



Inclusive Education in Emergencies Training Module

Background Information

Session 1: Background on Inclusive Education in Emergencies

Everyone has the right to education. Emergencies and crises affect education in many ways. As each context is unique, it is not possible to generalize or assume how an emergency will affect education systems, learners, and teachers.

Emergencies and crises affect inclusive education in different ways. For example:

- Caregivers may keep girls at home because they are worried about their safety.
- Learners with disabilities or very young learners may find traveling to school difficult or frightening.
- Teachers may be lost, and their replacements may have less experience or skills, so the quality of education drops.
- Learning environments may become less accessible and supportive.

During and after a crisis, education systems may face more challenges than usual. Teachers may have larger classes and more learners with diverse backgrounds. More learners may experience emotional distress or physical disabilities. Teachers, educational personnel and learners experience trauma and stress during the crisis. Teachers may have less access to training and support.

Despite these challenges, inclusive education is essential when responding to emergencies and crises. For a start, it is a human right. These international instruments highlight how important it is to provide quality and inclusive education to people with disabilities as a fundamental human right:

- [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD, 2006\)](#);
- [Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC, 1989\)](#);
- [Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW, 1981\)](#);
- [International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights \(ICESCR, 1966\)](#).

Access to safe, good quality and supportive learning environments for all vulnerable children must be ensured. That includes those with learning differences or disabilities, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), girls, those from other minority groups, and more. Inclusive education helps teachers and communities welcome all learners. It ensures that they have the same opportunities to learn as their peers. Research has shown that learning outcomes improve for everyone when they are in classrooms that meet the needs of diverse learners. Inclusive education plays an important part in building an inclusive and peaceful society.

For additional definitions of commonly used terms, see the [EiE Glossary](#).

Session 2: Barriers to Inclusion in Education in Emergencies

In all contexts, there will be barriers to educational inclusion for some learners. When there is an emergency or crisis, even more barriers, or different barriers, may emerge, and the education system will be less able to respond well. Every emergency and crisis is different. Every community and country is different before the emergency or crisis starts and it transforms each country and community differently. So there is no fixed formula or checklist of barriers to look for or actions to take.

Learning about the existing barriers and the other possible ones that all groups of learners face is crucial. This knowledge allows the implementation of appropriate measures to remove or reduce these barriers, ensuring the provision of quality education for everyone during emergencies and crises.

Types of Barriers

Considering barriers to inclusion in education often directs attention initially to physical and resource related barriers, like stairs in schools or a lack of specialized equipment. But the most important barriers to inclusion in education can be attitudes, discriminatory government or school policies, and teacher-centered pedagogy. Addressing some barriers requires funding (to build a ramp or produce accessible textbooks, for example). But many other barriers can be removed through more efficient use of existing resources or by using low-cost and no-cost solutions.

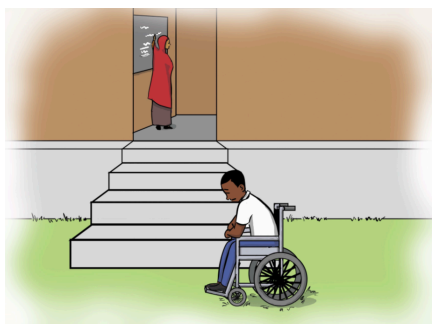
In the images below, image A illustrates barriers, image B illustrates moving toward inclusive education.

Environment

Environmental/physical barriers may include:

- school buildings that are not accessible
- poorly arranged classrooms
- furniture that is not safe or suitable
- pathways or surroundings that are not safe
- toilets that are not designed to accommodate persons with disabilities
- long, challenging, or dangerous journeys to school

A



B



[Image A shows the physical barrier caused by steps to school entrance and other poor infrastructure design. Image B shows a school community helping to improve physical access.]

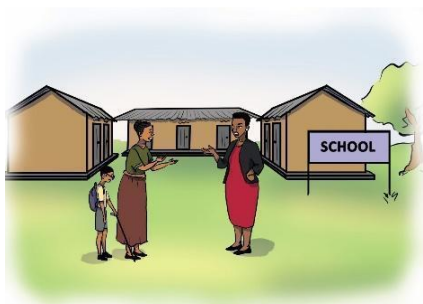
Attitudes

Attitudinal barriers may be seen in different ways:

- families may keep child at home because they feel fear, embarrassment, or shame about their child's disability
- families and teachers may have low expectations in regards to learners from certain groups

- teachers, education personnel, and other parents may have negative attitudes about having learners with disabilities in mainstream classes (this can reinforce exclusion and stigmatization)
- learners may bully each other
- community members, local leaders and officials may have prejudiced views about disability or other marginalized groups in society, such as refugees

A



B



[Image A shows a teacher refusing a mother's request to enroll a child with a disability. Image B shows a group of stakeholders in the school discussing how to include the child.]

Policies

Policy barriers may include:

- language policies that do not allow enough teaching and learning in children's mother-tongue
- school timetables that do not consider learners' different needs or how communities earn their livelihoods (some children may need to help out more at home during harvest season, for example)
- policies that prevent pregnant girls from staying in or returning to school
- education laws and policies that do not reflect current knowledge or best practices
- policies that promote segregated education systems and enrolling learners with disabilities in special schools far from home.

A



B



[Image A shows a man telling a pregnant girl to leave school. Image B shows efforts to change policies.]

Practices

Practice barriers may include:

- teacher-centered "chalk-and-talk" methods
- a lack of active, learner-centered teaching and learning methods
- a lack of interactive and cooperative methods that engage and support learners with diverse abilities and learning styles and promote collaborative learning
- limited understanding among teachers about different learning styles
- inability or unwillingness to adapt lesson content and methods to suit different learners.

A



B



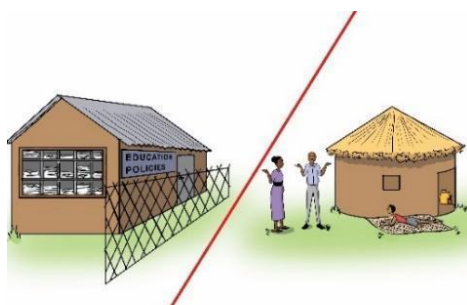
[Image A shows teacher-centered learning and teaching methods that are not engaging for learners. Image B shows that all learners, regardless of their abilities and backgrounds, are engaged, perhaps with peer support, and with the teacher observing or facilitating.]

Information

Information barriers may include:

- parents and caregivers not knowing that their child has the right to attend the local school
- parents not knowing about support they may have a right to
- schools and teachers not knowing about inclusive education policies
- schools not regularly communicating with or consulting families about their children's needs
- information shared in a language, format or style that is not accessible for families and communities.

A



B



[Image A shows members of the community not having access to or understanding information about policies. Image B shows efforts to share information about inclusive education.]

Resources

Resources barriers may include:

- not having enough qualified teachers
- not having enough training and professional development opportunities for teachers
- large class sizes
- limited teaching and learning resources and equipment
- no clean, safe, and accessible toilets and other facilities
- factors directly related to poverty, like children arriving at school hungry because of food insecurity or non-enrollment/dropping out because of the cost of schooling.

A



B



[Image A shows an overcrowded classroom. Image B shows a school implementing a school feeding program to address food insecurity.]

Barriers to inclusion in education can change over time. For example, if a conflict intensifies, more barriers may emerge. If fighting moves closer to a community, the journey to school becomes more risky and more families may choose to keep their children at home, even though the school remains open and welcoming. Attitudes may change during an emergency or crisis. A host community might at first welcome displaced learners, but later reject displaced learners with disabilities because they see them as an additional burden.

Identifying barriers and who is affected

Experiences and beliefs influence how barriers are interpreted. For instance, an assumption might be made that a learner with a physical disability is not going to school because there is no ramp into the classroom. But upon investigation, it becomes evident that the learner can easily get into the classroom with help from his friends. He does not want to come to school because the teacher always ignores him. Even if a ramp were built, without addressing the teacher's approach, this learner would still decide not to come to school!

Each barrier will probably affect more than one group of learners. For example, in an area affected by conflict, a dangerous journey to school could cause girls to stay home because they are afraid of sexual abuse. It could also cause boys to stay home because they are afraid of being recruited by armed forces or armed groups.

Practice barriers usually affect many learners. If the teacher writes on the board in very small or untidy letters, it could be assumed that this will exclude learners who have difficulty seeing. But it probably also makes it harder for everyone sitting at the back of the class, everyone who is tired and hungry after a long walk to school, and everyone who finds reading and comprehension difficult. This one barrier could affect how the whole class learns!

Therefore, assumptions about which barriers affect which learners and how must be avoided. Instead, there's a necessity to **investigate and listen** to the opinions and experiences of the people who are affected. How can this be accomplished? Through collaborative efforts and the application of action research.

How can barriers be addressed? By using the twin-track approach

This brief training cannot go into the details of the approach. The main takeaway is the necessity of adopting a **twin-track approach** when addressing barriers to inclusion in education. It involves implementing immediate actions that **help individual learners now**, and working towards **systemic changes** that improve education for everyone. Making systemic changes means gradually reforming the whole education system by changing the parts of the system – the policies, the practices, and the cultures (values, attitudes, and beliefs). Each organization and individual will be able to change different parts of the system. Some may be in a good position to change policy. Others are in a

better position to change cultures or practices. Collective efforts are vital for contributing to systemic change.

Focusing solely on one track would result in incomplete solutions and limited success, like a train that will quickly derail if it is running on only one track.

To apply an effective **twin-track approach**, emphasis should be placed on using **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** and providing **reasonable accommodations**.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) offers a framework for designing and delivering flexible learning experiences that meet the different needs of all learners. UDL makes learning environments, practices, and materials accessible to all learners from the start, without needing adaptation later.

Examples of UDL:

- If a teacher uses language on a handout that is difficult to understand, they may have to prepare a separate, adapted handout for some learners in class who struggle to read. But if the teacher applies UDL and makes the instructions easy to understand on the original handout, all learners can join in the activity, and the teacher does not need to make two separate resources.
- If the exam system is designed so that everyone must take the same written exam, then schools need to apply for special conditions for learners who cannot take a written exam or need more time. But if the exam system applies UDL and automatically offers alternative assessment options, schools do not need to ask for permission to make individual adaptations.

Reasonable accommodation is about making immediate, affordable changes to environments, practices, and materials to support individual learners. It means responding as much as possible, straight away, to individual needs, using all the resources available in the school community. It might involve various measures:

- provide assistive technology or devices
- make physical changes to the learning environment
- instructional methods.

Collaboration and problem-solving skills are essential when providing reasonable accommodations and finding the best ways to universally design an aspect of education.

**Chapter 2 of Mina's story (Handout 6) gives an example of a teacher making a reasonable accommodation for her, and an example of how the teacher was trying to use UDL principles when planning lessons.*

Important note:

People may understand the concept of twin-track differently. In this training, twin-track means the two tracks of systemic change (UDL) and individual support (reasonable accommodation). Some organizations may use twin tracks to refer to a dual strategy of integrating disability concerns into other projects and working on disability-specific initiatives.

Session 3: Theoretical concepts that help us to understand inclusive education

There are many key concepts to consider when learning about and starting to practice inclusive education. In addition to UDL, reasonable accommodation, the twin-track approach, and barriers to inclusion in education, four more concepts are to be considered

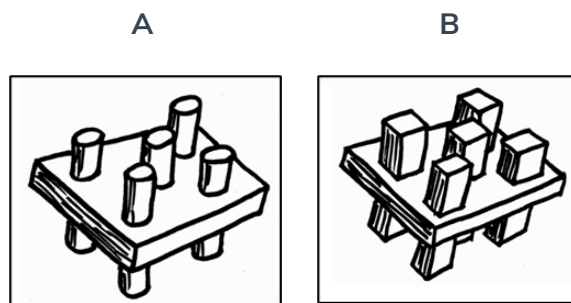
What is the difference between special, integrated, and inclusive education?

Sometimes the terms “inclusive education” and “integrated education” are used interchangeably. But they are not the same. Below is a summary of the differences between integrated and inclusive education, and how they are both different from special education.

Special/segregated education

This involves separate education settings for learners. Segregation can be based on specific criteria, such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, or other. Examples of this are special schools or special units in mainstream schools. Learners might get specialized resources and support, but they don't always. This approach reinforces stigma, social isolation, and social inequalities.

As the images below show, there is one system for learners who are “the same”, and a separate system for learners who are “different.” Differences could include special educational needs, race, ethnicity, gender, etc.



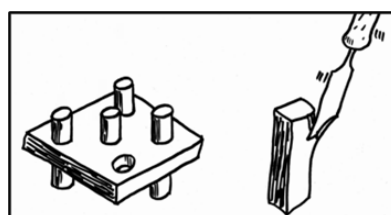
[Image A represents the mainstream school system for “learners who are similar”. Image B represents having a separate special school system for learners who are “different”.]

Integrated education

In this approach, learners with disabilities and special educational needs are in regular schools and classrooms without any specific support or resources.

This is a “sink or swim” approach, so the learner must find a way to cope and keep up, or they will fail and drop out. When learners with disabilities drop out, people sometimes use it as evidence that inclusive education does not work. But drop-out shows that the school probably practiced integration, not inclusion.

The image below shows that integrated education tries to change the learner so that they can fit into and cope with a school and education system that has not changed or improved. The idea here is that the learner is the problem, not the system.



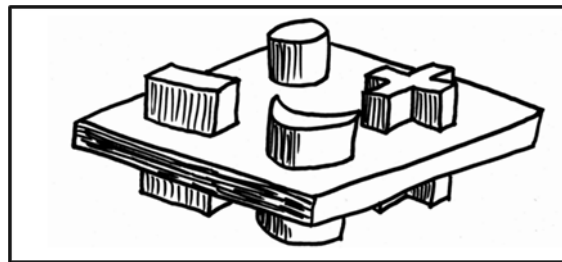
[The Image represents an integrated education system, where the child must change to fit in or fail and drop out.]

**In Chapter 3 of Mina's story (Handout 6) the math teacher told her she needed to try harder or get out of the class. She had to fit in with his way of teaching or drop out.*

Inclusive education

In this approach, the education system and school offer all learners equal access to educational opportunities. They include those with disabilities and those who are marginalized in other ways. Using this approach ensures that all learners get the support and accommodations they need to participate successfully.

As the figure below shows, the education system and school change and improve to welcome and support all learners, together. Inclusive education is about changing the system, not the learner. The learner is not the problem, the problem is in the education system.



[The Image represents an inclusive education system that adapts to accommodate and support all learners together.]

Why is it important to think about presence, participation, and achievement?

When a school practices integrated education, it allows children with disabilities and special educational needs to go to school. But it does not help them to participate and achieve to the best of their ability, academically and socially. It is discouraging for learners and their families if they just sit in class but do nothing or learn nothing because the teacher does not provide them with the necessary support they need. It is not surprising that these learners often decide it is not worth going to school. When education systems and schools only focus on presence, there might be a surge in enrollment among previously excluded learners. But these numbers often fall again quickly when these learners drop out.

Inclusive education, on the other hand, constantly works to ensure all learners are **present, participating and achieving**. Inclusive education ensures that every learner is actively involved in every lesson or activity, not just a passive observer. It ensures that all learners are achieving. That does not just mean they are passing exams. It means they are making progress, reaching their own learning goals, feeling proud of what they can do, and learning many different skills (including social skills).

In chapter 3 of Mina's story (Handout 6), Mina was **present in the math teacher's class, but he did not support her to **participate or achieve**.*

What is the difference between inclusive education and disability-inclusive education?

Inclusive education is an approach that transforms education policies, practices, and cultures. The goal is to create a system that welcomes and accommodates diversity and removes barriers, allowing all learners to learn together regardless of ability, gender, race, age, or other marginalization factors.

Inclusive education promotes a whole-school approach, involving whole-community collaboration. This means there is a shared responsibility to make it possible for all learners to go to school and to participate and achieve. It emphasizes the importance of offering high-quality, flexible, and adaptive teaching and learning opportunities to all learners, regardless of their characteristics and needs.

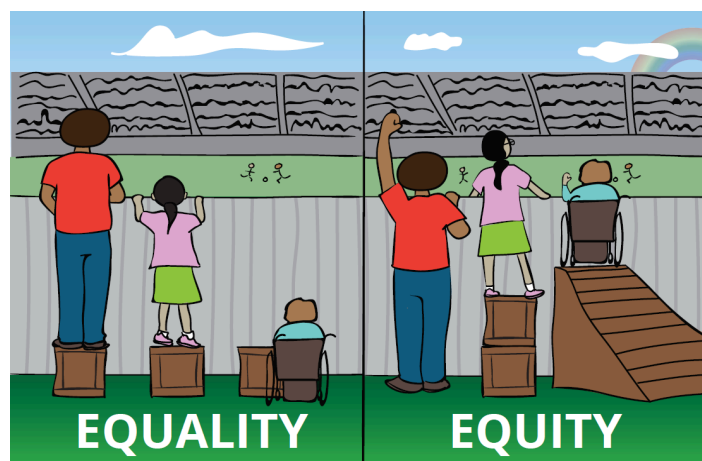
Disability-inclusive education refers to efforts to make sure that children, young people, and adults with disabilities are included in education. It is part of a broader agenda of inclusive education that aims to include all marginalized groups.

We cannot have one without the other! It is not possible to make an education system disability-inclusive without changing the whole education system. That means making changes that benefit all learners, not just those with disabilities. And on the other hand, education cannot be considered truly inclusive if it fails to support learners with disabilities, even if significant changes have been made to include and support learners from all other marginalized groups.

What is the difference between equality and equity?

Equality is a principle based on treating everyone equally and ensuring that all members of a group enjoy the same inputs, outputs, or outcomes relative to their status, rights, and responsibilities.

Equity is rooted in the recognition that people are innately different and that each individual requires different resources and/or opportunities in keeping with their personal circumstances. Fairness and justice are achieved by systematically assessing disparities in opportunities, outcomes, and representation, and redressing those disparities through targeted actions.



[The Image represents the difference between equality and equity.]

Every learner is different and has unique characteristics. Thus, each learner needs different things to reach the same educational objectives. Teachers must be aware of each learner's specific needs and preferences so they can offer personalized support and encouragement.

Example: Equality is when every learner gets the same exam paper, the same amount of time, and everyone must handwrite their answers. Equity is when a flexible exam system allows some learners to answer their exam orally, type their answers, have more time to finish the paper, have an assistant who writes what they dictate, or get the paper in large print format depending on need.

**In Chapter 3 of Mina's story (Handout 6), the math teacher said he taught every learner in exactly the same way because he believed that was easier and fairer. But it meant Mina could not join in lessons. She needed the teacher to make some adaptations to create equity in his classroom.*

Session 4: The importance of collaboration when designing and delivering inclusive education

Why is collaboration essential for inclusive education?

As seen in the previous sessions, collaboration is essential. It helps with:

- understanding the barriers that learners face
- identifying who the barriers affect
- finding creative and affordable ways to reduce or remove these barriers

Inclusive education requires creativity. One person alone cannot create all the solutions!

Often, compromises will be necessary when making decisions around reasonable accommodations to support individual learners. Ideal solutions need to be found, followed by an assessment of the budgets, resources, and expertise available. Collaboration is needed from everyone to create the best possible solutions using the available funds, materials, and personnel.

Systemic changes cannot be made alone. Even when UDL principles are applied at the school level to design teaching and learning approaches and materials, it is preferable for collaborative efforts to ensure the solution is as “universal” as possible.

Collaboration means creating a space for dialogue and an environment where all stakeholders feel confident and able to talk about their needs and ideas openly.

Collaboration is also a tool that helps learners to learn.

Who needs to collaborate?

For inclusive education to be successful many of the people it will affect and involve (the stakeholders) need to participate and cooperate in different aspects of the design and provision. That includes:

- learners with and without disabilities
- the families of these learners
- teachers
- community members
- local businesses and service providers
- local community and religious leaders
- representative groups, like organizations of persons with disabilities
- education personnel
- policy-makers and other authorities.

Each school community has a unique collection of stakeholders who have their own motivations and skill sets for promoting inclusive education.

In this session, four main groups of stakeholders whose contributions are vital when designing, delivering, and monitoring inclusive education are examined:

- learners
- parents and families
- teachers
- multi-stakeholder groups, like school inclusion teams.

Learners

To create inclusive learning spaces, it is very important to listen to learners’ voices and to respect their opinions. They know what makes them feel welcome or unwelcome and what teaching and

learning approaches help them or hinder their participation and achievement. Girls and boys with and without disabilities must be encouraged to explain what they think without fear of judgment. Learners can and should be co-creators who help identify barriers to inclusion in education and think of solutions. But their voices are still missing from most education policymaking, decision-making and practice design.

Decision-makers often excuse this on the basis that it is not easy to consult learners about this, especially very young learners. But that is not a valid excuse. There are user-friendly methods for involving learners of all ages and abilities. This can include everything from simple, anonymous suggestion boxes in schools to more in-depth participatory action research activities where young people investigate and experiment with change.

In emergency and crisis contexts, learners' experiences and needs may change, may be influenced by different factors, and may be less predictable. In these situations, heightened awareness of the importance of listening to them must be maintained.

Parents, caregivers, other guardians, and family members

All these stakeholders want the children they care for to be able to go to school, participate, and achieve to the best of their ability. They want their children to have the chance to progress through education, have a healthy and secure future, and help support their families. Parents and other caregivers need opportunities to share their experiences and describe the barriers their children face, without anyone criticizing their parenting or home lives.

There are many ways that parents, caregivers, and families can collaborate and contribute ideas and practical support for inclusive education. They could:

- join or lead local or national advocacy activities
- talk with teachers to share what it's like to help their children at home
- participate in school inclusion teams or school management committees
- volunteer time to help with inclusion-related activities

In emergency and crisis contexts, increased pressure will be experienced by parents and caregivers. It may become more difficult for them to find the time, energy, and motivation to help with education-related discussions or activities. This aspect must be considered when inviting and encouraging them to collaborate on inclusive education. Flexible ways and methods should be sought to help female and male parents and caregivers to participate.

Teachers

It is essential for inclusive education that teachers and other school staff collaborate. They need opportunities to share their experiences and ideas for improving presence, participation, and achievement. Teachers can work together on many aspects of inclusive education. This includes everything from investigating barriers to inclusion and finding out who is excluded, to helping each other plan inclusive lessons using UDL principles. It can even include team teaching, and teachers being critical friends who observe and advise each other.

School inclusion teams (or other multi-stakeholder groups and committees)

A school inclusion team (SIT), or similar, is a group of stakeholders who volunteer to meet and work together to help the school community to understand challenges around inclusion and find ways to manage them. A SIT could include:

- representatives of learners
- teachers
- parents and families
- neighbors and community members
- representative groups, such as organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and women's groups

- adults with disabilities
- local businesses and service providers
- local leaders

They can help by:

- helping the school community to understand the issues a particular group faces and make sure that that group is involved in all decisions that affect them
- advocating for funding, resources, and policy change
- identifying out-of-school children and why they are excluded
- sharing ideas and experiences that could help the school make reasonable accommodations and use UDL principles in all its teaching and learning
- sourcing materials or human resources

If more help is needed to understand why some stakeholders should get involved in inclusive education developments, here are some ideas. This will vary in every context.

Stakeholders	Why might they be interested in supporting inclusive education efforts?
OPD members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to make sure that decisions about learners with disabilities always involve persons with disabilities • to see more young people with disabilities going to school and doing well, having more secure futures, including futures as teachers or education managers • to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities • to make sure that more young people with disabilities are educated and confident to join their advocacy movement • to offer practical and emotional support to learners with disabilities, their families, and teachers
Neighbors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to help their neighbors' children go to school and do well • to help the whole community by making sure that all children are educated and become productive adults
Local businesses and employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to have access to a well-educated, skilled workforce with diverse skills and experiences that are needed locally • to help build a new generation of workers who will be future customers • to lend weight to advocacy • to give back to the community
Local service providers (health and welfare, for example)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to support better outcomes across several areas of development including health and welfare outcomes • to make sure there are more educated and skilled young people who can work for these services • to help identify out-of-school children and eliminate the things that exclude them
Religious leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to help support increased tolerance and acceptance of marginalized groups, including religious minorities • to help uphold rights • to offer practical and emotional support to families and learners who are excluded or at risk of exclusion • to add weight to inclusion advocacy