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Towards Disability Inclusive Education

Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Yet, half of the estimated 65 million primary and lower secondary-school age children with disabilities in developing countries are still out of school![1] SDG 4 can only be achieved if we deliberately include children with disabilities in all education programmes and include them in the (post) COVID-19 responses.

This guide gives a quick oversight of what inclusive education is and what immediate steps you can take to make your education programmes more inclusive. We have also brought together a selection of practical tools and background information that will help to kickstart your journey into inclusion.

Who is this guide for

Programme managers, proposal developers and field coordinators involved in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of primary education programmes.
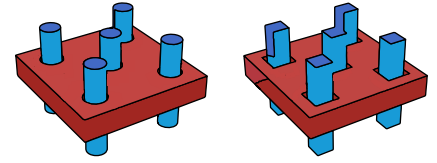
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Special Education

Mainstream schools for mainstream children. Special schools for learners with disabilities.

Integrated Education
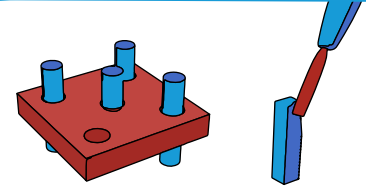
Children with disabilities are integrated in the mainstream school (in special classes or in regular classes.) There is space for small individual changes, but the system remains unchanged. In the end the learner must change to fit the school.

Inclusive Education
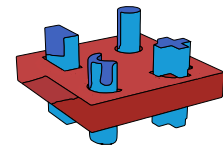
A flexible system which adapts to the learner. All children learn together.

Differences between special, integrated and inclusive education

What is disability?

Disability is a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder someone's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

What is inclusive education?

Inclusive education means that all children – no matter who they are – can learn together in the same school. This entails reaching out to all learners and removing all barriers that could limit participation and achievement.

It is a system that caters for all children, also those who are often not supported to achieve their potential at school, such as children from ethnic and linguistic minorities, girls, nomadic and street children, children suffering extreme poverty as well as children with disabilities.

Inclusive Education embraces "Universal Design for Learning" and ensures good quality education for all, which means that school systems are equipped with skills, knowledge and resources to provide quality education to all learners in accessible and safe learning environments.

Legal & Policy Frameworks

1989

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

1994

UNESCO Salamanca Statement.

2006

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), article 24.

2015

Conclusion on refugees with disabilities and other persons with disabilities protected and assisted by UNHCR.

2015

Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all.

Benefits of Inclusive Education

● Children with disabilities have higher academic achievements compared to children who are educated in special school setting.[2]

● Inclusion supports the social and emotional development and the self-esteem of children with disabilities and increases social acceptance by their peers.[3]

● All children learn to be more accepting of diversity and have increased sensitivity to the needs of others.

● Supporting teachers to respond to diverse learning styles benefits all learners and improves the quality of education for all.

● Educating students with disabilities will lead to greater participation in employment and income generation and will bring economic benefit at individual, family and national GDP level. There are potential efficiency savings from eliminating parallel education structures and using resources more effectively in a single inclusive mainstream system.[4]

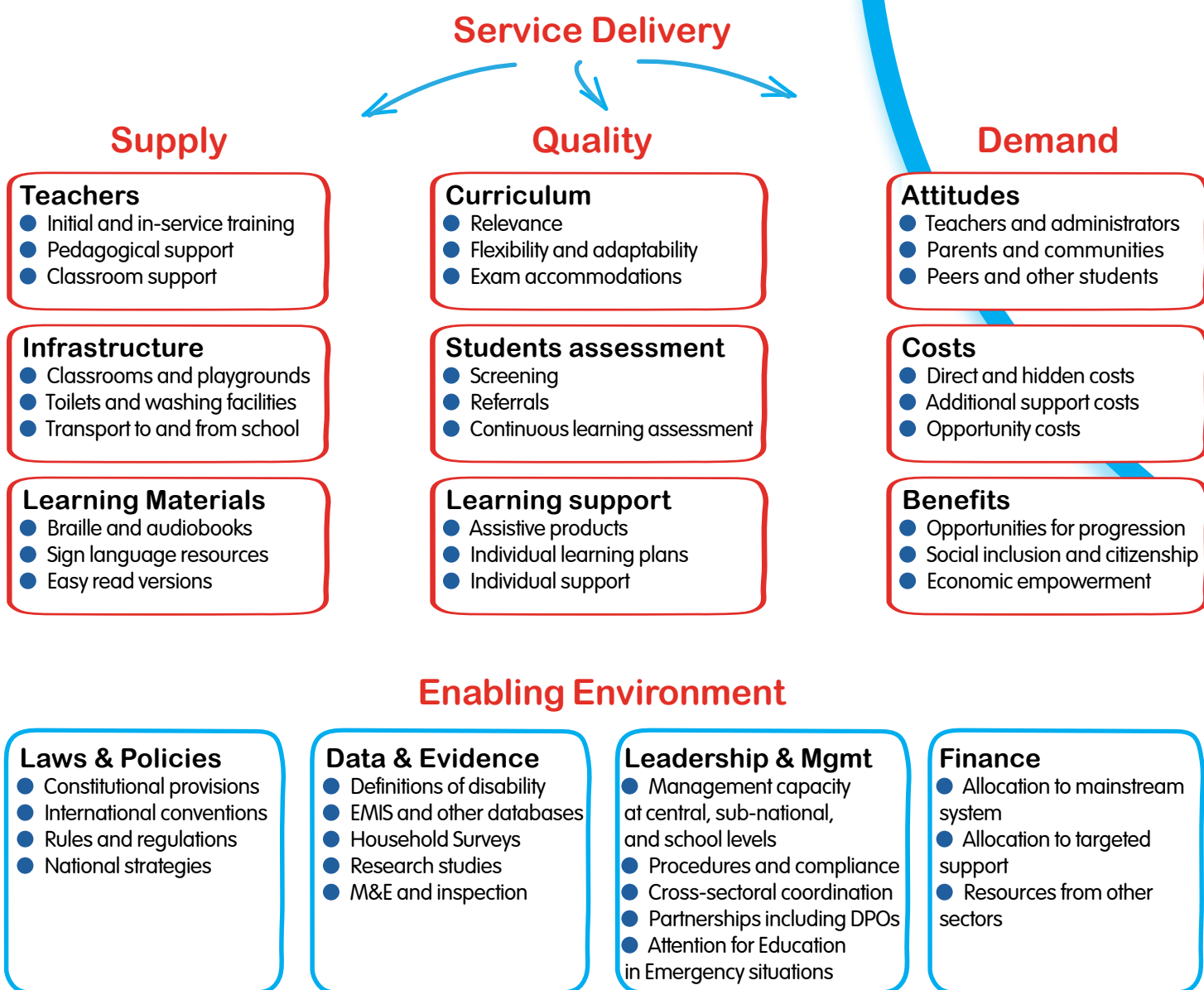# Key Ingredients For Disability Inclusive Education

Inclusion does not happen automatically; you have to plan for it in your projects and programmes and strengthen the capacity of all staff involved in the educational process. Attitudinal, communication, accessibility and institutional barriers have to be removed. The following ingredients will help you make your programmes more inclusive.

UNESCO has developed a framework for disability inclusive planning (see next page) to distinguish between the supply and demand side and the quality aspects to make education programmes inclusive. On the supply side, it is essential to ensure that teachers are well trained, infrastructure is accessible, and learning materials are available in accessible formats. On the demand side, it is important that teachers and administrators are positive about inclusive education and that the whole community supports the idea of inclusive education. Also, parents need to be motivated to send their children with disabilities to school, and they should be enabled to meet the costs that are involved in sending their child with a disability to school.

Inclusive education is more than just being present in the classroom. To ensure children with disabilities have equal learning opportunities and outcomes, attention needs to be paid to the quality of the education. Curriculum adaptations will be required, as well as individual assessments and learning support. It is equally important that children with disabilities feel safe and included and are not bullied in the classroom.

Framework For Disability Inclusive Education

Service Delivery

Supply

Teachers
- Initial and in-service training
- Pedagogical support
- Classroom support

Infrastructure
- Classrooms and playgrounds
- Toilets and washing facilities
- Transport to and from school

Learning Materials
- Braille and audiobooks
- Sign language resources
- Easy read versions

Quality

Curriculum
- Relevance
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Exam accommodations

Students assessment
- Screening
- Referrals
- Continuous learning assessment

Learning support
- Assistive products
- Individual learning plans
- Individual support

Demand

Attitudes
- Teachers and administrators
- Parents and communities
- Peers and other students

Costs
- Direct and hidden costs
- Additional support costs
- Opportunity costs

Benefits
- Opportunities for progression
- Social inclusion and citizenship
- Economic empowerment

Enabling Environment

Laws & Policies
- Constitutional provisions
- International conventions
- Rules and regulations
- National strategies

Data & Evidence
- Definitions of disability
- EMIS and other databases
- Household Surveys
- Research studies
- M&E and inspection

Leadership & Mgmt
- Management capacity at central, sub-national, and school levels
- Procedures and compliance
- Cross-sectoral coordination
- Partnerships including DPOs
- Attention for Education in Emergency situations

Finance
- Allocation to mainstream system
- Allocation to targeted support
- Resources from other sectors

Source: Adapted from UNICEF, On the road to inclusion, Highlights from the UNICEF and IIEP technical round tables on disability-inclusive education sector planning, 2019.

Inclusive education programmes thrive best in an enabling environment where laws and policies, data & evidence, leadership and management support the inclusion of children with disabilities and where the required finances are provided. The link with other sectors is also vital. Access to health and rehabilitation services is crucial: without wheelchairs, glasses and other assistive devices, it will be more difficult for them to go to school and learn.

This quick guide will focus on inclusion in primary education, but inclusion in early childhood education, secondary, tertiary, and vocational training is also equally important.

Background Resources

Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and education: ALL MEANS ALL

Are we able to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education, and are children with disabilities included? Find out all the facts in this report (UNESCO).

IDA Inclusive Education Report 2020: What an inclusive, equitable, quality education means to us

The report includes recommendations of good practices and lays down the minimum conditions required for the inclusion of all children (International Disability Alliance (IDA).

Good practices in inclusive education of children with disabilities in Cape Verde

Looking for good practices? This study clearly explains what works and what can be reproduced and developed in other contexts as well (Handicap International).

Evidence digest: disability inclusive education in focus

Looking for the latest evidence and guidance on disability inclusion? This digest gives you a good overview of recent research, best practices and manuals (Disability Inclusion Helpdesk).

Networks

International Disability and Development Consortium- Inclusive Education TG

The IDDC Inclusive Education Task Group promotes disability inclusive education by influencing policies, strategies and financing through evidence-based advocacy, sharing information and knowledge.

Want to be involved in the international lobby for inclusive education? Link up with this task group.

Inclusive Education Initiative

A multi-donor trust fund (overseen by the Worldbank) that invests in inclusive education.

Looking for technical knowledge or funding for innovative projects? Check this website.

EENET Enabling Education Network

A global information sharing and learning network on inclusive education.

Looking for more information on inclusive education? You will find all you want to know in the up-to-date EENET library.

Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies

A global network of members working together on education in a humanitarian context.

Working on education in humanitarian contexts? Check this website for practical resources.

Dutch Coalition on Disability and Development

DCDD is a Dutch network for disability inclusion whose participants are active in more than 70 countries worldwide.

Looking for a partner to work on inclusive education? Contact us at dcdd@dcdd.nl. We will happily connect you to partners in our network.

International Disability Alliance

IDA brings together over 1,100 organisations of persons with disabilities and their families from across eight global and six regional networks. IDA represents the estimated one billion people worldwide living with disabilities.

Want to get in touch with national/international and regional OPDs? On the IDA website, you will find all the contact details.

Make The School Infrastructure Accessible

To make sure children with disabilities can participate equally, physical barriers have to be removed. Each child should be able to enter the school and classroom without any obstacles, play together with the other kids, use the playground, go to the toilet, and come to school safely and without extra costs.

Toolbox

Towards an inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities South Sudan

Are you designing a disability inclusive school building or want to make an existing building accessible? This practical document is a great starting point (Light for the World - Netherlands).

Welcome to School kit

Want to create a welcoming atmosphere and a barrier-free environment in your school? Use this toolkit and engage all children to investigate how welcoming their school is to children with disabilities (Liliane Foundation).

Inclusion at Play Example from Malaysia

Looking for an example of an inclusive playground? Check what UNICEF Malaysia has done (UNICEF).

Inclusive play design guide

Want to make the school playground inclusive? This guide will inspire you to create outdoor play environments for everyone (Playworld).

Barriers to Play and Recreation for Children and Young People with Disabilities

Want to deepen your knowledge on Inclusive Play? This book will help you understand how barriers in the environment influence how children with disabilities play (LUDI).

Video inclusion in Sport and Exercises

Inclusion in sport and exercises will help children with disabilities to feel included at school. Check this video for practical tips (EENET).

Teacher Training And Support

Inclusive education can only be achieved when teachers receive proper training, including on the job follow-up support to help teachers integrate new skills into classroom practices.[5] Ideally, inclusive education is also an integral part of the national teacher training curriculum.

In addition, teachers will need supplementary classroom support to enable them to pay attention to the needs of all learners.

Toolbox

Preparing teachers for inclusive education

You want to train teachers, but you don't know yet how to set this up? In this guide, you will find a clear explanation and examples of different approaches to teacher training (Catholic Relief Service (CRS) - Vietnam).

Inclusive Schools. A Training Module for Teachers

Looking for ready-made teacher training? You can use this five-day Training Module to train teachers on the inclusion of children with disabilities in their school (Save the Children India).

Teachers for All: Inclusive Teaching for Children with Disabilities

Do you want to train policy-makers and teacher trainers on disability inclusion? This publication gives you practical tips and tricks on how to go about it (International Disability and Development Consortium).

Universal Design for Learning to help all children read: promoting literacy for learners with disabilities

Looking for information on how to organise teacher training and support? In Chapter 2.2, you'll find information on how to set up a tiered teacher support system (USAID).

Video-based teacher training on inclusion

Looking for a quick training tool for teachers? In videos 4, 5, 6 & 7, teachers will learn what practical steps they can take to improve the inclusion of children with disabilities in everyday school activities (EENET).

"A quarter of teachers in 48 education systems report a high need for professional development on teaching students with special needs."[6]

Accessible Learning Materials And Inclusive Communication

Children with disabilities need learning materials in a format that is accessible for them; think of braille books, audiobooks and easy read versions. Also, the communication in the classroom needs to be inclusive, for example, the use of sign language in case some children are deaf.

Toolbox

Inclusive Education Report: Realities Facing Hard of Hearing Learners in Nepal and Uganda

Want to know how to include children who are hard of hearing in education? In this publication, you will find some good inspiration (International Federation of Hard of Hearing People).

Language Before Literacy Videos about teaching deaf and hard of hearing children

Deaf or hard of hearing children in your class? These videos will help teachers to support language acquisition and will allow them to use a communication-first approach (Deaf Child Worldwide, eKitabu and Royal Dutch Kentalis).

International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment

Want to learn how to include children with visual impairments in the classroom? Browse through these publications (ICEVI).

WFD Position Paper on Inclusive Education

Find out the recommendations of the World Federation of the Deaf about inclusive education (WFD).

Accessible Digital Textbooks for all

Want to know how to make textbooks accessible for children with disabilities? This website is a great starting point (UNICEF).

Guidelines on best practice for persons living with deafblindness

Want to learn more about teaching children who are deafblind? This publication will give you practical guidance (CBM).

Accessible Curriculum, Student Assessment And Learning Support

When children with disabilities are enrolled in school, they must receive a good intake assessment to identify what support and accommodations they will need. They will benefit from an Individualised Educational Plan[7] that monitors their progress and needs for support throughout their school career.

When needed, refer the child to rehabilitation or medical support as well. For example, they may benefit from assistive devices such as glasses, hearing aids or a walker.[8] In addition, in cooperation with rehabilitation workers, individual learning support for children with disabilities can be arranged.

Strict examination rules and rigid school curricula are a barrier for students with disabilities to succeed in their school careers. Therefore, it is important to be flexible with the curriculum and examination rules and look for individual accommodations for children with disabilities.[9]

Toolbox

Instructional Approaches and Teaching Supports

Want to learn how to set up Individualised Education Plans, make the curriculum accessible and how to provide reasonable accommodation? In Chapter 2.3, you'll find practical guidance (USAID).

Ensuring All Students Are Learning

Want to know how to apply Universal Design and appropriate Information Communication Technology for Education? In chapters 8 & 9, you'll find recommendations (DAI).

Handbook of Inclusive Education and Curriculum Planning, Teaching Methodology, Assessment

Looking for more practical tips and examples about curriculum planning, assessments and individual Education Plans? Check chapters 6 and 7 of this handbook of Inclusive Education (CBSE).

Involving Students, Parents And Communities

To make sure children with disabilities are enrolled in school, it is important to identify children with disabilities systematically. Parents will only send their children with disabilities to school when they know their child is welcomed by the teachers and accepted by the other children. To create a safe and welcoming atmosphere, it is crucial to raise awareness and a positive attitude towards persons with disabilities in the community. Organising peer support can be very powerful: it will increase acceptance and empathy between students with and without disabilities.[10]

Toolbox

Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments

Want to identify children with disabilities in the community? In Chapter 3.2 of the Booklet, you'll find tools for finding children who are not in school and why they are not in school (UNESCO Bangkok).

Why are you not going to school? Children investigating barriers to education in Kosti, Sudan

Want to learn more about how children experience the barriers in their school? Have a look at these unadorned recordings (War Child).

Guidelines for consulting with children and youth with disabilities

Nothing about us without us also applies to children with disabilities. In this publication, you'll find out how to consult children with different disabilities (Plan International).

Parenting Poster

Want to know how to involve parents in the development of their child with a disability? This parenting poster is an excellent first step (Liliane Foundation).

Ethical Guidelines For ethical, meaningful and inclusive children's participation practice

Looking for inspiration to make your children's participation practice inclusive? Check these guidelines with practical checklists (Save the Children).

Budget And Lobby For Inclusion

Making educational programmes inclusive does not have to be costly, but it is necessary to budget for disability inclusion. Keep in mind that when accessibility is taken into account when designing new infrastructure, it usually adds only 1% to the construction costs.[11] Adjusting inaccessible infrastructure will be more expensive.

When developing an inclusive educational project budget, not only the costs for teacher training, educational materials and accessible infrastructure should be included. Also, a budget needs to be reserved to support parents to meet the direct or hidden costs of sending their children with disabilities to school when needed. Think of transport costs[12] and the costs of assistive devices.

To realise high quality, sustainable inclusive education, enough funding should be allocated at the regional/ national/international level. Advocacy is needed to ensure that also children with disabilities are included in national education policies. Education authorities need to be encouraged to develop inclusive laws, implementation strategies and sufficient allocation of funds towards inclusive education interventions.[13/14] It is also important to ensure that children with disabilities are included in the educational COVID-19 response programmes and post COVID-19 education programmes. The following tools will help you to lobby for more inclusion.

Toolbox

Making Schools Inclusive - How change can happen
Want to predict what budget you will need to make education inclusive? In Chapter 6, you'll find suggestions for addressing financial barriers to inclusive education and cost-prediction tools (Save the Children UK).

Enabling Education - Steps towards Global Disability Inclusive Education
Want to know more about the lobby for inclusive education? This document includes practical recommendations for the Dutch Government (Liliane Foundation).

Costing equity
How is disability inclusive education funded? In the report, you'll find how donors and governments currently fund disability inclusive education and what challenges still need to be overcome (IDDC).

Let's break silos now! Achieving disability inclusive education in a post-COVID world
Working on post-COVID Education Plans? This report calls for learning from the pandemic and for renewed efforts to improve inclusive education (Humanity and Inclusion).

Planipolis: Portal of Education Plans and Policies
Want to know what policy your government has with regards to inclusive education? Check this website for an overview of national inclusive education policies around the world (UNESCO).

Partnerships For Inclusion

Disability inclusive education can only be achieved if all actors and all sectors cooperate.

Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) play a key role in this process. Meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in inclusive education is a prerequisite. While moving from special education to inclusive education, OPDs will have new roles to play within schools (and systems). They become advisors, mentors and role models for children and youth with disabilities and support mainstream schools to allow them to welcome and ensure participation of children and youth with disabilities. In short, persons with disabilities and their families are the best placed advisors for a system transformation that places children and youth with disabilities – and UNCRPD commitments – at the core of reform.[15]

In many villages, persons with disabilities have not yet organised themselves and are in need of capacity strengthening support. That is why it is crucial while working on inclusive education to also work together with Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID) initiatives. CBID (formerly known as Community Based Rehabilitation) is an approach that is implemented through the combined efforts of people with disabilities, their families and communities, and representatives of the appropriate health, education, vocational and social sectors. Local CBID service providers will be a great support in making inclusive education a reality.

It's vital to link with other sectors – such as health and child protection – to ensure that children are receiving support outside of the classroom as well.

Toolbox

CBR Guidelines as a tool for Community Based Inclusive Development

Want to learn more about Community-Based Inclusive Development? Read this publication (IDDC).

Education In Humanitarian Context And Times Of COVID-19

During emergencies such as wars and natural disasters, children with disabilities are usually left behind, also when it comes to education. The assumption that it is too difficult to include children with disabilities in education during emergencies and that much expertise is needed should change. It is important to start by asking ourselves: "Who are the people currently excluded from learning and participation? What can all of us do first to improve the situation?" The INEE Minimum Standards are a useful tool for reflecting on how inclusive an emergency education programme is.[16]

COVID-19 has created the worst crisis in education and learning in a century. To make education more inclusive, effective and resilient than before the crisis, it's important to respond during the three phases. First, while schools are closed, it is necessary to cope with the crisis, which means protecting health, safety and nutrition and prevent learning loss through remote learning. Second, as schools reopen, we should manage continuity preventing an increase in dropout, prepare for partial reopening, train teachers to assess learning losses, and provide adequate financing for recovery needs. Then, throughout, we should seize opportunities to improve the system for the long term: scale up effective COVID-response approaches (e.g. incorporate remote learning, teach at the right level, track at-risk students to prevent dropout), focus on creating build-back-better education systems, protect and enhance education financing.[17]

Toolbox

Education in Emergencies: Including Everyone

Are you providing education in a humanitarian context? This guide will help you to get started (INEEInter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies).

Practical Guide to blended /remote learning and children with disabilities

Looking for guidance how to make remote learning disability inclusive? This guide covers the topic from A to Z (UNICEF).

COVID-19 and inclusive education Guidance

Looking for up-to-date and practical resources about inclusive education during and post COVID-19? Check this overview (EENET).

Right to education: challenges with inclusive education and accessibility during the coronavirus disease pandemic

Want to know how to implement the UNCRPD obligations regarding education (article 24) in times of COVID-19? This publication comes with a good insight into the barriers and comes with practical tips (Conference of States Parties UNCRPD).

About

DCDD is the Dutch Coalition on Disability and Development. For more information check our [website](#).

If you have questions or tips for tools that we could include in this Quick Guide, please contact us at dcdd@dcdd.nl. Please also check the other DCDD Quick Guides: there is a Quick Guide on Inclusive Humanitarian Action. The Quick Guides on Data Collection and Inclusive Food Security are coming soon.

DCDD has developed this Quick Guide in collaboration with Liliane Foundation, War Child, SeeYou Foundation, Kentalis, Into Inclusion, Roelie Wolting and Ilse van der Put. Special thanks to Emanuela Lamorte for the research and writing. The lay-out was made by Martin Menso.

Endnotes

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