**Module 9 Summary : Inclusive Education**

**All humans have rights – all rights apply to all humans. Disabled People (Persons with Disabilities) are rights holders and decision-makers in their own lives. Exclusion from services is a violation of an individual’s human rights.**

**Inclusive education is a fundamental right, both a means and an end for all children, including the most marginalised. It presents an opportunity to build the foundation of an inclusive society, as well as the opportunity to re-imagine and rejuvenate the education system[[1]](#footnote-1).**

**What is Inclusive Education (IE)?** The right to inclusive education encompasses a transformation in culture, policy and practice in all formal and informal educational environments to accommodate the differing requirements and identities of individual students, together with a commitment to remove the barriers preventing inclusion.

IE involves strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners.

IE focuses on the full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance and achievement of all students, especially those who, for different reasons, are excluded or at risk of being marginalized. Inclusion involves access to and progress in high-quality formal and informal education without discrimination.

IE seeks to enable communities, systems and structures to combat discrimination, including harmful stereotypes, recognizes diversity, promotes participation and overcomes barriers to learning and participation for all, by focusing on well-being and success of disabled students.

 IE requires an in-depth transformation of education systems in legislation, policy, and the mechanisms for financing, administration, design, delivery and monitoring of education. [[2]](#footnote-2)

**Inclusive Education** is now broadened and seen as a core principle of education to ensure that all children are reached, under the assumption that every learner matters equally and has the right to receive effective educational opportunities. However, this paper aims to make a strong case for ensuring access to quality inclusive education specifically for disabled people, as one of many groups who are at risk of exclusion.

For disabled people of all ages, the main challenge remains to be able to attend and achieve at schools and educational institutions in the communities where they live and with their peers.

This is important, as it provides learners with the fullest realisation of their right to education, but also because it is the most efficient and cost-effective means to ensuring the fulfilment of this right.

 In the low income countries large-scale exclusion of disabled children remains the reality and inclusive education is not a high priority.

 In middle and high income countries, far too many disabled children are segregated in special schools or units.

The UN's 2018 Disability and Development Report said: **"Among the countries with data, persons with disabilities ... are less likely to attend school, they are more likely to be out of school, they are less likely to complete primary or secondary education, they have fewer years of schooling and they are less likely to possess basic literacy skills."**

Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (UN, 2006)[[3]](#footnote-3) and the subsequent General Comment 4 on Article 24 (2016)[[4]](#footnote-4) were the most critical milestones since the 1994 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994)[[5]](#footnote-5) to affirm the right of disabled people to access an inclusive education.

In 2015 this right was further embedded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 – ‘**Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’.**

There is also a new focus on the relevance of **learning** **outcomes** both for the world of work, as well as for citizenship in a global and interconnected world. This is particularly explicit in target 4.5 which aims to **eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for those at risk of exclusion including disabled people, indigenous peoples’ and** **children in risk situations.**

**The Covid 19 pandemic has set progress towards inclusive education back.**

* **Prior to pandemic 200m children still likely to be out of school by 2030.**
* **The pandemic has increased this number by at least a third to 266million**
* **School closures kept 90% of children out of school in all 1.6 billion**
* **Education budgets must be increased for catchup, for more resilience on hygiene and for getting IT access to poorest 500million**

There is a US$148 billion annual financing gap in low- and lower-middle-income countries to achieve SDG 4 from now until 2030. Additional costs due to COVID-19 related school closures risk increasing this financing gap by up to one-third, or US$30 to US$45 billion. But investing now in remedial and re‑enrolment programmes could reduce this additional cost by as much as 75%.[[6]](#footnote-6)

1. ##  Leonard Cheshire (Sept 2019) **Inclusive education for persons with disabilities — Are we making progress?** <https://www.leonardcheshire.org/our-impact/our-policy-influencing-and-research/our-publications/reports>

 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. UNCRPD Committee General Comment No 4, Para 9 <https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD/C/GC/4&Lang=en> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.htmlv> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. UNCRPD Committee General Comment No 4 2016 <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57c977e34.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework 1994 [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000098427](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark%3A/48223/pf0000098427) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. UNESCO 2020 Policy Paper 42 <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/COVIDcostSDG4> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)