# The Path to Inclusive Education Systems

What changes are we asking for to create an inclusive education system?

One ministry is responsible for all students of the same age and level of education (for example the ministry responsible There are 6 for early childhood education should also be responsible key ingredients for early childhood education of children with disabilities; for building the ministry responsible for primary education of children without disabilities should be responsible for educating an inclusive children with disabilities as well, etc.). system that governments There is only one system/model of education where all must take children learn together in inclusive classes where children 2 with and without disabilities are learning together. "Special" action on: classes/settings/schools do not exist. Students go to the same school they would have attended 3 if they did not have a disability, are educated alongside their non-disabled peers and receive the supports they need to participate and learn. Teachers are trained and supported on how to individualise their 4 teaching using different methods for different learning styles. School culture values diversity - all students are welcome, participate and achieve. Schools have access to the financial and human resources to support inclusion.



The steps toward implementation of inclusive education may be different depending on the specific country, and may also occur in a different order. Not all the steps below are necessary in all countries, but are some of the most commonly taken:

 $\square$ 

#### Eliminate laws, policies, and/or practices which exclude children from school based on disability

O

This is sometimes called a "zero rejection policy". That means that schools cannot deny access to students based on disability. There are clear consequences in place if they do so and families have means of challenging school decisions. Ensure that one ministry is responsible for educating all students of the same age and level of education

In many countries, a social ministry rather than an education ministry is responsible for educating children with disabilities. This needs to change. Reallocate or re-distribute resources currently supporting segregation or integration to strengthen the mainstream system

### Train educators - teachers, school administrators, ministry officials - to respond to diversity

This means adopting new teaching practices which foster cooperative learning and peer tutoring; recognising different learning styles which call for Universal Design for Learning (UDL); fostering a respect for diversity and a culture of inclusion; and encouraging collaborative approaches between teachers.

Address teaching conditions so that teachers are well and reliably paid and are given time for professional development and planning Invest in inclusive early childhood education that is supported by a variety of professionals knowledgeable about early identification of children at risk of delay or disability.

The ultimate aim is that they have the support they need to learn and advance in the class with all students with and without disabilities.

Provide training and support to parents of children with disabilities

Engage organisations of parents, persons with disabilities, and other allies in policy development and implementation There is no one singular path to achieve an inclusive education system, and different countries propose different solutions. It is important for families to look critically at these proposed solutions and compare them to definitions of a truly inclusive school system.

#### For example

## Transforming special schools into resource centres is one strategy for moving towards inclusive education that some countries consider.

There is not a lot of research on the effectiveness of transforming special schools into resource centres which can provide support to inclusion. However, reports from organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) warn that specialists who have worked in segregated settings may not have the skills to offer support for inclusion. Resource centre workers usually work based on impairments and diagnoses rather than on how to deliver inclusive practice to meet the individual needs of all students. Sometimes repurposing special schools as resource centres is a way to reduce criticism of inclusion by special education teachers, who may be resistant to systems change. If special schools are used as resource centres, it is important that the commitment to inclusion is clear, that the teachers who have been teaching in the special schools are well trained in inclusive practices (transform their practices). If this strategy is used, families have a key monitoring role here to ensure the resource centre is not used as a place for teaching groups of students with disabilities (replicating segregation), but that it is used as a 'library' of material and human resources that support regular education teachers' work toward ensuring the participation of all children in the learning process.

#### Your turn: The path to inclusive education

Find your starting point – where is your community on the path to inclusive education? Where can families step in to help move the system further down the path towards inclusion?

