Bridging the Education Divide for Girls with Disabilities

In focus:

► Girls with disabilities are invisible in education. Education statistics under-represent the extent of disabilities among children. There are no clear shared definitions for disability and no comparable data on the incidence of disabilities amongst girls.

► Girls with disabilities are less likely to attend, achieve or stay at school. In East Asia and the Pacific in 2003 less than 10% of children with disabilities were enrolled in school and in some countries the figure was as low as 1-2%.

► Girls with disabilities are highly likely to be unemployed when they grow up. 80-90% of adults with disabilities are unemployed in developing countries.

► Girls with disabilities are at greater risk of violence and sexual assault. Children with disabilities are at least 1.7 times more likely to experience violence than their non-disabled peers.

► Girls with disabilities consistently meet obstacles to achieving quality lives.

Taking action: Bridging the education divide and improving the life chances of girls with disabilities

1. Create inclusive learning environments where special education needs are identified and met
   ► Provide early assessment and intervention to maximize learning
   ► Improve access to quality early childhood care and education to give children with disabilities and special education needs the best start in life
   ► Develop teacher training, school curricula, learning materials, and methods for assessing learning that are inclusive
   ► Overcome physical barriers to improve access to and around school buildings

2. Invest in data and research
   ► Develop standardised definitions of disabilities and special education needs
   ► Collect and disseminate quality sex-disaggregated data on children with disabilities to assist with effective planning and delivery of services
   ► Create frameworks for assessment of disabilities and special education needs that can be used by teachers

3. Develop partnerships with NGO’s, communities, schools and families
   ► Invest in targeted funding for education support services
   ► Work to challenge stigma, discrimination and negative attitudes so children with disabilities are welcomed in school
   ► Make sure families, teachers and practitioners have the support they need to meet the development needs of children with disabilities and special education needs
The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Defines persons with disabilities as ‘someone who has long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’.

Article 7.1 states ‘parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal bases with other children’.

Due to different definitions of disability, the proportion of people with disabilities reported by countries in Asia and the Pacific vary widely. This indicates the difficulties in collecting comparable data. The highest are made by Australia and New Zealand at 20%. All other countries, with the exception of Fiji, report less than 10%, while the lowest estimates are from India (1.8%), Indonesia (1.4%) Philippines (1.2%), and Malaysia (1%). Bangladesh, China, Japan and Republic of Korea estimate around 5-6% of the total population are living with a disability.

Only 41.7% of girls who have a disability complete primary school

Globally 15-20% of all learners will have a special education need at some point in their school career

All children are unique – Let’s celebrate their difference

All children have the right to learn – Let’s make the right real!

Sources