  
Klaus Lachwitz, President, Inclusion International

Thank you for your speeches and thank you, distinguished members of the CRPD Committee, for your interesting comments and questions.

We will provide you with all statements of today`s side session as soon as possible.

Let me finish up this session by referring to the Position Paper of the International Disability Alliance on Inclusive Education which was sent to you recently. It took some time to draft this paper as Art. 24 CRPD is a rather complex human rights provision and as the needs of persons with disabilities with regard to education might be different sometimes.

But in particular blind persons, deaf persons and persons with intellectual disabilities respectively their representative DPOs exchanged their views thoroughly within IDA and unanimously agreed that the main message of Art. 24 CRPD is to build up inclusive education systems all over the world for all persons with disabilities.

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It`s an important message not only for IDA`s membership, but for all States Parties who have signed and ratified the CRPD and we appeal to you, distinguished Committee members, to state very clearly in your comments and concluding observations that the development of inclusive education systems is the only way to implement Art. 24 CRPD.

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## Summary of Responses to Questions from Committee Members

Following the presentations to the Committee, members asked several questions, listed below together with a summary of the responses.

*Ms Degener*

Regarding special and inclusive education systems, I believe that it is not possible to keep up both. I am interested in knowing what kind of questions we should ask to Member States regarding inclusive education. Besides statistics, which could be useful questions? We are missing out in quality education.

*Response from Inclusion International*

You are correct that no public system will have enough resources to fund two systems and the only way to have sufficient for inclusion is through such reallocation.

The transformation from a special system to an inclusive one can happen in many ways and start in many places. It can start in one school, in one district, with one director or one politician. "The right to education of persons with disabilities" - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, A/HRC/4/29, 2007 makes several useful recommendations for how to begin. It is imperative that the CRPD Committee require that States develop plans with short and reasonable timeframes to transform their systems and comply with Article 24. So questions the committee might ask could relate to:

- the number of children, youth and adults with disabilities out of school compared to the general population;
- budget allocations for inclusion vs. special education at all levels;
- a plan with a 5-10 year maximum time frame for transformation of the system to inclusion.

Mr. Buntan

I don't think we disagree on the inclusive education, especially when we talk about no rejection policy, ensuring accessibility and support services for all people in the school system. But I'd like

to ask you a hypothetical question. Given the fact that if we go for all the mainstream delivery system to all students and to close special education schools, do you think we can ensure the provision in accordance with Article 24.3.c of CRPD? For example, in the United States for at least two or three decades the Braille literacy has gone downhill and many people blamed it on mainstreaming education. I used the word mainstream intentionally because I don't think mainstream education is getting any near or close to inclusive education yet.

My other question is: do you think that special schools have any role to play or any space in the future educational system?

*Response from Inclusion International*

First of all it is important to remember that according to UNICEF, 1/3 of children now out of school have a disability. Anyone painting a picture of a current special system that meets the needs of children with disabilities is ignoring these out-of-school children and contributing to their invisibility. Such a picture also ignores the quality of most special education as described by DPO's during the CRPD negotiations – where students do not have a curriculum equal to that of non-disabled students and are not prepared for life after school.

One reason that most mainstream schools do not provide all the individual supports necessary is that budgets are currently divided between the special system – which receives most of the resources – and the regular or mainstream system where there is little to invest in making inclusion work. It is critical that resources from the special system be reallocated to support inclusion.

With regards to the US data being cited, identifying one criterion is not sufficient for evaluating the impact of an entire system. That same country has also had a blind person hold the highest office in state government and demonstrated many other benefits of inclusive education.

Regarding special schools, we reiterate that the disability community fought hard during the CRPD negotiations to eliminate the concept of special education, because “special” has usually implied inferior quality and lower standards. The IDA position is clear that the CRPD endorses the existence of classes and schools for deaf students because those schools are based on language and culture, not disability.

Mr Kim

In Korea we experienced tremendous opposition to inclusive education from parents of children with disabilities. How are you going to deal with the stronghold of the special education empire? How do you work with them, (e.g. teachers)? What strategies would you have in order to incentive them?

*Response from Inclusion International*

Many parents are nervous about inclusion because they have never seen it work. It is important for all jurisdictions to immediately begin to demonstrate good inclusive education so that the

sceptics can see it in action. Research also has shown that the more experience educators have in special education the less they support the concept of inclusion. Similarly, many of the teachers who are most skilled at teaching classes with a wide range of learning styles have no training in issues related to disability – they are simply the best teachers.

An inclusive system still needs specialists, for example to teach mobility skills to blind students, but many former special education teachers may need to move into regular classes.

Mr. Tatic

We need guiding ideas. For example, when the Committee reviewed Denmark we were informed that the State recognized inclusion as the goal, and, therefore, they started the inclusion process. However, due to austerity measures, parents started to claim that schools did not provide enough support and, therefore, they asked to go back to the special system. Another example is my country, Serbia. In 2009 a new law established an inclusive education framework. The Ministry acted politically-correctly and started a process of enrolment of students with disabilities into regular schools. However, no support was provided to those children. My question is: how do you ensure real quality in inclusive education?

*Response from Inclusion International*

Regarding cutbacks, it is discrimination to achieve financial savings on the backs of students with disabilities. If budgets need to be reduced then cuts should be made to the general system, not to individual supports or accommodation.

Achieving quality in education is always a challenge, not only for students with disabilities. In many countries teachers receive little training and many do not have much more education than their students. Teachers are often poorly paid, and many work at more than one job. That means they do not have the time or energy to plan adequately. Teachers need to be well trained, reasonably remunerated, and supported to do their jobs. In so-called special education, often a lot of resources go into diagnosis and assessment, and much less into planning how to meet students' individual learning styles and supporting teachers.