



Supporting Families to Become Conversation Leaders on Inclusive Education



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THE WORLD BANK



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Transforming Education for Children with Disabilities

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Introduction

Around the world, families of children with disabilities play a key advocacy role in pushing their communities and their governments to provide inclusive education.¹

Families are the bridge between the child and the school and the community, and families can set their children with intellectual disabilities on a path towards inclusion and independence by advocating for inclusion in school and in the community from early childhood. Pushing for access to education may be a family member's first step into the advocacy space. Although education has been recognised as a human right since 1948, children with intellectual disabilities are still routinely excluded from mainstream schools.

Children with intellectual disabilities have the right to be included at school and to enjoy inclusive, equitable and equal education like every other child. Although more good practices on inclusion of learners with disabilities in education have appeared in the last few decades in some countries, most of the barriers to access to education, meaningful progress and opportunities still remain.

UNESCO-UIS data from 2018 shows that of the 64 million primary school-age children who are out of school, most are children with disabilities. In low and low-middle income countries, around 40% of children with disabilities are out of school at the primary level and this percentage increases to 55% at lower secondary level. Learners with intellectual disabilities are by far the most excluded. The Global Education Monitoring Report 2020 on inclusion in education says that "those with a sensory, physical or intellectual disability are 2.5 times more likely to have never been in school than their peers without disabilities."²

UNICEF global report "Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities"¹ recognised that "parents' involvement in their children's education and learning has been identified as a key and accurate predictor of academic achievement, improving

Inclusive Education is a system where all children, no matter their disability, gender, socio-economic, cultural, and religious or migrant/refugee status, have the same opportunity to learn together in classes with their peers. More information about how "inclusive education" is defined can be found in the **Inclusion International network position paper adopted by OPDs representing people with intellectual disabilities and their families in 2022.**

children's confidence, interest and performance at school. It not only improves children's education and learning outcomes but can also offset other social risks. The benefits can be even greater for children with disabilities, who face significantly more obstacles in achieving an education."³ A multi country study in Latin America by UNICEF LACRO and Inclusion International⁴ confirmed the same thing - families play a crucial role in promoting the right to inclusive education for their daughters and sons.

Recognising that strong local-level family groups are on the front lines in the fight for inclusive education, this toolkit aims to provide a set of resources that partners can use to support the grassroots family groups they work with, fund, or collaborate with to strengthen their advocacy on inclusive education.

¹ UNICEF (2016).

² UNESCO (2020). *Global Education Monitoring Report: Inclusion and Education, All Means All*. Paris: UNESCO.

³ United Nations Children's Fund (2021). *Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities*. New York: UNICEF.

⁴ Inclusion International et al (2021). *OUR OPINION MATTERS: Perspective of boys, girls and adolescents on discrimination and barriers to Inclusive Education*. UNICEF LACRO.

The tools, guides, resources, and other content included in this toolkit were developed based on the successes and needs of family groups at the local level, as identified by members of family groups themselves.

National federations of grassroots family groups in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa from the Inclusion International network conducted interviews and focus groups with family members of people with intellectual disabilities at the local level to help build this toolkit. This toolkit on supporting family groups was also created under the direction of a group of family leaders from sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, who shared their own experiences and the experiences of the family networks in their countries and regions to create a set of practical and contextually relevant tools aimed to strengthen family groups.

Each section of this toolkit covers content that organisations need to know about how families take action to advocate for inclusive education, and the support families need to strengthen their inclusive education advocacy work.

Equipped with this information and the practical tools and resources embedded within it, this toolkit enables organisations to be better partners for local family groups collaborating on inclusive education work and to ensure that they are contributing to supporting and strengthening families as essential advocates for inclusive education.

The content of this toolkit was created with funding from the World Bank Inclusive Education Initiative.



Supporting Family Groups to Advocate for Inclusive Education

This toolkit will provide organisations with training and tools to support families with the knowledge and resources they need to be conversation leaders on inclusive education - from building an understanding of Universal Design for Learning to become advocates for a twin track approach to investment in inclusive education.

This toolkit is structured in five sections:

- 1 Building a Vision for Inclusive Education
- 2 Family Advocacy for Inclusive Education
- 3 Inclusive Education in Practice
- 4 Breaking Barriers to Inclusive Education
- 5 Family-led Inclusive Education Monitoring

Each section includes contextual information for organisations to understand the way family groups operate in their inclusive education work, tools and resources that organisations can share with and use to support the local family groups they work in partnership with on inclusive education, as well as action points for organisations to take to better support this essential work by families.

These tools were created with the feedback of local family groups in Kenya, Zanzibar, Benin, Peru, and Nicaragua, who explained what resources they needed from partners to strengthen their work.

By using these tools to support family groups, organisations are helping to strengthen strong advocacy networks of families who lead the fight for inclusive education at the grassroots level.

Building a Vision for Inclusive Education

When families with a child or family member with intellectual disability have their first interaction with the education system, they are faced with a series of challenges. They might face rejection from mainstream schools, or they might be advised to take their child to segregated settings (also called ‘special schools’) with the promise that their child will get an education that is a better fit for them. In reality, special schools and other segregated educational settings will not help kids develop and reach their full potential, but families often lack access to information about what educational practices are most effective.

Families who have pushed for their family member with an intellectual disability to be included in a mainstream school know that learners with intellectual disabilities do reach their full potential when they learn in an inclusive school. Students with intellectual disabilities learn best in the same classes as their peers with and without disabilities and from a wide variety of socioeconomic, cultural and religious backgrounds, of different genders and migration status.

Organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) representing people with intellectual disabilities and their families have a united position on inclusive education⁵ which aligns with how the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) describes inclusive education in its Article 24⁶ and the CRPD Committee’s General Comment 4⁷. The family movement recognises that education systems must be inclusive of all students with and without disabilities from the beginning - this means that special or separate programmes for students with disabilities are not necessary.

⁵ Inclusion International (2022). Position Paper on Inclusive Education.

⁶ Article 24 of the UN CRPD is dedicated to education.

⁷ UN CRPD’s General Comment 4 is about Inclusive Education. General comments aim to help States parties to fulfil their obligations by providing additional guidance about the provisions of the Convention. General Comment 4 on Inclusive Education can be found at [this link](#).



The family movement's vision for inclusive education

Organisations of people with intellectual disabilities and their families came together under the Inclusion International umbrella to develop a shared vision of inclusive education.

Inclusive education means:

- ✓ All students learn together - inclusive education does not mean segregation, exclusion, or integration. Segregation means that the learner with intellectual disabilities goes to separate classes without their peers without disabilities. Integration means that they learn in the class with their peers with and without disabilities but without support to participate and achieve. Both segregation and integration are against the principle of the UN CRPD, therefore they are a human rights violation.
- ✓ Every learner with disabilities has the right to attend the same schools as learners who do not have disabilities - governments in countries that have ratified the CRPD must provide this inclusive education system.
- ✓ People with disabilities should be provided with the support they need to enjoy their right to education.

Inclusive education makes sure that learners with disabilities have opportunities to learn, take part, and develop. Inclusive education leads to persons with disabilities contributing to their communities and benefits all children. Inclusive education helps to build fair societies, where differences are valued, celebrated, and supported. People with intellectual disabilities have a right to be included in education systems and settings that are inclusive of all.

However, despite moving towards a consensus on inclusive education in global level advocacy spaces, at the grassroots level, many families of people with intellectual disabilities may not even know that inclusive education is an option for their school-aged child. A key challenge that family groups face in their work is combating the misconceptions about people with disabilities in the education system, and supporting families to understand the possibilities and build a vision for inclusive education.

OPDs representing people with intellectual disabilities and their families reported that family knowledge of and demand for inclusive education varies from community to community, and can be reflective of the type of education available for children in the area. For many families, the difference between segregated education, integrated education, and inclusive education is not always clear, and families may ask for what they know already exists in their communities. In many cases, if segregated education is all that a family knows is available, this may be what they advocate for, particularly in countries where segregated education systems are well entrenched, as is the case in many Latin American countries.

► **TOOL:** Inclusion International's Position Paper on Inclusive Education

Review this position paper to ensure that your work on inclusive education is in line with the vision of the movement of people with intellectual disabilities and their families

"Families do not have a single way to demand education for their children. Many times they are more inclined towards special education due to the great difficulties that the educational system faces for all children in general - in terms of professional training, number of students, educational resources, and the pandemic has worsened the situation."

Family leader in Ecuador

This can result in divisions within the family groups, with some families pushing for access for segregated education while others want to organise around inclusive education. These divides are particularly clear between rural and urban families and younger and older families, and divides related to income also exist.

“The younger families are much more informed and demand their inclusion, others in remote regions do not know their rights or the regulations, so the action of the families there in relation to the inclusion is still very disconnected.”

Family leader in Peru

“Some families do not have the support or find economic barriers and lack of tools to accompany the process, therefore, so there is no unanimity in the demand from the voice of families. The poorest families continue to choose special education.”

Family leader in Uruguay

The reason why not all families at the grassroots level are pushing for inclusive education is clear - if families are constantly told from the birth of their child that they need to be accessing specialised services in segregated settings, it will be difficult for parents to feel confident that an inclusive education setting will be a good option for their family member with an intellectual disability. Some parents may seek out segregated options because they have been told that their children will get more attention and better quality “service” there - as well as because parents are told that segregated schools are the best way to guarantee the safety and protection of their children.

“Families have very different views, in small or provincial cities with families from rural areas. They have the concept that their children are going to be treated badly, that they are going to be isolated in inclusive schools, they are left just colouring.”

Family leader in Ecuador

Additionally, segregated school systems for children with disabilities are well established, so families accept it as the default option for education. With the common assumption being that children with disabilities belong in segregated schools, families in communities where segregation is well-entrenched may fear that their child will be discriminated against if they were to take them to an inclusive school. In contrast, family organisations in sub-Saharan Africa reported that when segregated schools are not well-entrenched and when families do not have a clear picture of what the different types of education potentially available to their children entail, they treat inclusive options as the default.

When family members of people with intellectual disabilities do not have an understanding of the rights of their family members and do not recognise that inclusive education is a valid option in their community, they may ask for segregated options in the first instance. At the community level, organisations of families of persons with disabilities support families in their journey towards inclusion by equipping them with knowledge about their rights and by helping them build a vision for what an inclusive future might look like for their family members.

There are many strategies that family groups use to help families build this vision for inclusive education. From connecting families across a country using WhatsApp, to harnessing technology

“Today, technology is one of our greatest resources. We have, for example, a lot of closeness through our WhatsApp groups. Families are using communications and technology like this in many ways because it is a very efficient way to keep families informed. This channel is very useful for us to be able to provide immediate support and for families to strengthen their network.”

A mother and family group leader in Colombia

“[In Ethiopia], most families don’t know about the different education systems, but their beliefs are that their children should be together with their peers in all ways.”

Family leader in Ethiopia

to help families learn, to using media materials to demonstrate to families what inclusion looks like, family leaders within the movement use creative strategies to open the eyes of families to how an inclusive education can create new possibilities for people with intellectual disabilities.



Example**Pop culture as a conversation starter about inclusive education**

Other accessible spaces such as pop culture can be a useful tool to help families buy-in to inclusive education. In a series of workshops for new families of persons with intellectual disabilities, Asdown Colombia found that the use of a telenovelas that talked about typical struggles that a family can encounter in their life to ensure their family member received inclusive education was a very important exercise.

The telenovela showed the impact of discrimination on the life of a family. The soap opera that was used for this exercise was a telenovela in which a mother had an adoptive daughter with Down Syndrome that they had separated from her twin brother without a disability. It told the story of the adoptive mother, a doctor, who had to fight for all the rights of her daughter. In particular, when her daughter got to school, the telenovela depicted her facing segregation and discrimination that can occur and is common to all.

Watching the telenovela and conducting the exercise helped families to reflect on the barriers that they were seeing in the telenovela, and share about their specific barriers and real-life experiences. That soap opera helped families to understand what the fight for inclusive education was all about. This resulted in building a strong emotional link between families who were clear on their common work to ensure inclusive education for all learners.

“Media languages can help us to understand what we are talking about when we talk about inclusive education and the struggle to achieve it. We find that we see ourselves reflected, and the families were also reflected in the struggle of this woman for her girl to enter the school. And when she entered the school and once inside, how she changed her vision when she saw her [daughter] playing with other children and saw her happy. Seeing the situation from the outside and through the soap opera helped families realise that this is a common battle, and see the barriers more clearly.”

Astrid Cáceres, family member in Asdown Colombia



⁹ The telenovela used was a Brazilian show titled (in its Spanish translation) “Páginas de Vida”. It was produced and transmitted by TV Globo and had 203 episodes.

Example**Using technology to train families on accessing education rights**

Asdown, the leading family-based organisation in Colombia, uses technology to support families across the country in understanding the benefits of promoting and opting for inclusive education for children with disabilities.

Asdown creates online spaces for training courses where they can talk with families about the main difficulties they face when accessing education for their child. Families can learn about the benefits of inclusive education and why it's the best option for their child, and then they can get support with putting that new vision for inclusive education into action, including support with approaching a school and asking for enrolment. Using these online spaces, Asdown talks to families about what their children's rights are, and

gives them tools so that they are able to put their new vision of inclusive education into action for their child and others.

“Technology has also allowed us to show many other elements. For example, we can share webinars with experts who speak on subjects related to inclusive education and we can bring our perspective. It can provide a space where we can find ways to promote messages about inclusive education.”

Monica Cortes, Asdown Colombia

Strategies that organisations at the national level use to support the families to understand the value of inclusive education work on different levels. A vision of inclusive education is built and promoted in group settings - such as community gatherings or inclusive education training for families, and are also reinforced through 1-on-1 discussions. Family members who have already gone through

the inclusive education path have a role to play in guiding and supporting new families through their first steps in believing in inclusive education and then achieving it for their child.

While guiding families on the path towards inclusive education, the language that organisations use to talk about education and inclusion matter.



“We must be accountable for telling our families that how we see our children is how others will see them. And this is a very important task to help change the focus from deficit-based [language] - from what they cannot do - to a much more realistic outlook, where our children are recognised for what they do know how to do, for all of those strengths that we as families know they have.

In books and resources, a lot of times we find language that tells us they're not going to be able to learn, that they were never going to be able to reach certain places, certain learning. And all this has been debated from the experience of the families themselves and this is the great purpose of achieving inclusive education, where we are able to show society and the environment everything we have to offer.”

Family leader in Colombia

This resource created by families about how to support families with building a vision for inclusive education shares examples of some of the strategies that organisations can use to help families embrace inclusive education for their own children and unite family members in a community around the idea of inclusive education.

Top Tips for Supporting Families

For organisations that fund or work in partnership with families at the local level on inclusive education advocacy, ensure the family organisation has space and time to support families to develop the vision as a first step to any project work.

- ✓ Before expecting a new group of families to deliver funded work or activities, begin with funding a vision building phase.
- ✓ Ensure any funded work allows for space for the family group to connect with the wider regional or global families network to learn more about how other organisations of families are helping new families of people with intellectual disabilities to advocate for inclusive education.
- ✓ Encourage the family group to use the discussion guide for building a vision of inclusion to set their collective goals as a precursor to any other substantive project work.

Groups that have had a chance to develop their shared vision for inclusive education will be a more cohesive advocacy unit and a strong partner for the organisations they work with.

► TOOL: Helping Families Build a Vision for Inclusive Education

Family groups can use this tool to support their members or new families to build their vision for inclusion in education.

Family Advocacy for Inclusive Education

Families are the bridge between home and schools and the community. As the natural advocates for their family member(s) with an intellectual disability, families need to play a significant role in ensuring their child's right to inclusive education is fulfilled in settings where inclusion is not a guarantee.

Families are consistently told that their children with intellectual disabilities require specialised services and care, which diverts children with disabilities from the mainstream education system. What families often do not know as they navigate the options presented to them is that teaching and organisational strategies designed to include different learning styles in the classroom (such as Universal Design for Learning and other planning strategies) benefits all learners and the educational environment as a whole - this is true not only for those interacting directly with students in the classroom but also for those assuming responsibilities in the local administration. Equipped with knowledge about what inclusion in the classroom can look like, families can become catalysts for change in education systems.

The role that families play in advocating for inclusive education may look different in every family and will evolve as the student ages, but for all family advocates for inclusive education, the building blocks for advocacy tend to be the same. At the earliest stages, family advocacy in the school system often begins through building a relationship as a key information source for schools.

Families have a key role to play in providing accurate information about expectations for their child and expectations for inclusion from the beginning. Families build strong relationships with teachers and through those relationships can advocate for their children's needs and for inclusive practices in the classroom.

Many teachers in mainstream schools have not had the opportunity to be trained on inclusive practices in the classroom, and may hold certain assumptions about children with disabilities as learners. Parents are on the front lines correcting misconceptions about learners with disabilities and through their positive relationships with teachers, can influence

the way that a teacher supports not only their own child to be included in the classroom, but also influence how a teacher or a school engages with students with disabilities for years to come.

"It happens that many teachers in their training do not necessarily know what the inclusive approach is. The family has an opportunity to help the teacher get to know his or her child beyond what the teacher knows from the label or diagnosis. Health professionals sometimes categorise kids by giving them a diagnosis, a level of disability (mild, moderate, severe, type of support support one, two...). But that medical label does not match the educational space. The medical label does not help us to see the potential that a child or adolescent has, nor his learning style. By helping teachers know who their child is, how he learns and progresses, what are his interests and what motivates him, and talking about him in a positive way (highlighting his strengths) can help the teacher understand what type of support the child needs and how the teacher can build an environment where the student with disability reaches his full potential."

Family leader in Peru

Families often have to carve out space for their own advocacy in schools. Each relationship that a teacher has with the parents of the children they teach is different, and the families of children with intellectual disabilities who are building those relationships with teachers may approach building that connection differently, and may take a more hands on approach with supporting the teacher than the parents of other students in the classroom.

In the classroom, some of the roles that family members of students with intellectual disabilities might play include:

Setting Expectations

Families are the main source of information about their children with disabilities. They are the experts in everything related to their child's strengths, abilities, and the support they need to achieve their goals.

Myth Debunker

Parents and family members can support teachers to contribute to eliminating myths and prejudices about children with disabilities by leading by example in the language they use and the expectations they set. Parents also know through family networks that inclusive education works, and they can support teachers to understand that inclusive education benefits all students.

Referral Resource

Parents and family members can help teachers and school directors to identify the resources and supports needed to progress/achieve/enhance inclusion in education.

Advocate

Parents and family members build trust with teachers and school officials, and get the opportunity to share their expertise and influence decisions about education in the direction of more inclusive schools. Parents and family members can create demand for inclusive, quality and equitable education.

This resource created by families on the roles that family members play in the classroom is a good starting point for a discussion about how families can and do interact with teachers, schools, and others in their community to build a case for inclusive education.

This tool can be used by families organisations to help younger families understand what they can do to promote inclusion in education, but can also be a valuable tool for teachers and schools in understanding how families can support them to deliver more inclusive education. When teachers and schools understand that the knowledge and values families hold about inclusive education can help improve educational outcomes for all students, stronger partnerships for inclusion can be created.

Top Tips for Supporting Families

For organisations that are engaged in teacher training, incorporate an understanding of the role that families of children with disabilities play into teacher training, including:

- ✓ A pro-family approach that recognises the family as the best source of information and knowledge on inclusive strategies that work for the individual child.
- ✓ The roles that family members play in supporting inclusive education in the classroom or the school more broadly.

Teachers who work in partnership with families of children with disabilities get first hand access to advice on strategies that work for each individual child, and have more inclusive classrooms as a result!

► TOOL:

The role of families in promoting inclusive education

Share this resource with families to introduce roles they can play in inclusive education advocacy, and share this resource with teachers to help them understand how families can become a key resource to the school system.

For families to be the most effective advocates for inclusion and to play their role as a knowledge source and advocate for teachers, families must also be equipped with the tools to be strong conversation leaders about inclusion.

Inclusive education benefits all learners, and families who are advocating for inclusive education in their community are not just promoting the rights of their child, they are promoting the rights of all learners - this necessitates strong knowledge of rights, good practices for inclusion, and an understanding of the non-negotiables and red lines for inclusion in the classroom.

This resource created by families about the rights of students to inclusive education is an essential piece of knowledge not only for families who are advocating for inclusion, but also for the teachers and school administrators who are responsible for ensuring those rights are fulfilled.

For schools, knowledge of students' rights and buy-in into ensuring that rights are fulfilled not only supports learners with disabilities, but also supports the entire school community to understand why inclusion matters and what the non-negotiables are when schools lead by example on education rights.

Top Tips for Supporting Families

For organisations working in partnership with schools, help build knowledge of student rights in your work with schools and families.

- ✓ Ensure that teachers, school administrators, and other actors in the education system in the community understand the rights of students and their responsibility to ensure those rights are fulfilled.
- ✓ Ensure that families of children with intellectual disabilities in the school have access to information about the rights of learners and understand their role in holding the schools to account.

► TOOL:

Flyer on students' rights

Teachers and schools can also use this resource to get information about what rights students have in their classrooms.

Inclusive Education in Practice

Family networks support young families with a child or family member with intellectual disability to imagine and believe in inclusion, helping them to join the call for inclusion at school and become agents of change in their communities. However, to be a strong advocate for inclusion in the classroom, families also need to build an understanding of what inclusion actually looks like in practice. Advocating to teachers and school administrators by asking for “inclusion” and demanding the fulfilment of student rights may not be successful without specific asks that the school can take as action points.

If families are aware of what the support, strategies and methodologies are that need to be put in place in the class to achieve inclusion, then their asks for schools can be rooted in clear achievable “asks”. A knowledge of what inclusion looks like in practice also helps families recognise when these elements are not available or are not sufficient, and equips them with the information they need to support the school and teachers to understand what’s missing and to plan the delivery of teaching in a more inclusive way.

Family members who are new to the concept of inclusive education often ask what “inclusive education” means in practice. While the principles of inclusive education are the same around the world, there are wide variations in educational provision within countries (between urban and rural areas, for example) and even more disparity in what inclusion in the classroom looks like from country to country, which varies based on levels of public expenditure devoted to education, for example.

There is an increasing tendency to approach inclusive education through the lens of diversity - the principle that inclusive schools reflect the composition of the local population by welcoming all students no matter their disability, gender, socio-economic and cultural status and ensuring

all students can learn and advance. This lens for education is based on the guiding principles as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and General Comment 4 issued by the UN CRPD committee, which outlines the implications of the CRPD for inclusive education, as well as Inclusion International’s position paper on inclusive education.

Importantly for families, this diversity lens for inclusive education means that family members are not just advocating for their own child or children with disabilities to be included in schools - families that advocate for inclusive education are really advocating for more inclusive systems that benefit all children, including their child with an intellectual disability. The gulf between advocating for your own child and advocating for systems change in education for all diverse learners can feel big for families, particularly families that are new to advocacy. For this reason, it is important that families are equipped with information about what inclusive education really means, that they work in connection with the cross-disability movement and other groups that work on educational rights, and that families are guided with some inclusive advocacy messages that reflect the need for a diverse approach to inclusion.

Top Tips for Supporting Families

For organisations working in partnership with family groups or other groups that are advocating to schools about inclusion in education, ensure that everyone plans actions to promote inclusion wearing a “diversity lens”.

- ✓ Ensure that all the organisations and professionals working to deliver inclusive education believe that education is for all children, no matter their disability, socio-economic and cultural background, gender or migration status.
- ✓ Ensure that when the education system and all the actors working in and around that buy-in the vision of “Education for All, where All means All”¹², the needs and rights of those at highest risk of being left behind aren’t less visible.

► **TOOL:**
Frequently asked questions about inclusive education

Review these FAQs before working with family groups or schools, and share them with your teams, partners, and funders who are engaged in inclusive education.

This resource created by families in partnership with education experts¹³ on frequently asked questions about inclusive education is an entry point for families looking to build a baseline understanding of what inclusive education looks like. The information and examples in this tool aims to be widely relevant across different contexts, while recognising that the details of how inclusive education is implemented will depend on the national and local context.

This resource created by families focuses on the difference between inclusion, integration, segregation, and exclusion – an important starting point for families and they begin their advocacy journey on inclusive education.

Moving beyond the broader principles of inclusion, if families are aware of what the support, strategies and methodologies are that need to be put in place in the class to achieve inclusion, then their asks for schools can be rooted in clear achievable asks. A knowledge of what inclusion looks like in practice also helps families recognise when these elements are not available or are not sufficient, and equips them with the information they need to support the school and teachers to understand what’s missing and to plan the delivery of teaching in a more inclusive way.



► **TOOL:** Inclusion, Integration, Segregation, Exclusion: What’s the difference?

Share this tool with families as part of a vision building process or at the early stages as families begin their advocacy journey. Teachers and schools can also benefit from better understanding the difference between these education models.

¹²UNESCO (2020). Global Education Monitoring Report: Inclusion and Education, All Means All. Paris: UNESCO.

¹³Catalyst for Inclusive Education is the Inclusion International’s (II) initiative to support II members to equip families with the knowledge and resources they need to advocate for inclusive education. More information available here.

While families don't need to be experts in pedagogy and should not have to be, a basic knowledge of inclusive practices helps families recognise when things aren't right in the classroom and how they can give advice to help fix that.

One of the planning strategies that can be used to ensure inclusion in the class is Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which schools can use to ensure inclusion in everything from physical access to giving inclusive instructions. For families, a basic understanding of UDL can help demonstrate family members as key knowledge sources for schools while also allowing families to ask for specific strategic changes from teachers that will better support inclusion in the classroom.

Universal Design as a general concept was born in the '60s and was initially aimed at designing all products and environments to make them aesthetic and usable to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of age, ability or status. Examples of universal design being used include the creation of stairs with a low inclination ramp that cuts across the stairs, or a toilet paper towels dispenser that switches on and extracts paper towels just with a motion sensor.

UDL is based on the following assumptions, which are essential for both teachers and parents to understand and embrace:

1

Inclusion is for all students, regardless of their different learning styles. Learning styles, ability or disability, gender, socio-economic background, migration status, nor any other labels are an excuse to separate students from their peers.

2

Teachers can plan to accommodate the full range of students to learn within one lesson. Some teachers might argue that the fact that some students are at different achievement levels means that they should design different lessons, however, this is not true - UDL helps ensure that children do learn and contribute in different ways in the same class learning the same material.

3

The teacher is able to weave individual goals of students into the classroom curriculum and through instructional strategies. What the student needs individually and the needs of the class have to be linked together in order to ensure every student receives inclusive, quality and equitable education in the class.

“On a day-to-day basis, it is important to be able to identify the technical aspect [in the classroom] that is not working. And without being an expert on that technical aspect, parents can still discuss and give advice to the teacher. Such advice is based on the fact that as parents, we know our children, what information, what elements my son gives me, that can contribute to pedagogical strategies that the teacher can implement to change the situation of the boy or girl.”

Family leader in Nicaragua

Universal Design applied to education resulted in the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) planning strategy. This strategy's focus highlights and enables building bridges to embed support, enabling good practices in inclusion in education in the schools.

Families do not need to be experts on UDL, but an understanding of the basic ideas behind UDL and a recognition that flexibility is the most important practical application of UDL gives families a good starting point for a conversation with teachers about issues. Challenging the rigidity of curriculum is often the entry point for families in the conversation about UDL.

“Understanding flexibility from a school-wide perspective is often a challenge, while this is what would make possible the education for all that we all want. The most important thing in education should not be the curriculum. We have always believed that school was created for us to learn and to share knowledge, but not within the framework of a curriculum that is pre-generated, inflexible and immovable. It is a curriculum that allows us to have some ideas of knowledge that we are going to share, but children will be able to learn differently. If the curriculum becomes flexible and the school is more open to find a diverse range of ways to teach that fit all learners’ styles, then we would never again listen to exhausted teachers and exhausted learners and families. Universal Design for Learning helps us build a space where we can all learn together and share the best of each other.”

Family leader in Colombia

“The curriculum, for example, is an instrument that is talked about so much, but we must lose our fear of the curriculum. We must guarantee and know the regulations in order to be clear [with teachers] that [the curriculum] must be flexible. The educational system must adjust to the rhythm and learning style of our children and ensure that this is always fulfilled with a purposeful feeling of empathy.”

Family leader from Nicaragua

This resource created by families about the basics of Universal Design for Learning is a good starting point for families to position themselves to spread the values of UDL and be conversation leaders on inclusion in the classroom. This tool supports families to learn key concepts about UDL, to be ready to recognise what UDL is and what is not, and to analyse whether UDL is being implemented in their family member’s classroom.

Families advocating for inclusive education in local communities often report that Ministries of Education officials misuse the term “Universal Design

for Learning” - they report that administrators and government officials would refer to UDL to explain how they were supposedly complying with standards that would realise inclusive education, but provide examples of work they were doing that was not in fact a reflection of UDL principles or inclusion. With a better understanding of what UDL is and isn’t, families are able to speak up and correct misconceptions about what UDL is and isn’t, while also holding governments accountable for understanding their responsibilities for genuine inclusion.

Top Tips for Supporting Families

For organisations working in partnership with family groups or other groups that are advocating to schools about inclusion in education, ensure that families are equipped with the knowledge to lead conversations about what inclusion looks like in practice.

- ✓ Ensure that families understand the assumptions and rationale behind key principles in education such as universal design for learning.
- ✓ Encourage families to build their advocacy around the need for flexibility - the key principle of inclusion strategies like universal design for learning.

► **TOOL:**
What families need to know about Universal Design for Learning

Organisations can use this tool to support families with introductory level knowledge about UDL.



Breaking Barriers to Inclusive Education

Children with intellectual disabilities have the right to be included at school and to enjoy inclusive, equitable and equal education like every other child. However, when families with a child or a family member with an intellectual disability start exploring options for the education of their family member, they encounter a series of barriers and challenges to inclusion.

Breaking down barriers

When families approach schools, they find that many schools still do not allow access to children with intellectual disabilities. This means that families may have to take their children to schools that are further from their communities. Students with disabilities being denied enrolment in schools can impact the life and finances of their entire family - families may move to another community where schools are more open, and spend their time and money on advocacy. These barriers to inclusive education can result in parents being required to travel or move to a different city and lobby policy-makers to access the basic right of an inclusive education for their family member with an intellectual disability.

The rejection of persons with intellectual disabilities from schools may be formal policy in some places, and informal in others - by denying enrolment without a formal policy indicating this, school managements can avoid being held to account for excluding children with intellectual disabilities from the school. However, when denial of enrolment happens informally, this also means that it can change more easily over time as school leadership changes.

“Three years ago, my idea was to send my child to the (private) school here, but it looks like these kids with disabilities were not welcome, so they did not receive them. (...) However, after some time I brought (my son) to the school and the director told me that there was no problem, that the child could go to get their classes. Since then, he is already in the second grade.”

Mother of a child with an intellectual disability in Ocotal, Nicaragua

Lack of access to inclusive education is a consequence of discrimination and a lack of accurate information about intellectual disabilities. Families face this discrimination and exclusion because of myths and misconceptions about disability.



Families report the exclusion of children with disabilities from school actually creating more discrimination in the community - often resulting in non-disabled children and their families refusing to allow children with intellectual disabilities to play with them for fear of “becoming infected”.

This situation speaks to a severe lack of awareness amongst children in the community about persons with intellectual disabilities and the deep misconceptions about the nature of the impairments, misconceptions that are likely shared by actors in schools that are denying enrolment.

It speaks to the propensity of false narratives and negative stereotypes to take root in the community and result in the isolation and exclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities. In many cases, recognising this discrimination and lack of accurate information is an origin story for family groups. Individual family members often come together after recognising the lack of accurate information available to them and their community, filling that void in the community by breaking down barriers to information about how best to support persons with intellectual disabilities as family members.

Example

Combatting discrimination in Benin through campaigning and training

In Benin, a severe lack of awareness amongst families and children in the community about the nature of intellectual impairments was demonstrated by their refusal to allow children with disabilities to play with them on the playground, to be included in class, or even come near them for fear of becoming infected.

The Djidjoho Family group in Benin wanted to combat this, and organised an awareness campaign to provide correct information to children about persons with intellectual disabilities. The purpose of the campaign was to spread the message that intellectual impairments are not contagious and that all children with disabilities should be included. Following their campaign to spread awareness within the community, a big party was organised at which disabled and non-disabled children played, sang and ate together. The family group was able to provide correct information to the community about intellectual impairments in a way that led to a greater acceptance, access and inclusion

of persons with intellectual disabilities in the community.

The IFE family group in Benin also works to equip family members themselves with accurate information about intellectual disability, which empowers families in their own lives and allows them to spread accurate information within their own communities. The IFE family group recognised that parents fear that if their children are registered in a regular school, they will experience discrimination - this belief has kept special/segregated schools open in Benin. The IFE family group works to raise awareness amongst parents about the importance of inclusive education and the positive impact it can have not only on their child but also on other children who learn to accommodate and facilitate persons with intellectual disabilities and building a more inclusive community. This equips family members to be conversation leaders in their communities and combat misconceptions head-on.

Family groups can also combat the barriers to access created by misinformation and discrimination through advocacy to schools and to governments directly. The collective advocacy of family groups

has been successful in breaking down barriers to the admission of persons with intellectual disabilities to mainstream schools in many communities.

Example**Strategies for breaking down barriers to access in Kenya**

In Kenya, groups of family members of people with intellectual disabilities associated with OPD the Kenya Association of the Intellectually Handicapped (KAIH) take action against schools that deny access to children with intellectual disabilities through advocating directly to schools and governments.

In Machakos County, the Born Together Family Group addresses the denial of enrolment for children with intellectual disabilities through advocacy to the school leadership. In one successful example, when a child with an intellectual disability was denied access to a local school, the Born Together group sent ten family members to meet with the principal of the school and the school management committee. Following three meetings where the family group made their case for inclusion at the school, the child who had been refused admission and three other persons with intellectual disabilities were admitted to the school.

In Taita-Taveta County, the Baraka Self-Help Group of family members addressed denials of

enrolment by escalating their advocacy to the national government, and through working in partnership with other stakeholders. The family group requested a meeting with the Kenyan Department of Education to discuss the exclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities from schools, and the need for financial support to be made available to the families of persons with intellectual disabilities. As a result of this meeting, twelve persons with intellectual disabilities were admitted into mainstream schools. The Baraka Self-Help Group also later collaborated with the Kenyan Department of Social Development, the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, and a number of faith-based organisations to collect data from across the country on persons with intellectual disabilities and their families. This data could then be used by the government to improve services and facilities for persons with intellectual disabilities and their families around the country, including their access to inclusive education.

“The motivation I received from my family group has helped me to work towards achieving my vision for my daughter’s education... They have helped me in gaining access to school. They have engaged in direct talks with the headteacher in school to facilitate the enrolment and access to other opportunities in school.”

Mother of a child with an intellectual disability and member of a family group in Zanzibar

In many cases, the barriers to access in place for children with intellectual disabilities are not just a matter of poor implementation, discriminatory laws or policies may also be in place which are a significant barrier to access. In these cases, it can

be more challenging for local family groups to affect change in their community when community leaders are being guided by national laws and policies that conflict with human rights.

Example**Influencing policy change in Zanzibar**

In Zanzibar, prior to 2006, the government's policies on education did not include any provisions for inclusive education. Consequently, very few schools in the country operated in a way that was inclusive of persons with intellectual disabilities. This meant that when parents went to a school and asked for inclusion, not only was there no law or policy promoting their child's right to back up their argument, schools also had no frame of reference for what inclusion would look like and assumed it was not their responsibility to implement.

For many years, inclusive education was advocated for by the Zanzibar Association of

People with Developmental Disabilities (ZAPDD), the OPD representing people with intellectual disabilities and their families in Zanzibar. ZAPDD's family groups worked to coordinate resources to fund the implementation of an inclusive education pilot project in Zanzibar.

The success of this initiative led to the introduction of inclusive education into Zanzibari education policy in 2006. This policy has since then been implemented in over 200 schools across the country. This success of collective advocacy illustrates the transformative impact family groups can and do have in influencing policy change in regards to inclusive education.

When national inclusive education frameworks are in place, zero rejection policies are in place at schools, and misinformation in communities is addressed, although children with intellectual disabilities are then permitted to enrol in mainstream schools in line with their rights, families are still faced with other barriers to access.

In particular, financial barriers can be significant for families of children with intellectual disabilities, who are more likely to be in poverty than other families in the community. School fees, uniform fees, school lunches, and time away from work to support their children with schoolwork are all direct costs associated with access to education that families face.

Family groups have demonstrated an ability to tackle these financial barriers to education by raising

funds in unique and innovative ways. Many family groups, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, embark on economic empowerment projects to help families who are part of their group pay for the costs associated with their child accessing inclusive education.

Families also use advocacy strategies to help address the financial barriers to accessing education - family groups have been successful in many communities with getting families of people with intellectual disabilities access to support when they need it and holding government programmes accountable to ensure that people with intellectual disabilities and their families are able to access social protection systems on an equal basis with others.

Example**Removing financial barriers for families in sub-Saharan Africa**

For families of people with intellectual disabilities, financial barriers can be a key challenge that prevents children with disabilities from accessing inclusive education. Family groups are taking action in their countries to ensure that the impact of financial barriers on families is limited.

In Benin, members of the IFE family group participated in a meeting with the President of Benin in 2022 along with people with physical and sensory disabilities. Following their advocacy about financial barriers for people with intellectual disabilities and their families, the meeting led to the creation of the Support Fund for the Rehabilitation and Integration of Persons with Disabilities, which now supports the delivery of services for people with disabilities in and beyond school.

One of the most impressive successes of Born Together, the Kenyan family group based in Machakos County, has been managing to influence the Relief Committee, which is a coordination body aimed at identifying community members who need relief food and other basic commodities. After a year and a half of constant advocacy from the family group, Born Together was asked to nominate a family member to the committee. Since being included on the committee in mid-2021, the Born Together family representative has been instrumental in helping the Relief Committee identify and assist the households of persons with intellectual disabilities who require support.

Barriers to participation and progress

Supporting the full involvement of persons with intellectual disabilities in education is a priority for many family groups. Gaining access to regular schools for persons with intellectual disabilities is only the first step. Ensuring that persons with intellectual disabilities have access to inclusive, equal and equitable education once admitted to regular schools and that the appropriate supports are in place to facilitate their educational development is necessary for the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Even when children with intellectual disabilities are given places in the classroom, they often don't have the support they need to learn, participate and advance. Schools are often not truly inclusive, as they lack individualised support to help children with intellectual disabilities stay in the classroom and allow them to learn at their own pace together with their peers with and without disabilities. Too often, families (and especially mothers) are asked

“What I did as mother was to give up everything, all my time, to support (my son) in his life at school. (...) I always kept a close relation with the teachers, so my priority was to help him to advance. I also used to go to attend classes with him. Why? So then we could revise together the contents that were presented in the class.”

Mother of a child with an intellectual disability in Ocotal, Nicaragua

to come to the class and play the role of a support teacher. This might happen because teachers do not feel equipped to teach children with disabilities, or because the school does not have the resources to provide the support needed.

Family members of people with intellectual disabilities often call for teachers to receive additional training or be better equipped with a knowledge of the pedagogy that supports inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities. Families recognise that even when there is a will to include persons with intellectual disabilities, the experience needed to practically deliver on inclusion is not always there. This results in learners with disabilities being “integrated but not included” - physically present in the classroom, but not getting the support they need and not being taught in alignment with their learning style. This results in situations whereby parents are expected

to constantly accompany their children to school to provide support and compensate for the lack of trained teachers. Where parents are not able to provide full time support, they might find their child being excluded from the classroom or simply not being taught at all.

Family groups often step in to fill this void in knowledge about inclusive practices in the classroom, in many cases being the primary source of information for teachers and schools about what needs to happen to achieve meaningful inclusion through training and other strategies

Example

Family-led teacher training on participation in Nicaragua

In Nicaragua, families of people with disabilities identified a lack of knowledge in the community about government guidelines on teaching students with disabilities within the framework of diversity, which families had influenced when it was being developed. This lack of knowledge meant that the guidelines were not being applied effectively in all schools in the country and that their use was limited. As a result, while children were physically in mainstream schools, they were still facing significant barriers to participation and were not included.

The family group worked with the Ministry of Education to develop a strategy for improving

awareness and full implementation of the regulation. This strategy led to teachers being more aware of the guidelines on inclusive teaching, and classrooms became more inclusive as a result. The take-up of this guidance has been instrumental in strengthening capacities in teachers, pedagogical advisors and educational authorities to support persons with intellectual disabilities in their educational journey.

This same family group has also provided teachers with direct training to improve their knowledge of how best to support the educational development of learners with intellectual disabilities.

When family groups can recognise these barriers, they are well positioned to take action to break down those barriers.

This resource created by families on common barriers to inclusive education helps families and other stakeholders in the education space to recognise barriers and take action.

Top Tips for Supporting Families

For organisations that want to break down barriers to education faced by learners with ineffectual disabilities, families need to be part of the conversation.

- ✓ Organisations that work with schools could use the tool “Common Barriers to Inclusive Education” to initiate a reflection exercise with their partner schools to help identify what the barriers that apply to their context are and how they can break them down.
- ✓ Organisations that work with families should ensure families access the information they need about the barriers that they face or might face, so that they can be prepared to break them down.
- ✓ Organisations working with schools should ensure that organisations of families receive funding to allow them to continue and strengthen their advocacy work and their support to younger families.

When families, schools and organisations identify the barriers to inclusive education, they can work together to break them down!

► TOOL: Common barriers to inclusive education

Share this tool with families to help equip their advocacy work on inclusive education.

This resource created by families on the path to inclusive education systems helps families and other stakeholders in the education map and understand the steps towards building an inclusive system, to help inform their policy advocacy.



Family-led Inclusive Education Monitoring

Organisations of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families play a key role in monitoring inclusion or the lack of inclusion in education in their local communities, as well as at the national level in their countries.

At the community level, family groups use a variety of different approaches to collect information about the implementation of inclusive education and begin monitoring the fulfilment of educational rights. Once armed with information, some of the strategies that families use to hold governments accountable include:

- Attending school board meetings or meeting with local level education officers to collect information about provision of education and report on issues.
- Joining school management committees to share information about access issues and push for action.
- Reporting to national or regional human rights commissions about access to inclusive education and partnering with human rights commissions to hold Ministries of Education accountable.
- Working in partnership with other organisations that have an existing monitoring capacity, such as non-governmental organisations or other human rights groups.



Example

Training families to monitor inclusive education in Nicaragua

The Nicaraguan Association for Community Integration (ASNIC) has prepared an “Information Route” for families - printed materials that families can use to key contacts and access points to the Ministry of Education, Human Rights Ombudsman, and other key monitoring bodies. These tools ensure that families know where to go in case of a violation of the right to inclusive education and are aware of reporting mechanisms in the country.

In the various activities ASNIC delivers related to strengthening and generating capacities in families, they emphasise participation in the educational process and share practical examples of ways families can get involved at school and access spaces that will allow them to monitor fulfilment of rights. This advice includes:

- assuming a leading role in the various activities of the school.
- developing a close relationship with the teachers of their daughters and sons, and providing feedback and information

that contributes to strengthening their participation and learning.

- identifying and making use of spaces in which issues related to education are addressed, sharing the educational situation of their daughters and sons, their progress and challenges, in order to involve the community, generating a greater commitment to all girls and boys excluded from the Educational System.

It is worthwhile to mention that the Nicaraguan Ministry of Family, Adolescence and Childhood has developed a series of materials with information on various topics, including: Violence Prevention, Education, Family Relations, among others. In turn, they hold meetings with families through their community structures, in which the aforementioned issues are addressed. All this helps to strengthen inclusion.

More examples of ways families can monitor inclusive education can be found in the tool created by families titled **How can families monitor inclusive education?**

International treaties such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and other international treaties and mechanisms are important tools for helping families hold governments accountable for delivering on inclusion.

One common strategy that families use in their work monitoring inclusive education is when they contribute to the reviewing work of the Committee of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee). The CRPD Committee is an important accountability mechanism for governments - states who have ratified the CRPD have a responsibility to report to the CRPD Committee about what actions they are taking

at the national level to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are being fulfilled. The CRPD Committee reviews these governments reports, asks questions about their actions, and makes recommendations on how they could work towards better fulfilment of the CRPD.

Families can use the CRPD Committee country reviews to submit information and reports (also called “shadow reports”) that tell the members of the CRPD Committee¹⁶ what the real situation of children with intellectual disabilities is in their countries when trying to access inclusive education. The CRPD Committee can then compare the information received with the official state reports

¹⁶Information on how organisations of persons with disabilities can inform the Committee of the CRPD can be found on the “Report of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on its eleventh session (31 March–11 April 2014)” under Annex II “Guidelines on the participation of disabled persons’ organisations and civil society organisations in the work of the Committee” chapter II

with reports of families and other organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) to get a full and accurate picture. It is important that families know about this international mechanism for accountability and other ways they can monitor and advocate for inclusion.

For families to effectively monitor inclusive education implementation in their community or their country, families must be well equipped with the knowledge of what the laws of their country say about inclusive education, what the entitlements are of people with disabilities in their country, and what international mechanisms exist to help monitor inclusion in education.

This resource created by families on understanding inclusive education laws is an essential tool for family groups and other stakeholders who are monitoring education. This tool provides information and guidance about how international and regional processes and mechanisms can be used by organisations to advocate for and monitor inclusive education in their communities and at national level. This tool also provides examples of how families are monitoring inclusive education in Nicaragua, Peru and Ethiopia.

Top Tips for Supporting Families

For organisations engaged in monitoring of inclusive education at the local or national level:

- ✓ Connect with and hear the perspectives of local family groups - families of children with intellectual disabilities have first-hand experience with navigating inclusion in schools and can speak to the reality on the ground.
- ✓ Contribute funding to support families convene to participate in monitoring processes such as the CRPD Committee countries reviews.

► TOOL:

Tools for monitoring inclusive education

Share this tool with families looking to get involved in monitoring inclusive education.

► TOOL:

Understanding inclusive education laws

Families and organisations can check this resource for a breakdown of relevant laws at the national, regional, and international level.

Taking Action to Support Family Groups

For organisations that work with families – whether they be funders, INGOs, service providers, cross-disability organisations, or other actors – family groups need support from the organisations they work with to achieve their goals on inclusive education.

This section consolidates all of the top tips for organisations who work with family groups that are suggested in the sections above.

Section	Top tips
<h2>Creating demand for inclusive education</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Before expecting a new group of families to deliver funded work or activities, begin with funding a vision building phase. ✓ Ensure any funded work allows for space for the family group to connect with the wider regional or global families network to know more about how other organisations of families are helping new families of people with intellectual disabilities to advocate for inclusive education. ✓ Encourage the family group to use the discussion guide for building a vision of inclusion to set their collective goals as a precursor to any other substantive project work.
<h2>The role of families in inclusive education</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Embed a pro-family approach that recognises the family as the best source of information and knowledge on inclusive strategies that work for the individual child in teacher training and school philosophies. ✓ Help teachers and school administrators understand roles that family members play in supporting inclusive education in the classroom or the school more broadly. ✓ Ensure that teachers, school administrators, and other actors in the education system in the community understand the rights of students and their responsibility to ensure those rights are fulfilled. ✓ Ensure that families of children with intellectual disabilities in the school have access to information about the rights of learners and understand their role in holding the schools to account.
<h2>Understanding inclusive education in practice</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure that all the organisations and professionals working to deliver inclusive education believe that education is for all children, no matter their disability, socio-economic and cultural background, gender or migration status. ✓ Ensure that when the education system and all the actors working in and around that buy-in the vision of “Education for All, where All means All”, the needs and rights of those at highest risk of being left behind aren’t less visible.

Section	Top tips
<p>Understanding inclusive education in practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure that families understand the assumptions and rationale behind key principles in education such as universal design for learning. ✓ Encourage families to build their advocacy around the need for flexibility - the key principle of inclusion strategies like universal design for learning.
<p>Supporting families to break down barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Organisations that work with schools can use the tool Common Barriers to Inclusive Education to initiate a reflection exercise with their partner schools to help identify what the barriers that apply to their context are and how they can break them down. ✓ Organisations that work with families should ensure families access the information they need about the barriers that they face or might face, so that they can be prepared to break them down. ✓ Organisations working with schools should ensure that organisations of families receive funding to allow them to continue and strengthen their advocacy work and their support to younger families.
<p>Family-led inclusive education monitoring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Connect with and hear the perspectives of local family groups - families of children with intellectual disabilities have first-hand experience with navigating inclusion in schools and can speak to the reality on the ground. ✓ Contribute funding to support families convene to participate in monitoring processes such as the CRPD Committee countries reviews.

With the support of the organisations they work in partnership with, grassroots family groups around the world can strengthen their movements and grow their impact in the fight for inclusion in their communities.

Toolkit

This section includes guides, tools, and actionable resources that organisations can use to support families of people with intellectual disabilities in their work on inclusive education.

These tools were created with the feedback of local family groups in Kenya, Zanzibar, Benin, Peru, and Nicaragua, who explained what resources they needed from partners to strengthen their work on inclusive education.

By using these tools to support family groups, organisations are helping to strengthen strong advocacy networks of families who lead the fight for inclusive education in their communities.

Tool list

- ▶ Helping Families Build a Vision for Inclusive Education
- ▶ The Role of Families in Promoting Inclusive Education
- ▶ Flyer on Student Rights
- ▶ Frequently Asked Questions Families have about Inclusive Education
- ▶ Inclusion, Integration, Segregation, and Exclusion: What's the Difference?
- ▶ The Path to Inclusive Education: A Tool for Policy Advocacy
- ▶ What do Families Need to Know about Universal Design for Learning?
- ▶ Common Barriers to Education
- ▶ How Can Families Monitor Inclusive Education?
- ▶ Understanding Inclusive Education Laws



Helping Families Build a Vision for Inclusive Education

This resource shares key points that can help new families build their vision of inclusive education. It provides strategies that organisations and family groups can use to help unite family members in a community around the vision of inclusive education.

What big ideas about inclusive education can help form the basis of a family group's vision?

Inclusion

Every child has a right to access inclusive education. This idea should be the basis of all conversations about the future of people with intellectual disabilities - from learning alongside students without disabilities in an inclusive school to accessing the same extra-curricular activities.

Inclusive education is good for learners with disabilities and is also a strategy to strengthen the education system. Research evidence is clear that when teachers learn to teach students who learn in different ways and promote cooperation between students, everyone benefits.

Equality

Full inclusion happens only when every learner - no matter their ability, gender, socio-economic, cultural or religious background or migration status - sees their equal rights and equal access recognised. In an inclusive education system, all individuals must have the same possibilities as others in their community and no one is left out of school.

Diversity

Diversity is a key value that guides the vision and the advocacy of families for inclusive education. In an inclusive school/education system, everyone's diversity is celebrated and the different contributions of every unique person are recognised.

An inclusive school is one where everyone respects and appreciates all learners regardless of their particular characteristics, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, among others.

The Global Education Monitoring Report on Inclusion in Education says that "Education systems, which celebrate diversity and believe every person adds value, has potential and should be treated with dignity, enable all to learn not only the basics but the broader range of skills the world needs to build sustainable societies".

Belonging

An inclusive school believes that all learners - including learners with intellectual disabilities - should be accepted and valued. Inclusive schools and inclusive education systems ensure that learners with intellectual disabilities are fully included and feel a strong sense of belonging along with everyone else.

Breaking down barriers

The capacities of children and youth should not be considered a barrier to inclusive education, since education is a right regardless of what a person can or cannot do without support. Barriers are not due to an individual's characteristics or abilities, but are because the environment prevents people with impairments from participating and developing fully.

The main barriers to inclusion in education for learners with intellectual disabilities are linked to access, participation, permanence and progress¹⁹. By identifying each of these barriers, families can work together to break them down. Since many families have gone or are still going through this process, families can learn from each other and exchange on their strategies.

The goal for families is to break down barriers that prevent people with intellectual disabilities from being included in education. Making our education systems inclusive of everyone is a key principle.

For families who are thinking about inclusive education for the first time, these big ideas can be difficult to wrap their heads around - families hear messages from doctors, from teachers, from other professionals, and also from others in their community that might be telling them their child or sibling with an intellectual disability should attend segregated schools and not be included in the general schools with all children, or giving them low expectations for their family member's futures and learning achievements.

Your turn: Helping Families to Build an Inclusive Vision

What other big ideas matter for building a vision for inclusive education?

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¹⁹Tool: "Common barriers to inclusive education"

Strategies for Inclusive Education Vision Building

Family organisations have a role to play in combating these negative stereotypes and ideas that families are exposed to, and helping them to see how inclusive education will be possible for their family members.

Some of the strategies that Inclusion International members use to build an inclusive vision include:

Using peer support to help build a vision

It can be difficult to imagine what inclusive education looks like in practice. For young families it can also be difficult to imagine what the impact on their child/family member with intellectual disability's life will be when they are deciding between an inclusive education school (where all children - with and without disabilities - learn together) or a segregated school or class (also called 'special school/class'). Families of older children or adults with intellectual disabilities can share their own experiences and examples of how they came to have a vision for inclusive education and how they supported and pushed for their family members to be fully included at school. Hearing first hand how other people with intellectual disabilities in their community are thriving and being included in education will help new families see the possibilities.

Hearing from self-advocates directly

Where family groups are connected with self-advocacy groups, hearing people with intellectual disabilities themselves speak about inclusive education and about the impact of it on their lives can be a powerful tool for helping families to build a vision of inclusive education.

Using the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to think about how it applies in our own lives

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in countries where it has been ratified is a standard that governments must meet and affirms the right to inclusion for people with disabilities, but it can also be used as a practical tool for families. With a facilitator, families can look through Article 24 on inclusive education and General Comment 4 and think through what they are doing to help their family members be fully included in education.

A discussion around Article 24 on inclusive education gives families a chance to think about if and how the school they have chosen for their child is really supporting their family member with disability to learn and progress and to be included in society.

Challenging stereotypes

Families are often told by doctors, teachers and "special education experts" that their child or family member with intellectual disabilities should go to a specialised educational centre instead of the general mainstream school because they think they need a special education.

Supporting families to think about the importance of inclusive and quality education can help families understand the real potential of their child or family member with intellectual disabilities as well as the benefits that inclusion can have on their lives. When families embrace this vision of inclusive education, they can help the school and the entire community to become more inclusive.

The Role of Families in Promoting Inclusive Education

Parents and family members have a key role in the active advocacy to ensure inclusion in education for their children with disabilities.

Family members can support inclusion at home, at school and in the community:



At home

- ✓ Parents need to recognise their child as a citizen with full rights and responsibilities - inclusion starts at home.
- ✓ Parents and family members of children with disabilities can create an inclusive space where all family members are supportive and understand the value of inclusion.
- ✓ By treating their children/family members with and without disabilities equally – like by ensuring equal rights to make choices and supporting children to participate in community activities in the same way - parents can embed a strong value of inclusion within the family. This creates the next generation of advocates within the siblings!



In the community

- ✓ Parents and family members can create a local or national community and platforms where they can support each other and exchange ideas on how to advocate for inclusion within and beyond school.
- ✓ Families can find, be part of, and strengthen support networks with family organisations that work for the rights of people with disabilities on inclusive education.
- ✓ Parents and family members can contribute to the construction of policies, laws and programmes to include the perspective of inclusion in education with their governments to make education systems inclusive and bring about long-term systemic change.
- ✓ Parents and family members can generate strategic alliances with key actors in their communities, to demand quality education for all without exception.



At school

- ✓ Parents and family members need to know that the right to education should never be taken away from their child/family member.
- ✓ Parents and family members need to know the rights and regulations that exist in their country on education and for people with disabilities in general.
- ✓ Parents and family members can create demand for inclusive, quality and equitable education.
- ✓ Parents and family members can support building trust with teachers and school officials, so that they share their expertise and influence decisions about education for their children about inclusion.



At school

- ✓ Parents and family members can support teachers to contribute to eliminating myths and prejudices about children with disabilities by explaining to them why inclusive education benefits all students.
- ✓ Parents and family members should have confidence that they are the main source of information about their children with disabilities. They are the experts in everything related to their child's strengths, abilities and support needed to achieve their ambition and they must contribute with this knowledge to the educational environment.
- ✓ Parents and family members can help teachers and school directors to identify the resources and supports needed to progress/achieve/enhance inclusion in education.

Your turn: The Role of Families in supporting Inclusion Education

What other ways do you support inclusion and inclusive education in your family member's life?



At home

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In the community

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At school

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Flyer on Student Rights

What do families need to know about the right to education?

Inclusive education is a right for all.

Most countries have signed and ratified something called the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which gives all learners with disabilities the right to go to school in an inclusive setting with their peers without disabilities.

Inclusive education benefits everyone. If children with and without disabilities go to school together and learn together in the same class:

- ✓ Teachers are prepared to support diverse learners, all students benefit.
- ✓ Children and adolescents learn to live as an inclusive society, accepting everyone's diversity.
- ✓ Learning in inclusive classrooms equips all children with the necessary skills to live and interact in a diverse society.
- ✓ Education becomes more enriching, because when students work collaboratively in diverse groups, this allows them to learn more, have better learning experiences and put into practice values such as respect, solidarity and empathy.

Inclusive education is characterised by three fundamental principles – the 3 Ps:

Presence

Presence is about access and attendance in regular school - all students attend and remain in a school until they complete compulsory educational levels.

Participation

Participation is about the active participation of students in the school, with a feeling of belonging and emotional wellbeing. Not only are students included inside the classroom, learners with disabilities also participate in all school activities like their peers without disabilities even if accommodations are needed.

Progress

Progress refers to learning achievements by students with disabilities. These must be in accordance with their needs and goals at the time of learning. All people have the ability and potential to learn, and everyone should have goals and be making progress. Evaluations (psycho-pedagogical or pedagogical) to determine these goals should focus on the student's qualities and strengths and the student's learning style – it should not be based solely on a diagnosis.

Some things that schools might ask parents to do can be in violation of the students' rights – these are non-negotiable and cannot be allowed in an educational institution:

- Parents cannot be forced to hire a chaperone or "support teacher" as a condition for the school to accept the child at the school.
- The family should never have to make an additional payment to enrol or reserve a seat for a student with a disability.
- Parents providing a psycho-pedagogical report, neurological report, psychiatric examination, or a certificate of disability should never be required for a student to be enrolled at school.
- School progress cannot be conditional on medical diagnoses.

Common Questions Families Have About Inclusive Education

Frequently Asked Questions on inclusive education

What is inclusive education?

“Inclusive education is central to achieving high-quality education for all learners, including those with disabilities, and for the development of inclusive, peaceful and fair societies.”

United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

“Inclusive education entails providing meaningful learning opportunities to all students within the regular school system. It allows children with and without disabilities to attend the same age-appropriate classes at the local school, with additional, individually tailored support as needed. It requires physical accommodation – ramps instead of stairs and doorways wide enough for wheelchair users, for example – as well as a new, child-centred curriculum that includes representations of the full spectrum of people found in society (not just persons with disabilities) and reflects the needs of all children. In an inclusive school, students are taught in small classes in which they collaborate and support one another rather than compete. Children with disabilities are not segregated in the classroom, at lunchtime or on the playground.” This definition comes from UNICEF’s State of the World’s Children²³ report.

There is also a clear description of what inclusion in education means and how an inclusive education system works in **Inclusion International’s Inclusive Education Position Paper**.

It is also important to know what is not inclusive education – some of these things get called “inclusive education” but are not true examples of inclusion:

- Placing students with disabilities in regular classes but without support is NOT inclusion.
- Grouping students with disabilities in a resource room in a regular school is NOT inclusion.
- Providing all of a child’s education at home is NOT inclusion.
- Focusing on only life skills instead of academic outcomes is NOT inclusion.
- Guiding secondary students with disabilities into vocational/professional programmes is NOT inclusion.

Is inclusive education really better for everyone?

Yes! Research evidence is clear that when teachers know how to teach students who learn in different ways and promote cooperation between students everyone benefits!

Inclusive education is a strategy to strengthen the education system, and ensures all children (with and without disabilities) are able to live, learn, and play together. It provides all children with opportunities to learn and accept one

Common misconception

Many parents fear that having learners with disabilities in their child's classroom will impact the amount of time their child gets with the teacher or will impact their learning. This is not true! Research shows that the presence of children with higher support needs in mainstream classrooms does not negatively impact the time that typical students spend on learning and instruction.

another's abilities, talents, personalities, and needs. Research evidence is clear that when teachers learn to teach students who learn in different ways and promote cooperation between students everyone benefits.

Benefits of inclusive education for students *with* disabilities:

- Children who have been included in school are more likely to continue to be included in their community later in life
- Learners with disabilities in inclusive education have higher academic gains than children with disabilities in segregated settings
- Learners with disabilities get access to a wider, more flexible curriculum and higher academic expectations than what is usually available in segregated settings
- Learners with disabilities in inclusive schools are more likely to get employment and access to recreational activities

Benefits of inclusive education for students *without* disabilities:

- Students without disabilities who provided peer support to children with disabilities in cooperative lessons performed at the same level as the other students without disabilities who are not in inclusive classes – having children with disabilities in the classroom does not impact achievement for the students without disabilities.
- Students without disabilities who have friendships with children with disabilities were often exposed to new knowledge and motivation
- There is a depth of knowledge and skills that is acquired by students without disabilities who act as tutors for children with disabilities which most typical students do not get out of passive learning.

Benefits for others

Teachers:

- have higher expectations of their students with disabilities when they are in inclusive settings (vs. segregated settings)
- have better knowledge and skills related to the inclusion of children with disabilities, including inclusive instructions and teaching methods
- positively impact the learning outcomes of all students when they use inclusive teaching methods

Social impact:

- development of essential social-emotional skills for life-long independence for all children can only be acquired in inclusive settings
- children are more likely to have increased positive interactions, a better understanding of socially acceptable behaviours

and norms and higher social-emotional competencies when educated in inclusive classrooms

Economy:

- Reduces loss of GDP of approximately 5–7% (output and income loss) & social welfare burden
- Reduces cost of education – costs to educate a student in segregated settings can be as much as 7–9 times higher; special education per capita costs are 2.5 times higher than those in regular education.

What is the difference between an inclusive education system, an inclusive school and inclusive classroom/practices?

Examples of inclusive classrooms/practices exist almost everywhere in the world. Every time a teacher ensures all students in the class are participating equally in a given activity they are engaging in an inclusive practice.

Inclusive schools are those in which all teachers ensure that all of their students are participating equally, all of the time.

An inclusive education system is more than a collection of inclusive schools and practices. It is a long-term, national or regional commitment to upholding the rights of all students by ensuring that all school-aged children are in school and that the system responds to the strengths and needs of every child without discrimination. This means that schools welcome all children and respond to their individual needs, and administrators, teachers, and support staff receive the assistance they need to help every child succeed in school.

What is the difference between accessibility and reasonable accommodation?

Accessibility addresses barriers and obstacles in the environment which may prevent some people from participating (such as making a ramp that multiple people can use - in a wheelchair, with a suitcase, with a baby carriage, etc). Accessibility benefits groups of people – these measures are things everyone can use. Generally accessibility is based on a set of standards.

Accommodation (or reasonable accommodation) is a modification and adjustment made to address a person's specific obstacle or barrier. It is fit-for-purpose and individualised (such as providing a personal assistant).

The right to accessibility means that students have the right to attend schools available to others, without discrimination. "Reasonable accommodation" as defined in the CRPD means that schools have the resourcing to provide the individual support a student may require in order to fully participate, without placing a disproportionate or undue burden on the school, and is complementary to accessibility. Examples are a modified curriculum, additional assistance for the classroom teacher, additional time for taking tests, or moving a class from the second story to the ground floor for a student with a mobility impairment.

What is the “twin-track” approach to investing in inclusive education?

Often the term “twin-track” is misused to describe special education running parallel to the regular system. Operating segregated programmes as an alternative to inclusion is NOT a twin-track approach. It is segregation.

Successful inclusion requires investment in transforming the existing education system PLUS investing in individualised supports. A true twin-track approach includes systemic investment in building accessibility, teacher training and development and modifying curriculum, as well as providing individual personalised support such as accessible computer programmes, materials, etc.

Is inclusive education more expensive than segregation?

No, inclusive education is NOT more expensive. In fact, an inclusive system is economically effective and efficient because instead of taking resources out of the regular system to educate groups of students with particular needs, all of the resources stay in the system. The UN CRPD Committee asserts that “no country can afford a dual system of regular and segregated education delivery.”

In countries where most students with disabilities are currently in school, transferring the resources currently supporting segregation and moving those resources to support inclusion helps to strengthen the system for all students by creating a culture of inclusion and training teachers to better meet the needs of all students.

In countries where many young people with disabilities are not in school, more investment is needed in order to provide them with an education. But as of 2017, half of the world’s 93 million school-age children with disabilities are out of school. That means that new resources are needed in order to provide an education to the 32.5 million children with disabilities currently completely excluded from education.

²³See: <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2013/>

²⁴Inclusion International’s Inclusive Education Position Paper

²⁵Duhaime’s Law Dictionary defines undue burden as “an obligation which is not in proportion to the reciprocal cost or benefit.”

Inclusion, Integration, Segregation, and Exclusion: What's the difference?

Learners with disabilities engaging in school systems will experience one of four things – exclusion, segregation, integration, and inclusion.

The goal of inclusive education for all is that all learners will have access to true inclusion at school – but it is important for families to understand the difference between the four experiences – because often schools will use the term “inclusion” to describe systems that are really segregation or integration. By understanding true inclusion and how it differs from integration and from segregated systems, families can push for real inclusion at school.

Exclusion

Occurs when students are denied access to education

Exclusion happens when students with disabilities are not permitted to register to attend a school, or when they register but are told not to come to school or when there are conditions placed on their attendance (for example, asking parents of students with disabilities to pay for their individual support at school). Sometimes, students are registered but told they will receive their education from a teacher who will visit them at home – so effectively they are still excluded from school.

Segregation

Occurs when students with disabilities are educated in separate environments (classes or schools) designed for students with impairments or with a particular impairment

Segregation is most blatant when students with disabilities are forced to go to a school only for students with disabilities, but it also happens when students are educated in separate classes in a regular school. These are sometimes called resource classes.

Integration

Is placing persons with disabilities in existing mainstream education without changing the system of education delivery

Integration involves placing a student with a disability in a regular class but without any individualised support and with a teacher who is unwilling or unable to meet the learning, social, or disability support needs of the child. Many people mistakenly call this “inclusion” but unless the student receives the support needed to learn and participate, it is not.

Inclusion

Involves a transformation of the education system with changes in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures, strategies and review mechanisms

In an inclusive system, teachers are trained on inclusive teaching methods during their education and also receive ongoing professional development to respond to different learning styles and present lessons in different ways so that all students can learn. Resources are available to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities, such as modified curricula and adapted materials.

Your turn: Inclusion, Integration, Segregation, and Exclusion

Think about your own community – are there examples of each of these four systems that currently exist? What steps can families take to push integration, segregation, and exclusion towards the goal of full inclusion?

Exclusion

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Segregation

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Integration

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Inclusion

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The Path to Inclusive Education Systems

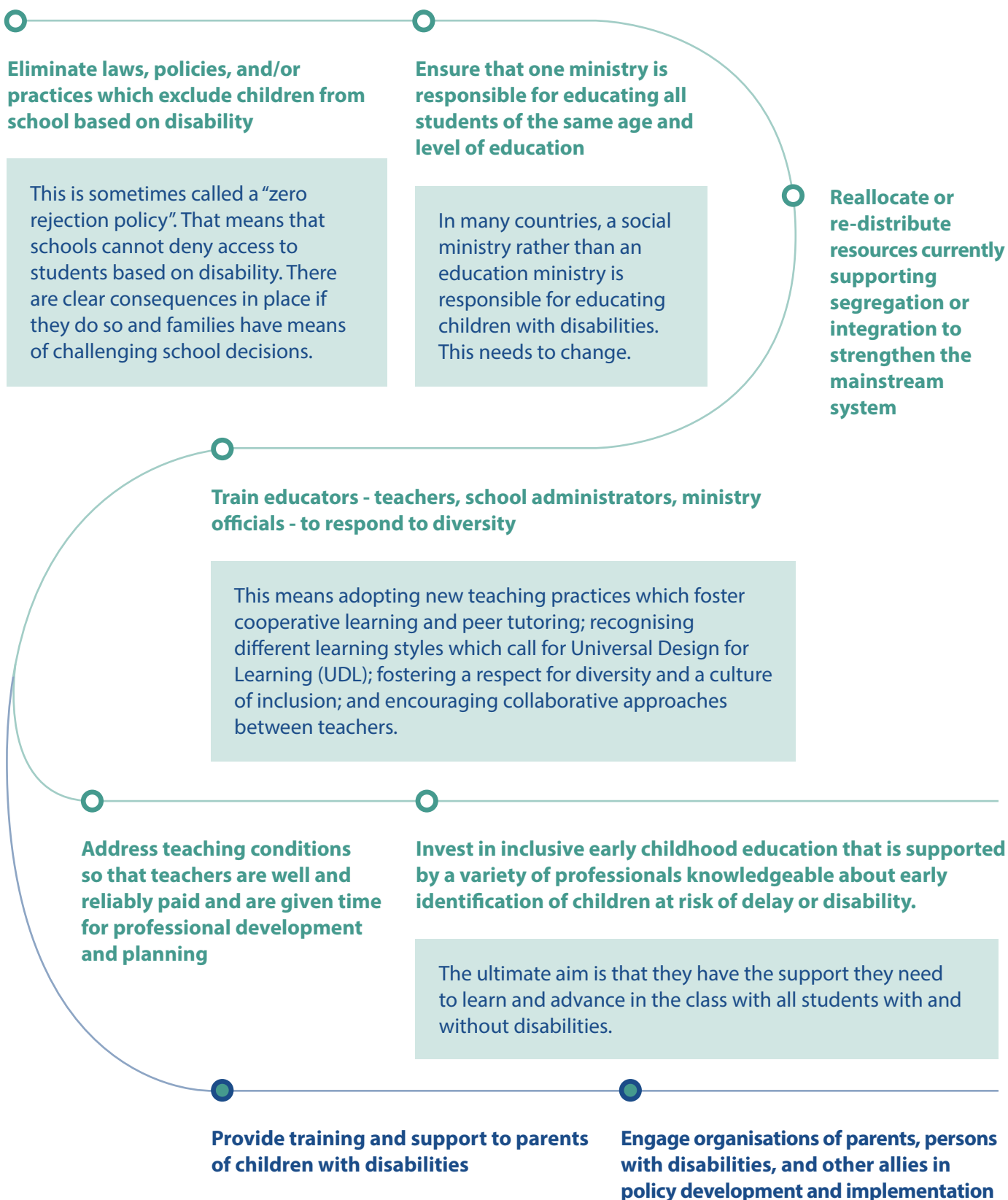
What changes are we asking for to create an inclusive education system?

There are 6 key ingredients for building an inclusive system that governments must take action on:

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



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

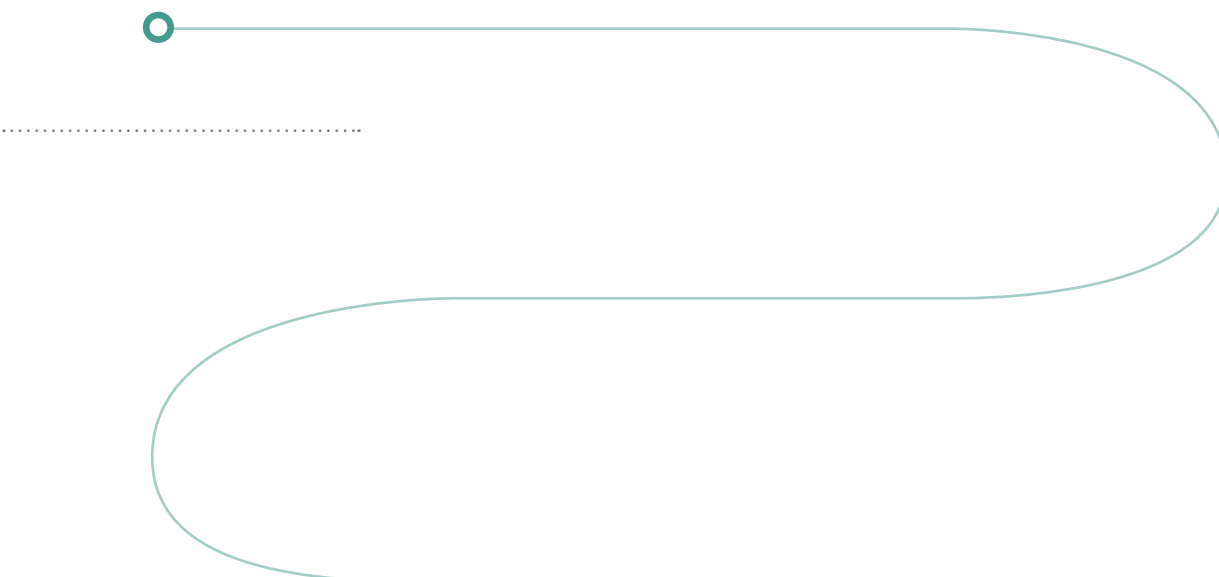
Transforming special schools into resource centres is one strategy for moving towards inclusive education that some countries consider.

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?



What Do Families Need to Know About UDL?

The principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) that families should know:

- ✓ The Universal Design for Learning is a framework for planning that can be applied at all levels of the educational system resulting in a flexible, open and accessible curriculum.
- ✓ UDL is a planning methodology that supports inclusion but is not the only tool needed to achieve inclusive education.
- ✓ UDL recognises that there is no single way to learn, and therefore, there should not be a single way to teach. Different forms of motivation, representation, and expression, should be facilitated (3 principles).
- ✓ UDL implies that we focus on the ability and not on the disability, it tells us that we must not label students.
- ✓ UDL gives value to the diversity found in every classroom, plans for it and leaves behind the deficit model to focus on a skills model.
- ✓ UDL recognises that what is disabling is the context and not the people.

Key messages that families can promote:

- ✓ UDL promotes a learning model that takes into account all children.
- ✓ The core of UDL is that teachers must know their entire group of students. In this way, each one of the activities of the classes is planned according to the diversity of students, the environmental barriers are recognised and planned for, the previous knowledge of the students is built upon, and various materials and didactic strategies are used so that everyone can participate in the learning experience.
- ✓ It is also recognised that some students may require a particular adjustment in order to participate. Adaptations and reasonable accommodations must be done in some cases even if UDL is being used.
- ✓ Applying UDL does not mean that all students learn the same content, but rather that each and every one advances in their learning process by sharing in the same learning experience.
- ✓ UDL uses many means of communicating concepts, from reading/writing, sound and visual, spatial, and touch. Every sense should be stimulated so that the teacher can provoke development and learning in their classroom group.
- ✓ In this design, children are not evaluated in the same way, that is, boys and girls are not compared in relation to the learning of others, but in relation to their own learning progress.
- ✓ UDL applies an interdisciplinary work and approach involving different subjects covering the same topic which reduces the academic load and makes learning more efficient and meaningful.
- ✓ Many teachers involve families in their designs. This is ideal because the knowledge provided by family members enriches the pedagogical experience of all children.
- ✓ The UDL is not a specific methodology for students with disabilities who are in the regular system, it is a planning methodology that provides answers to diversity in the classroom, in which the teacher's knowledge of the students is critical.

Common Barriers to Inclusive Education

Top tips for breaking down barriers to access, participation, progress and learning

Barriers are those situations, circumstances and attitudes that prevent us from reaching a true inclusive education. It is important to understand that a barrier in inclusive education will never be the capacities of children and youth, since education is their right regardless of what a person can or cannot do. For this reason, the barriers are not within the individuals or in their abilities, the barriers appear when the interaction with the environments prevents people with impairments from participating and developing fully.

Barrier	Action point
<p>Access barriers</p> <p>Some barriers are in the schools and can affect children's access to the education system. For example, schools (directors, teachers, psychologists, etc.) can ask for evaluations to disqualify admission, or they can give impossible tests to reject admission. They may also ask for children with disabilities to complete clinical requirements to be allowed to enter the school. In general, these barriers are based on the ignorance of individuals and on a fear based on false imaginaries about what people with disabilities are or are not, that is, on prejudices that discriminate. In other cases, schools request the payment of a "tutor" to accompany the student, making the possibility of access unattainable due to the cost for families.</p>	<p>It is important to remember that education is a right, and no one can take that away from any learners, including those with disabilities. Parents should advocate for schools to adopt non-rejection policies - that means that no one can be rejected from school.</p>
<p>Barriers to participation</p> <p>When we achieve access (the student is enrolled), it is necessary for the student to be taken into account and involved in all of the activities in the classroom and throughout the educational institution. It becomes necessary to facilitate and support their participation so that the student builds a sense of belonging to the group and feels part of the learning process, just like his classmates. If learners with disabilities don't feel that they belong in school, then this is a sign that there is a need for structural changes to avoid dropping out from the school system.</p>	<p>It is also important that families recognise situations of discrimination and reject them. Often, the forms of discrimination tend to show that the school is being fair and wants to "help" and they may say that the teachers are not prepared, or that the school does not have the tools to care for our children. Families must be clear that compliance with existing laws and regulations are required, and families may teach the school administration that discrimination on the basis of disability is a violation of rights and is punishable by law.</p>

Barrier	Action point
<p>Barriers to progression</p> <p>Other barriers have to do with progression, the transition from one grade to another and, of course, the promotion and graduation from all schooling. Parents being pushed to have their children repeat a grade is an argument linked to the old idea that all students need to be on the same level to be able to pass a grade, of thinking that it is possible for all students to have the same learning experience and outcome. This idea leads to children with disabilities being kept in the same grade for several years, then facing the issue of difference in age which leads to them feeling out of place when sharing a classroom with younger students. Schools often then suggest that the family take the student to segregated programmes that promote skills for occupational issues is a violation of the right to education.</p>	<p>Families must push back against schools pressuring them to have their children repeat grades – children belong with their peers of their own age, and their progression goals should be based on them as an individual.</p>
<p>Barriers to learning</p> <p>Getting students with disabilities to learn and teachers and families to raise expectations regarding their possibilities has to do with barriers that we find in traditional ways of thinking about education. Some teacher training has been given from the framework of integration, that is, allowing a student to stay in a class as long as they can keep up with the curriculum, without any adaptations. Some students are kept out of school based on a medical diagnosis, as if a diagnosis could determine the way students learn. Instead, teachers should be acting in line with Universal Design for Learning, whereby teachers must recognise the different learning styles that allow all students, with any characteristic, to learn and participate in classroom activities.</p>	<p>Parents can advocate for the idea that a curriculum is a framework for action, but it is NOT more important than the students and their prior knowledge which needs to be part of the teaching strategy.</p>

Your turn: Common Barriers to Education

Are there any barriers to education that are unique to your community? What actions can you take to start removing these barriers?

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How can Families Monitor Inclusive Education?

If inclusive education is not happening in schools, learners with disabilities and their families are often the first to know – families can play a key role in monitoring inclusion at school and raising the alarm when this isn't happening.

Families can take action to monitoring inclusion in education by:

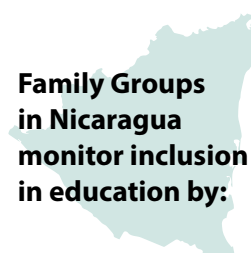
- ✓ Join school bodies and committees (such as parent teacher associations) to participate in monitoring directly as part of the school's process
- ✓ Work with control and monitoring bodies such as ombudsmen, oversight offices and others to whom cases of discrimination in education can be reported. Know the routes, and share them with other families.
- ✓ Make a complaint – when inclusion isn't happening, work with legal offices that can advise and support your complaints.
- ✓ Learn about the rules and provisions that exist in your country (and internationally) to ensure the rights of students with disabilities and study them with your network of families.

Family Monitoring in Action



Family Groups in Kenya monitor inclusion in education by:

- Training families on national education legislation, Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the CRPD Committee's General Comment 4.
- Coordinating meetings between families and officers from the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights where families report on the status of education for children and youth with intellectual disabilities in their communities.
- Directly monitoring inclusive education at the school level, and presenting their reports to the local education officers.
- Being part of school management committees, taking a key role in providing advice regarding inclusive education.



Family Groups in Nicaragua monitor inclusion in education by:

- Preparing printed materials about avenues for monitoring (such as the Ministry of Education, Human Rights Ombudsman, and others) so that families know where to go in case of a violation of the right to inclusive education.
- Training families to assume a leading role in the activities at the school, develop relationships with and provide feedback to teachers, and to join other groups and spaces where education is addressed.
- Attending meetings hosted by the Nicaraguan Ministry of Family, Adolescence and Childhood to address education issues.



- Connecting families to training with professionals in different areas.
- Hosting and taking part in peer meetings with other families so that they can exchange their experiences and learn about new strategies.
- Participating in dialogues convened by representatives of the Ministry of Education, to provide contributions to changes in educational laws and policies.



- Training families on inclusive education.
- Creating resources for other families, such as **Asdown Colombia's ABC of Inclusive Education podcast series**.
- Supporting families to speak to Ombudspersons and attorneys.
- Participate in the different spaces within educational institutions, such as parents' associations and other volunteering.
- Finding allies with groups of people with disabilities and raising awareness about children with intellectual disabilities within the right to education.

Your turn: How Can Families Monitor Inclusive Education?

Thinking about who is responsible for inclusive education monitoring in your community, and how you can reach them.

Actor	Action point
School Monitoring or Management Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a family representative join the Committee • Prepare a report on the state of inclusion in schools to present to the school monitoring group

Understanding Laws and Rights on Inclusive Education

It is important that families know general information about their own countries' national laws as well as international treaties that are related to the rights of children and adults with disabilities. With this knowledge, families can inform other members of the community about human rights commitments and help the community realise the goal of education for all.

What international laws do families need to know?

United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD)

Almost every country has ratified (agreed to implement) the CRPD, which recognises the human rights of people with disabilities.

The CRPD contains 50 separate articles, including Article 24 which recognises the obligation of the State to “ensure an inclusive education system at all levels.” The CRPD is the first treaty to recognise the right to inclusive education under international laws.

The CRPD Committee is the United Nations body that monitors implementation of the CRPD on the international level. They also write “General Comments” to help explain how governments should interpret the CRPD. In its General Comment 4, about Article 24 on inclusive education, the CRPD Committee also urges countries that have ratified the treaty to allocate sufficient resources and incentives to promote inclusive educational settings rather than segregated ones.

Regional legal frameworks

In addition to the CRPD, regional treaties address the right to education for children and adults with disabilities and families can use them in countries where their governments have signed up to regional treaties. For example:

Africa

The African Disability Protocol – or the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa - recognises the right of all children with disabilities to education, and on an equal basis with others, as well as accommodations and support “required to facilitate their effective education” in Article 12.

It is important for families to also be aware of global treaties and laws in cases where the regional and national frameworks are not fully in line with global human rights. For example, the African Disability Protocol offers people with disabilities the choice to opt out of mainstream education and into special education, which is not in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Families can use the global human rights laws to push back against these inconsistencies.

Regional legal frameworks

Americas

Article 26 of the American Convention on Human Rights requires that States Parties take steps to progressively achieve the full realisation of the right to education for all. Although people with disabilities are not specifically mentioned, they are included in “education for all” and families can use this to support their advocacy in countries where the convention is ratified.

How can families actually use international and regional laws for advocacy?

Families need to know

- **WHICH** laws on inclusive education from the global, regional, and national level are in place in their country;
- **WHICH** public institutions are responsible for monitoring and/or monitoring compliance with policies, regulations, agreements, etc. related to inclusive education; and
- **WHO** at the local level in their own community is responsible for ensuring compliance with the laws

Examples

Nicaragua

The family movement has played a key role in implementation of policies and laws in Nicaragua. For example, in the city of Boaco, in the centre of the country, families promoted a strategy for the implementation of the “Regulation for the Attention of Students with Educational Needs in the Framework of Nicaraguan Diversity (2012)” a national law in Nicaragua that was not yet a reality for students with disabilities. Families bridged this gap by proposing coordination between local educational authorities with national authorities. Family organisation ASNIC supported an effective a series of trainings with key actors such as teachers and authorities of the Ministry of Education to make this happen. These links created by families contributed to eliminating access barriers, and the regulations now have a new version Manual of Rules and Procedures for Special Education and Inclusive Education as a result.

Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, international laws are used when families have any conversation with Ministries of Education (MoE) or teachers and school administrations. Families use the CRPD when they provide training, participate in any meetings invited by MoE, and also reference the CRPD in any media interviews or campaigns. Families will take part in inputted into annual plans for education using their CRPD knowledge, or will evaluate existing plans or reports based if they align with on the international laws and instruments. Families used this same strategy during the process of renewal of the National Inclusive Education Strategy (2023-2032), where they advocated for compliance with the UNCRPD and specifically the CRPD’s Article 24 and General Comment 4 on inclusive education. Families also make an effort to reminding the minister that Ethiopia ratified and committed to implement the CRPD and the Agenda 2030 (including Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education) as part of their regular advocacy.

Your turn: Understanding Laws and Rights on Inclusive Education

What laws for inclusive education exist in your country?

National

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Regional

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International

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