Inclusive education

> The CBMA policy note provides a **high level overview** of our **understanding and policy position** on relevant topics, and outlines our **engagement with these areas** in conjunction with our partners and other areas of the organisation.

Definitions

'Inclusive education' is a process of systemic reform that involves **making changes and modifications to education structures to overcome barriers** that prevent students with disabilities from receiving an equitable and participatory learning experience.[i] This can involve modifying content, teaching methods, approaches, and strategies in education so that **people with disabilities can be educated in mainstream schools that meet their needs**.[ii] The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has stated that inclusive education "focuses on the **full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance and achievement of all students**." It involves change in culture, policy, and practice for both practical and attitudinal change to occur and is part of the broader process of achieving social inclusion for people with disabilities.[iii]

Background

Education has the transformative potential to **improve key human development outcomes** and is a powerful mechanism to lift families out of poverty. Globally, an **estimated 258 million children are not in school**, with those most likely to be included in this figure disadvantaged due to poverty.[iv] For people with disabilities who already face higher risks of poverty, this leads to **entrenched exclusion from education**.

One in three children with disabilities of primary school age is out of school, in comparison to one in seven children without disabilities.[v] As a direct consequence, **adolescents with disabilities are less likely to complete lower secondary education**, with an average completion rate of 36 per cent as opposed to 53 per cent for adolescents without disabilities throughout five developing countries.[vi]

Inclusive education is featured in **several international frameworks on education and global development commitments**. Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) calls for:

- Access to **inclusive, quality, and free primary and secondary education for children with disabilities** on an equal basis with others.
- **Reasonable accommodation and learning environments accessible for children with disabilities**, including accessible education materials.
- Appropriate measures to be taken by State Parties to employ teachers – including those with disabilities – who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to **train professionals** who work at all levels of education.
- The use of **alternative modes and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials** to support persons with disabilities.[vii]

More recently, the International Forum on Inclusion and Equity in Education in 2019 resulted in the Cali Commitment to equity and inclusion in education, which called upon **governments and other stakeholders to accelerate efforts towards inclusive and equitable education for all**.[viii] This commitment serves as a call for renewed impetus for inclusive education 25 years after the adoption of the Salamanca Statement, which called on the international community to implement practical and strategic changes to facilitate inclusive education and work towards including all learners in mainstream schools.[ix] This is supported, too, by Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda which calls for **ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all**.

There are a host of impacts associated with inclusive education that go beyond the classroom. Attending mainstream, local schools that are disability-inclusive improves students' and families' **connection to the community and fosters social inclusion and wellbeing**.[x] Education is an important gateway out of poverty. Children with disabilities are given the **skills and knowledge necessary for social and economic participation later in life**, and, parents and caretakers become available to undertake paid work to increase the family's income.[xi] Importantly, making mainstream education systems conducive for learners with disabilities **challenges misconceptions about the learning capacity of people with disabilities** which contributes to **reducing stigma** and creating more inclusive societies, and the increased participation of people with disabilities in social life.[xii]

Accessibility in education

Achieving inclusion requires actively eliminating barriers that prevent learners with disabilities from accessing education.[xiii] **Children with disabilities need to be identified and provided with services** such as early intervention programs and assistive devices that facilitate their inclusion early in their education journey.[xiv] **More work is required in fostering accessibility in education to remove barriers to education and school attendance**, and ensure students are not just attending school but learning, too.[xv] Measures to improve accessibility include:

- **Accessible infrastructure**, particularly accessible WASH facilities for students with mobility impairments
- **Flexible and adaptable learning materials** and devices, including assistive devices
- **Professional development** and training for teachers
- **Curriculum reform**, including adapting assessment systems
- **Support services and programs**
- **Awareness-raising activities** to combat stigmatising attitudes that prevent people with disabilities from accessing education opportunities

CBM Australia's position on inclusive education

CBM Australia (CBMA) supports **strengthening education systems to foster inclusive education practices**. CBMA outlined its position on inclusive education in its [submission](#) to the International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy which is set to be released in 2024. In the submission, CBMA notes that **educating people with disabilities in mainstream schools is a more financially effective model than segregated schooling**, calling for targeted measures to reduce barriers to education for people with disabilities.[xvi] CBMA calls upon the government to **support partner countries** to ensure that people with disabilities are targeted in education programming from early childhood education through to technical and vocational education and training - in addition to education practitioners being taught inclusive education practices - to **foster lifelong learning opportunities**. CBMA's specific recommendations to the government are to:

- **Ensure education programs and initiatives include specific identification and targeting of children with disabilities** to improve enrolments and educational achievement.
- **Include provisions within education programs and initiatives to build the capacity and knowledge of disability inclusion** of education practitioners to ensure children with disabilities are served by education policies and practices.

CBMA's support for inclusive education is **evidence-based and grounded in calls from organisations of persons with disabilities**. Regional developments towards the adoption of inclusive education include the Pacific Regional Inclusive Education Review, which aims to advance the understanding of inclusive education in the Pacific region.[xvii]

CBM Australia engagement

CBM is supporting local partners and country offices to improve access to inclusive education. As of the beginning of 2024, CBM's Indonesia country office is implementing a project on safe and inclusive Schools.

Annex: Associated resources

CBM Australia – Towards Brighter Futures: Children with Disabilities in the Asia-Pacific Region (publication pending)

- This report provides a **high-level overview of inclusive education in the Asia-Pacific region and provides recommendations for development and government stakeholders** in addition to other key areas for progress for children with disabilities.

International Disability Alliance (IDA) - What an Inclusive, Equitable, Quality Education Means to Us: Report of the International Disability Alliance

- This report aims to **inform education sector stakeholders on the priorities agreed by the disability rights movement**, and to equip disability activists and their allies with essential messages and recommendations to unify and strengthen advocacy towards effective and accelerated reforms of the education sector.

UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (UNICEF ROSA) – Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia

- This study focuses on the **South Asia region and its current education policies, strategies, and practices in relation to their contribution towards realising inclusive education**. It identifies opportunities for improvement and strengthening of regional and country-level programming to advance disability-inclusive education.

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) – Disability and Development Report: Realising the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities

- This report examines the **Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the lens of disability**. It identifies best practices and outlines recommended actions to **promote the realisation of the SDGs for persons with disabilities**, which includes inclusive education under Goal 4.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) – Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and education: All means all

- This report provides an **in-depth understanding of the state of inclusive education globally**. It provides a detailed breakdown of multiple areas of

focus within the field of inclusive education and outlines areas for improvement.

World Bank – Every Learner Matters: Unpacking the Learning Crisis for Children with Disabilties

- This report presents evidence of **how and why children with disabilities are being left behind and the need to shift from school access to prioritising learning**. It provides an evidence-based review of educational participation, takes stock of current mechanisms of measurement of learning outcomes and reviews their inclusivity, and explores evidence of best practice.

[i] OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights) (2016), *General comment No. 4 on Article 24 – the right to inclusive education*.

[ii] CBM Australia (2022), *Towards Brighter Futures: Children with Disabilities in the Asia-Pacific Region*, https://www.cbm.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/FINAL-Towards-Brighter-Futures-paper-28-NOV-2022.pdf.

[iii] UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) (2020), *Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and education: All means all*, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718.

[iv] UNESCO (2020), *Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and education: All means all*, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718.

[v] UN DESA (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs) (2019), *Disability and Development Report: Realising the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities*, https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2019/04/un-disability-and-development-report-realizing-the-sdgs-by-for-and-with-persons-with-disabilities/.

[vi] UN DESA (2019), *Disability and Development Report: Realising the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities*, https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2019/04/un-disability-and-development-report-realizing-the-sdgs-by-for-and-with-persons-with-disabilities/.

[vii] UN DESA (2006), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd.

[viii] UNESCO (2019), *Cali commitment to equity and inclusion in education*.

[ix] CSIE (Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education) (2020), *The UNESCO Salamanca Statement*.

[x] IDA (International Disability Alliance) (2019), *Vision for SDG 4 implementation by 2030 in line with the CRPD: Consensus position prepared by the IDA Inclusive Education task team voted by the IDA Board (Nov. 2019)*.

[xi] DFAT (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) (2023), *Disability-inclusive education: policy guidance*.

[xii] Mont, D. (2019), *Childhood Disability and Poverty*.

[xiii] DFAT (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) (2023), *Disability-inclusive education: policy guidance*.

[xiv] UNICEF Pacific Islands (2022), *Pacific Regional Inclusive Education Review*.

[xv] UNICEF ROSA (UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia) (2021), *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia*, https://www.unicef.org/rosa/reports/mapping-disability-inclusive-education-practices-south-asia.

[xvi] CBM Australia (2022), *Towards Brighter Futures: Children with Disabilities in the Asia-Pacific Region*, https://www.cbm.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/FINAL-Towards-Brighter-Futures-paper-28-NOV-2022.pdf.

[xvii] CBM Australia (2022), *Towards Brighter Futures: Children with Disabilities in the Asia-Pacific Region*, https://www.cbm.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/FINAL-Towards-Brighter-Futures-paper-28-NOV-2022.pdf.