



A primary school class including a learner with deafblindness in Tanzania

Inclusive Education for Children with Deafblindness / Multi-sensory Impairment

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1. Introduction

1.1 About deafblindness

Deafblindness/multi-sensory impairment refers to any condition where a person has a combination of hearing and visual impairments. These may range from partial visual and hearing impairment to deafness and blindness. The combination of a vision and hearing impairment increases the effect of each, since one sense is unable to compensate for the loss of the other. This creates a distinct disability. Many people with deafblindness also have additional physical and medical conditions.

People with disabilities face barriers with accessing information, learning, communicating, social and emotional development, and mobility and orientation. People with deafblindness are some of the most discriminated against and isolated, resulting often in them experiencing extreme poverty, social exclusion and stigma. This can have a significant impact on families.

There are many different causes of deafblindness. These include: poor nutrition or trauma during pregnancy or birth; deafblindness as a result of the mother having rubella while pregnant, which causes congenital rubella syndrome; Usher syndrome; illness, such as meningitis or cerebral malaria; or premature birth. Deafblindness is a low incidence disability. Also, as people age their vision and hearing often deteriorate. The Global Report on deafblindness estimates that globally 0.2% of the population are living with severe deafblindness and 2% with milder forms of deafblindness.¹

1.2 About Sense International

Sense International is an international non-governmental organisation (INGO) that works with and for people with deafblindness in Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Nepal, Peru, Romania, Tanzania and Uganda. Our vision is a world in which all people with deafblindness are equal and active members of society. Our commitment to equality, participation and inclusion – coupled with our values of individual worth and respect for diversity – means that inclusive education is an important part of our strategy to ensure children with deafblindness get the best possible start in life and can fulfil their potential. The best interests of the child – as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – are paramount.

Sense International has supported education in developing countries since the 1990s, including the development of training for teachers, partnering with special schools and community-based rehabilitation (CBR).

¹ See: www.senseinternational.org.uk/about-deafblindness/first-global-report-deafblindness

1.3 Sense International's role in inclusive education

Sense International supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) Article 24 (2016) which requires States to ensure realisation of the right of persons with disabilities to education through an inclusive education system at all levels. Please see Annexes 1 and 2. Note also that Article 24 mentions deafblindness specifically in paragraph 3c:

“States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:

c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.”

We recognise that the achievement of inclusive education systems is subject to progressive realisation: it cannot be expected to happen overnight. Currently, in many contexts, national education policies, practices and resources leave ‘mainstream’ education settings unable to offer people with deafblindness the opportunity for education that “is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication... and in environments which maximise academic and social development” (UN General Assembly 2007 Article 24 (3c)).

As a priority we urge States to invest in their education systems to bring about the policy, practice and resource improvements needed to facilitate inclusive education. We also recognise that since ‘mainstream’ settings often remain unable to offer access to a quality education for some learners with deafblindness, there needs to be a blend of provision options that support individual learners’ needs whilst continuing to promote the concept of inclusion. This will be explained in more detail in this paper.

Sense International's role in promoting and supporting inclusive education varies depending on the national education context and existing government and NGO capacity. Our role will vary depending on whether inclusive education is happening yet and in what way; whether we are pushing for something completely new to start or intervening to ensure existing work is more cognisant of learners with deafblindness.

Our role, as we explain below, is as facilitator and collaborator within inclusive education. Sense International cannot ‘do’ inclusive education alone. Instead we need to contribute to the system-wide changes that are needed and work together with others to bring our unique expertise into inclusive education initiatives.

2. Purpose of this document

This paper draws on our own and global experiences to guide Sense International staff and partners working to promote and support inclusive education for learners with deafblindness. It outlines our guiding vision and principles and explains what this means for the type of work we should engage with. This document does not provide a step-by-step guide for how to implement all those types of work.

2.1. Development of this document

To help develop the guidance presented here, consultations took place with each of the countries in which Sense International works. In addition to desk research, there were focus group discussions with Sense International team members and interviews with young people with deafblindness. Staff also helped identify examples of good practice and resources. We are particularly indebted to Steve Rose and Jenny Fletcher who gathered together a huge amount of material and contributed their considerable experience to get this project off the ground. Ingrid Lewis from Enabling Education Network, EENET, condensed and structured various inputs to create this extremely helpful overarching paper.

3. Our vision for inclusive education

Summary of key principles for Sense International's approach to inclusive education

We focus on *contributions towards change*.

Recognising our capacities, limitations and mandate as a specialist disability-focused INGO, we set ourselves realistic objectives regarding the inclusive education changes we can directly facilitate and those that we can contribute towards through advocacy and as part of a wider collaborative effort.

We acknowledge the *long-term pathways for change*.

Recognising that there is no quick-fix solution to inclusive education for learners with deafblindness, we work in pragmatic and innovative ways that focus on the best interests of the learners, but that may not always result immediately in mainstream placement of these learners. In all such work, however, mainstream inclusive education remains our long-term guiding vision and so all our work must be able to demonstrate that it is moving along a change pathway towards that ultimate vision.

Our work follows a *twin-track approach*.

We work tirelessly to advocate for, and support in practical ways, the changes that will facilitate the inclusion of learners with deafblindness in mainstream education settings. We also work to provide learners with deafblindness with support for their individual learning needs in a range of inclusion-oriented settings which may be outside mainstream settings, when inclusion in mainstream settings is not immediately viable and/or in the learners' best interests. Our twin-track approach has two inter-connected work streams:

- striving to ensure learners with deafblindness are welcome and appropriately supported in inclusive mainstream settings;
- developing innovative inclusive education solutions in diverse other settings for learners for whom inclusion in a mainstream setting is not yet a viable option.

We believe that quality inclusive education is *not limited to formal settings*.

Education is not assessed to be inclusive purely on the basis of where it is taking place. There are so many other factors that determine the inclusivity of education. We recognise that formal settings such as schools and colleges are only one of the possible locations for inclusive education. A wide range of non-formal settings (such as adult or catch-up learning centres) and education in informal² settings (including home- and community-based) also have the potential to offer high quality, stimulating, beneficial learning opportunities that can still promote inclusion and challenge segregation.

(The sections in this chapter explain these key elements in more detail.)

² Non-formal education encompasses organised educational activities that take place outside the formal education system. Informal education refers to learning that happens throughout one's life (at home, in the community, etc).

3.1. Our overall desired change

Sense International has an ambitious vision for inclusive education – based on analysis of needs and evidence of what works. We are not constrained by rigid or narrow theories of what inclusive education should look like. Firstly, those theories have often evolved with little or no consideration for learners with deafblindness. Secondly, inclusive education is a constant process of change, adaptation and learning from experience which cannot be pinned down to one universally agreed, never-changing definition, set of rules, or implementation formula.

We seek a world in which every person with deafblindness is included in a high-quality, life-long education alongside diverse peers and without segregation or exclusion.³

This is a long-term vision for a desired change. It is where Sense International wants the world to be one day, whether that takes 10 or 100 years. It is our ideal world that we are committed to working towards – a world in which no one is excluded and in which there is no reason for any group to be segregated. This statement is not an operational objective, i.e. it is not something that we aim to achieve by ourselves within a specific short-term strategic planning timeframe. To achieve a long-term global change such as the one in our vision, there will need to be many smaller, stepping-stone changes along the way. Some of these changes Sense International can contribute to substantially and directly, while other changes we will only be able to make small and/or indirect contributions towards. Both types of contributions are valid and vital in the long journey towards our vision.

We need to be able to show how every change we contribute towards is taking us a step closer to our overall desired change of educational inclusion for learners with deafblindness. Some of the steps we take, in particular those involving segregated provision for learners with deafblindness, may not fit neatly with what other actors consider to be inclusive education. That is fine, after all there is no universally agreed formula for inclusive education. However, it is vital to ensure we can show how our steps are actively moving us closer to our vision of inclusion. For example, we need to show through the way we design programmes, that we do not view the use of segregated provision simply as an end point, but rather as one ingredient in a complex mix of changes that one day will ensure people with deafblindness are not segregated or excluded at all. Some actors will rigidly maintain the view that all segregated provision should be stopped immediately. We do not agree – but equally we must be able to show how use of segregated provision is being blended with ever-increasing efforts to boost inclusion and ultimately render segregation redundant.

³ Annex 2 provides definitions of inclusion, exclusion and segregation. Exclusion occurs when students with deafblindness are directly or indirectly prevented from or denied access to education in any form. “Segregation occurs when the education of students with disabilities is provided in separate environments designed or used to respond to particular or various impairments, in isolation from students without disabilities.”

Figure 1: The concept of making stepping-stone contributions towards a huge, ambitious ultimate desired change

“Every person with deafblindness is included in a high-quality, life-long education alongside diverse peers and without segregation or exclusion.”

This is our desired change – a vision for where we want the world to be one day. Everything we do should bring us a step closer to this vision.

We will contribute to lots of stepping-stone changes on the journey to reaching this vision. Such changes will usually include changes to policies, practices, resources, environments and attitudes.

We cannot reach this vision quickly nor by working on our own.

We will make some major contributions to change through our own direct action and through collaboration and advocacy

And we will make lots of smaller contributions to change through direct action, collaboration and/or advocacy

Here and now

3.2. What inclusive education looks like to us

3.2.1. Twin-track strategy

Inclusive education for all learners with deafblindness one day could mean, quite simply, participating, learning and achieving effectively in a mainstream setting alongside other diverse peers, with and without disabilities. Sense International will work tirelessly towards achieving the policy, practice, resource, environment and attitude changes needed. But in many contexts inclusive education for some learners with deafblindness cannot be achieved or may not be in the child's best interests – yet. So we need innovative and pragmatic stepping-stones that ensure deafblind learners' inclusive education rights are fulfilled, while we keep moving constantly closer to the vision of inclusive education in mainstream settings.

Our programme and advocacy work therefore has two inter-connected tracks:

- striving to ensure learners with deafblindness are welcome and appropriately supported in inclusive mainstream settings;
- developing innovative inclusive education solutions in diverse other settings for learners for whom inclusion in a mainstream setting is not yet a viable or appropriate option.

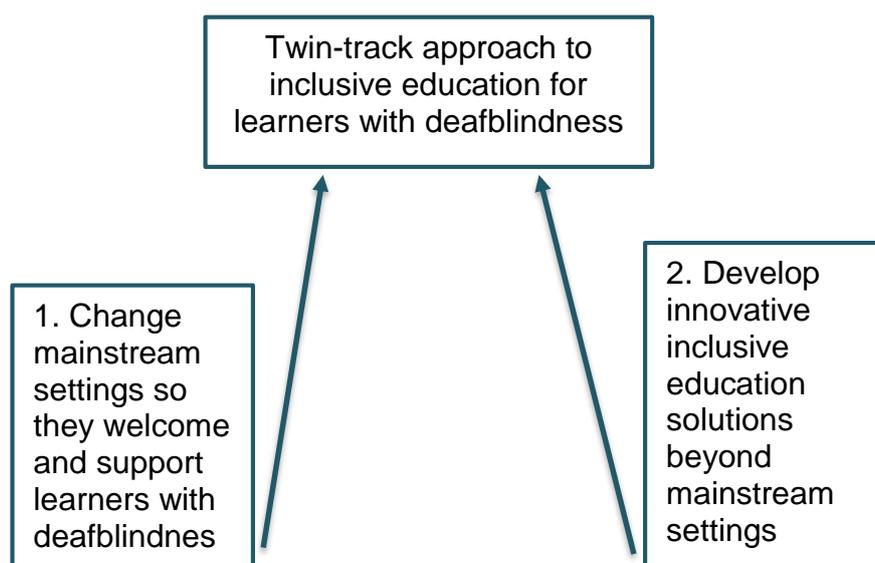


Figure 2: Sense Internationals twin-track approach

To help us be effective innovators on the second track we need to rethink the idea of where education is located and see education as a continuum of provision and locations. This is explained below.

3.2.2. Rethinking education settings

Many proponents of inclusive education focus their efforts heavily on location – sometimes quite single-mindedly planning programmes with the aim of getting everyone learning in the same place. This is perhaps why so many inclusive education programmes focus on establishing pilot or model schools where ideal

environments and practices for diverse classrooms can be showcased (often in quite a controlled and well-resourced micro-climate that can be challenging to replicate on a larger scale).

We believe that focusing attention too much on a narrow prescription of the setting for education limits our opportunities for facilitating inclusive education for the most excluded learners. Trying only to make mainstream education settings inclusive ‘puts all our eggs in one basket’ (limits our options). Inclusive mainstream education is what we want, to ensure that children are able to go to their local school and be included in their local community, but it is going to take time, so what can we do to support the education of learners with deafblindness meanwhile?

Crucially, we must not just fall back on what appears to be the simplest solution – setting up parallel, separate, special settings for learners with deafblindness. While this may appear to be the most direct solution, on its own it is not a step that keeps us moving towards our vision of inclusion, and it should not be our default solution as it can contribute to the maintenance of segregation and exclusion.⁴

3.2.3. Inclusive education as a continuum

We see inclusive education as a continuum of provision in a range of settings, from home to mainstream education setting (see Fig.3). At any point on that continuum, and in any combination of different settings, inclusive education can be achieved for learners with deafblindness.

Importantly, different learners will find their ideal inclusive education solution at different places and in different combinations of places on this continuum. For instance, some learners’ inclusive education solution will primarily be home-based. For others it will involve home and community-based provision; or they may experience inclusive education through a blend of community-based and specialist provision⁵ and attending a mainstream setting. Common to all of these options is support from specialist personnel, whether they are providing that support in the home, in the community, in a special setting or in a mainstream setting – or in a combination of these settings.

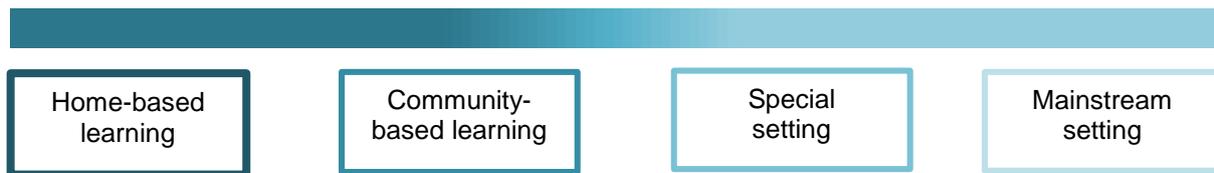
Decisions about education options, and the best ways to combine elements from this continuum, are based on the best interests of the child/learner, taking into consideration the indivisibility of their rights,⁶ and of course in consultation with the learner and his/her family.

⁴ Remember, ‘not setting up special schools’ is different from ‘not offering specialist support’ – so we must not conflate the two issues.

⁵ Specialist provision is context-specific and might mean spending some of the learning time in a special class, unit, centre or school.

⁶ This refers to the human rights principal that no human right is any more important than, nor should be addressed in isolation from, other rights. For example, a child’s right to education cannot be addressed separately from consideration of other rights such as the right to be with family, the right to express their own opinion and the right to be protected from abuse.

Figure 3: A continuum of inclusive education provision



We will unpack this idea below.

Home-based learning

Learning at home may be the only viable option – at least initially – for some children with deafblindness or other complex and multiple impairments. Home-learning is often assumed to be exclusive or segregatory because the learner is usually on their own and they are not joining in a typical education experience in a school. But with careful design and facilitation, learning at home can be a valid and valuable inclusive education experience.

We first need to think about some key components of inclusive education to understand how this is possible.

We believe that education is inclusive when:

- there is a focus on high quality teaching and learning;
- learners have opportunities to learn in different ways;
- curricula and lessons are adapted and planned to suit learners' abilities and interests;
- teaching and learning materials are created or adapted to suit learners' abilities and interests, using the resources that are available locally;
- learners have access to individual support tailored to their needs;
- environments are accessible and/or reasonable accommodations are made to maximise access and participation with the resources available;
- learners learn with and from peers, not just from adults or books;
- learners have opportunities to interact with and learn from diverse peers;
- learners feel valued, feel part of a learning community, and part of the wider community;
- learners learn by engaging with active learning approaches; 'learning by doing' and learning through 'real-world' experiences;
- learners have a voice in their education, in determining what interests them and what they want to learn, how and where;
- learners' parents, caregivers, families and communities have a voice and are actively involved in improving education;
- learners' mother tongue language (spoken, signed or other) is used as the medium of instruction.

This is not an exhaustive list;⁷ readers may have their own ideas to add. Inclusive education is a long-term process of ongoing change; it is never complete and there is no ultimate formula that we can simply follow in every context. This list therefore reflects our belief that education is moving towards being inclusive when one or more of these components is happening. The more components in place, the more we are moving towards inclusion. If all of these components were in place, education would be fairly inclusive, but still with room for improvement.

None of the above components depends on a formal school setting. These components can all happen anywhere, in any setting, from a tent school in a refugee camp, to a community-based non-formal education setting, to home.

Some of the components of inclusive education listed above may seem difficult to implement outside of a mainstream education setting (for instance, you might ask how learners with deafblindness can learn from peers or engage with a learning community if they are being educated at home). Common beliefs about what is possible in education arise because history, and personal experiences of going to school, have narrowed our vision of what education should be like. In Sense International, we are determined to take off the blinkers and open up a wider vision of how education – and therefore inclusive education – happens. Thus, in the case of peer learning, there are many different ways that a learner with deafblindness being educated at home can also be facilitated to learn inclusively with and from peers. We just need to be creative and, most importantly, invite other stakeholders to come up with creative ideas.

Examples of creative ideas for peer learning outside formal education settings

- Plan for siblings, relatives, friends or neighbours to join in learning sessions on a regular basis.
- Create a home tutoring club so learners in local schools volunteer to regularly visit home-educated learners and join in learning activities with them, or even design and facilitate learning activities with them (under adult guidance).
- Extend the home/school link to enable home learners to visit schools and join in activities.
- Develop buddy schemes so that each home learner has a school-based learner buddy and they help each other, tell each other what they have been learning, etc.

Community-based learning

Non-formal and informal learning opportunities exist in every community. Informal learning – learning from life experiences – is incredibly diverse and plays a large part in every child’s development and ongoing learning. It includes learning through

⁷ The list draws on two decades of experience and insights, such as those shared through Enabling Education Network, as well as highlighting points from international documents such as the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016) General Comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education

playing together; participating in community events; listening to community stories or performances; engaging in self-study; listening to, watching or reading the news/media, and so on. Non-formal learning opportunities are more organised. They might include adult literacy classes; catch-up/accelerated classes for those who have missed years of schooling; sports clubs; community groups that offer training on local issues, practical skills or life skills, and so on.

Diverse 'learning in the community' opportunities can exist or be created for persons with deafblindness, whether through, for instance, facilitating inclusive play/sports activities, supporting community performances, groups or clubs to become more accessible, and so on. Given the low incidence of deafblindness in most communities, creating community-based classes just for learners with deafblindness may not be feasible, but anyway the main benefits of community-based learning are through facilitating and encouraging opportunities for inclusion in community learning activities.

Special settings

While special settings are not our default solution, in the short-term at least they will continue to play a role in education for learners with deafblindness. Our challenge is to work on ensuring that special settings embrace all the components of inclusive education listed above. For instance, the deafblind units we established within mainstream schools enable learners with deafblindness attending a special setting to have opportunities to learn from and interact with diverse peers (not just other deafblind peers) and become part of a wider learning community that extends beyond the special setting. Special settings have opportunities to be facilitators of inclusion, not places of segregation, and Sense International is committed to developing that role.

3.2.4. Locally appropriate and viable solutions

The opportunities for inclusive education beyond mainstream settings are immense, though of course constrained in all contexts by what is feasible financially, socially and politically. Solutions need to adapt to suit the context. For instance, we mentioned home education: in a very well-resourced context this might mean a teacher working full-time with the learner one-to-one at home. In low-resource contexts it may be impossible to assign a teacher to work full-time with a learner at home, but other solutions emerge instead. For instance:

- teachers from the local school, who have received training, visiting the home regularly to work with the learner;
- building capacity of volunteers, family members, student teachers, etc, to work as home tutors;
- developing flexible learning schedules with a mixture of some home-based and some mainstream or special setting-based sessions, or some sessions with a teacher and some sessions with peers, volunteers, etc.;
- connecting home-learning with the responsibilities of local CBR workers and volunteers or other government staff who have had appropriate training.

4. What does our vision mean in practice?

4.1. General considerations

The previous chapter outlined our vision and conceptual approach for inclusive education for learners with deafblindness – what we think inclusive education should look like. In this chapter we focus on the practical implications of this vision – **how can we apply our key principles** to our advocacy and programme work, and **what type of work** should we focus on?

4.1.1. Realistic expectations for the scale of our intervention

Key to our success is being ambitious yet realistic. The field of inclusive education is huge. Developing an inclusive education system in any country requires a sustained and extensive revolution across every aspect of the system, from the design of curricula and exams, to teacher training and deployment, to infrastructure design and equipment resourcing, and more. Inclusive education is also not just about learners with disability, but also about preventing exclusion on the grounds of gender, language, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, health/HIV status, age, refugee/asylum status, and more.⁸ No organisation can take on all that. Even the UN agencies are not big enough nor sufficiently resourced with the diversity of expertise to tackle every aspect of inclusive education all at once and on their own. The system-wide revolution must be led by government, with support from other agencies – such as Sense International – that hold expertise in education and in issues of discrimination and diversity. Our role is not to try to do everything ourselves, but to **make strategic contributions** to ensure learners with deafblindness specifically, and learners with other disabilities and other vulnerabilities in general, are an integral part of the education system revolution.

4.1.2. Deciding on appropriate interventions

As we saw above, our vision for inclusive education involves engagement on two main tracks: a) learners with deafblindness being supported to attend, participate and achieve in mainstream settings; and b) the development of innovative inclusive education opportunities for learners with deafblindness beyond mainstream settings. Of course these twin-tracks do not run completely separately so there is inevitable over-lap.

In each country context we need to decide how to balance our efforts across the two tracks. That means deciding whether we need to focus equally on changing the mainstream education provision and on supporting options outside mainstream schools, or whether we should invest more in one than the other. When making this decision we should consider:

- the existing nature and results of government policy and practice;
- where there is already momentum for change and the most strategic intervention we can make;

⁸ Remembering of course that persons with disabilities have these other ‘multiple identities’ too.

- the existing nature and results of advocacy and programme interventions by disabled people’s organisations (DPOs), NGOs and other stakeholders;
- Sense International’s local capacity (financial, personnel, expertise, partnerships and connections);
- the nature of barriers to inclusion in that context – policy, practice, environmental, resource and attitude barriers – as identified by existing participatory situation analyses and/or by our own analyses.⁹

Underpinning our decisions regarding how best we can support inclusive education for learners with deafblindness in each context will be participatory consultative processes involving:

- girls, boys, women and men with deafblindness;
- their families and representative groups;
- representatives from government ministries and departments;
- other relevant DPOs, NGOs and community service organisations;
- members of school communities;
- health, (re)habilitation, welfare and education service providers, and more.

4.1.3. Prioritising collaborative interventions

Because inclusive education requires a revolution across the whole education system, we need to understand **our position as a facilitator and collaborator**. We have a role to encourage other actors who work in education and with persons with disabilities and other vulnerabilities, to learn about, and learn how to support people with deafblindness in education. Our job is to **lobby, inform, educate, advise and support** these other actors to work more effectively for our target group.

4.2. Advocacy work

Whether our work is focusing on making mainstream settings inclusive for learners with deafblindness, or on developing innovative inclusive education solutions beyond the mainstream settings, we will inevitably be doing a lot of advocacy – providing evidence, raising awareness, campaigning and lobbying for change.

- If inclusive education programmes are **already well established** in our context, then we can try to influence how the existing programmes operate, to ensure a more committed and well-informed focus on learners with deafblindness.
- If the inclusive education movement is still **in its early stages**, then we can seize the opportunity to influence the design and implementation of (government and/or NGO) programmes, ensuring that learners with deafblindness are considered in all discussions and decisions.

⁹ Often other organisations have already conducted situation analyses that we can use as a foundation for doing more deafblindness-focused investigations. We do not necessarily have to do every situation analysis ourselves from scratch. Drawing on and building on other organisations’ situation analyses can be a useful early step in developing vital collaboration too.

- If there is **no movement toward inclusive education** yet, then we can motivate all other relevant actors to develop an interest, to understand why inclusive education for all is vital, and to start discussing the potential roles and contributions of all actors in making it happen in that context, including Sense International's role as a facilitator and collaborator on all matters relating to deafblindness in inclusive education.

Our advocacy will need to focus on encouraging the government and non-government actors to understand the idea of a continuum of inclusive education provision (involving home-based, community-based, special and mainstream settings) and not just automatically channel all their efforts and budgets into mainstream settings.

Depending on the context, we will also focus our advocacy efforts towards one or more of the following desired changes:

- **Build self-advocacy** capacity among people with deafblindness and their representative organisations such as national Deafblind Associations (always a priority), as well as with families and communities, e.g. Parents' Associations.
- **Change government policy** to ensure that inclusive education is an overarching policy commitment and that deafblindness is explicitly acknowledged and addressed within all relevant education policies and budgets.
- **Change government-led practice** across all education-related departments (curriculum, examinations, teacher education, infrastructure, education funding, inspection, etc) to ensure that the inclusion needs of learners with deafblindness are considered in the work of every department.
- **Change attitudes and practices within other NGO-supported education programmes**, so that they broadly embrace principles of quality inclusive education and specifically seek to include learners with deafblindness in their inclusive solutions.
- **Change attitudes and practices at individual school and community level**, so that teachers, parents, members of parent-teacher associations and school committees, learners, community leaders and representatives from other community organisations, institutions and groups broadly embrace principles of quality inclusive education and specifically seek to include learners with deafblindness in their inclusive solutions.

4.3. Programmes

4.3.1. Our overall approach to programmes

Our programme interventions will vary depending on the context and our decisions regarding the amount of engagement needed on both/either of the twin tracks. We will consider:

- What inputs are other actors contributing?
- What niche is Sense International most suited or required to help fill?

- Where can we make the most effective contribution to change for learners with deafblindness?

Our interventions need to be **realistic, appropriate and collaborative**. For instance, rather than aiming to set up a model inclusive school from scratch and support every aspect of inclusion (a huge task, requiring very diverse expertise), Sense International's approach is more likely to focus on supporting an existing government-run school that is aspiring to be a model school. Our support would focus primarily on promoting and assisting the inclusion of learners with visual and hearing impairments, and also on promoting and/or assisting wider disability-inclusive practice and attitudes. But we would then encourage collaboration with other partners to complete the full picture of inclusion in that school. For instance, depending on the context, there might be a partner who can provide specialist support for the inclusion of learners from refugee families, or a partner that specialises in improving teachers' pedagogy skills, or that is highly experienced in tackling the entrenched problems of gender inequality and child marriage in the community.

The opportunities for programme engagement are limitless, but might include, in no specific order of priority:

- developing and supporting training courses on deafblindness and related topics for mainstream teachers (face-to-face and online);
- supporting the development of teaching assistants to provide additional classroom support in mainstream schools (including changing government policy towards acceptance of teaching assistants, inclusion of their stipends in budgets, training for teaching assistants, and agreement on the teaching assistant job description and 'ranking' as a cadre of staff);
- supporting schools / education systems to engage in early identification and community-based (re)habilitation including home-based learning;
- supporting schools / education systems with accessibility, reasonable accommodation, communication support and assistive devices;
- supporting school communities to be participatory and plan school improvements collaboratively;
- supporting schools / education systems to develop or adapt individual education planning approaches (e.g. starting to use individual education plans);
- supporting special settings to redefine their roles through an inclusion lens;
- supporting extra-curricular activities, sports, art, drama clubs, child rights and inclusion clubs, and so on.

Additionally, supporting schools / education systems to improve safeguarding with particular attention to the needs of students with deafblindness can be a cross-cutting work strand in every project / programme (see the section on safeguarding below).

4.3.2. Develop and support training courses for mainstream teachers

Inclusive teachers are fundamentally good teachers. If teachers have not had opportunities to learn the foundational skills for being a good teacher (and in many countries basic training is not providing these skills), it can be a huge expectation for them to embrace and benefit from inclusive education training.

It is vital to remember that good quality training on inclusive education is extensive and wide-ranging. It focuses on topics from classroom management and pedagogy, to developing and using teaching and learning materials, to effective collaboration and problem-solving with other teachers, communication support and much more. Teachers therefore cannot be trained how to be inclusive during just a one-week, theory-focused course – that is not how one learns to teach, nor how an adult effectively learns new ideas. An ever-growing body of academic and field evidence confirms that inclusive education training needs to involve **long-term, experiential, adult-learning oriented training programmes** rather than the short, isolated, theoretical, cascade-style courses which have in the past been favoured by many NGOs and donors.

Sense International's appropriate contribution:

- Set out the benefits of inclusion of learners with deafblindness including why we all need to work to ensure 'no one is left behind'.
- Provide teachers with specific training on working inclusively with learners who have deafblindness, and on how to work with a teaching assistant who is supporting a learner with deafblindness.
- Provide teachers, head teachers and school administrators with training and/or advice on how to contribute to blended educational solutions, where learners with deafblindness may engage in a continuum of home-based, community-based, specialist-supported and mainstream-based learning.

We must be aware that if foundational training on good quality, inclusive teaching has not happened, our specialist topic training may have limited impact. It could be like teaching someone to run before they can walk. Strategically, therefore, when we want to provide teachers with deafblindness-related training, we must work in collaboration with other actors to **ensure that more comprehensive training on good quality, inclusive teaching is happening before or alongside our specialist training**. This may mean engaging with teacher training colleges, lecturers and the current curriculum to add in components to or revise existing teacher training courses; or providing training modules alongside standard classes, requiring us to demonstrate the benefits of undertaking extra learning.

4.3.3. Support the development of teaching assistants to work in mainstream schools

Learners with deafblindness often require more intensive learning support. Teachers with large classes inevitably struggle to provide this, and while peer support is an excellent approach, it cannot always replace the support that a skilled adult can provide. Good quality teaching assistants can enable learners with deafblindness to participate and achieve in mainstream classes.

Their role includes:

- supporting the teacher to design lessons and prepare teaching and learning materials that are differentiated for specific learners' needs and interests;
- providing interpretation support;
- providing one-to-one help to learners;
- providing personal care support (e.g. help with using the toilet or eating);
- facilitating peer interactions, encouraging and facilitating learners with and without disabilities to work and play together;
- generally supporting the teacher across the whole class.

It is vital that teaching assistants are not used to segregate deafblind or other learners with disabilities by having them always learn in different spaces away from their peers. Teaching assistants may offer some one-to-one sessions during the week outside the regular classroom (e.g. sessions in a resource room or help with homework after core classes have finished), but this should not become the default option.

Sense International's appropriate contributions:

- Directly support the development of teaching assistants whose mandate is to support learners with deafblindness (and other disabilities) within regular classes, with a view to promoting the concept more widely and securing government endorsement of and funding for teaching assistants.
- Design, roll-out and freely share training courses for teaching assistants that deal with deafblindness, inclusive education and learner-centred pedagogy. This must also include training mainstream class teachers how to work inclusively with teaching assistants, so that they understand the assistant's role and do not just 'dump' the needs of learners with deafblindness and other disabilities on their assistants.
- Develop and trial innovative ways to fulfil teaching assistant roles in low-resource contexts.

We may have to deal with objections from the teaching establishment who fear the implications of having adults in classrooms who have not been trained as teachers, e.g. teachers' concerns that this undermines the value of their own training and status. However, in practice once a teaching assistant is introduced, mainstream teachers usually find her/him to be an invaluable asset.

Directly recruiting or funding teaching assistants in specific schools will provide immediate support to a small number of learners with deafblindness. For longer-term sustainability we must also focus on the **policy and resourcing changes needed to embed a system of teaching assistants into the government's education system**, to benefit all learners in the future.

4.3.4. Support schools / education systems to engage in early identification and community-based (re)habilitation

Teachers and other staff in mainstream schools do not have, and cannot be expected to have, medical and rehabilitation knowledge and skills. Teachers are often reluctant to embrace inclusive education because of the misperception and fear that they will need to become medical experts. Realistically, we can expect teachers, parents and family members to be the ‘first line’ of identification – they can spot when a child is experiencing functional difficulties. For instance, they can notice when a child appears to have difficulty seeing, hearing, moving, understanding or communicating. Beyond that, we cannot expect them to identify or diagnose the precise nature of the problem. Instead, teachers, parents and family members can be prepared to seek appropriate advice and support from people with more specialist skills. If the community does not have suitably skilled medical and (re)habilitation services/personnel, regular teachers cannot be expected automatically to fill this specialist gap.

Sense International’s appropriate contributions:

- Train teachers to identify learners’ functional difficulties and make appropriate referrals and requests for advice to specialists.
- Train teachers how to work with CBR or similar services to provide learners with an appropriate blend of education and (re)habilitation support at home, in the community and in school.
- Raise parent/family awareness and confidence to identify children’s functional difficulties, seek referral support, and demand their rights to appropriate educational and (re)habilitation support.
- Support or partner with local service providers who can offer parents and teachers more specialist referral services for diagnosis, (re)habilitation and advice.
- Where appropriate services do not exist, advocate with government and collaborate with other NGOs to fund or introduce services.
- Where referral/CBR services do exist, but lack deafblindness expertise, offer them targeted training, advice and support.

4.3.5. Support schools / education systems with accessibility, reasonable accommodation and assistive devices

Many disability-focussed NGOs engage directly in providing support with accessibility improvements in school communities, by upgrading school infrastructure and/or providing equipment, assistive devices and materials. To ensure longer-term sustainability of inclusive education there is an additional broader role to build teacher and school capacity for innovation, so that they can make useful reasonable accommodations with existing limited resources. There is also a need to lobby government and NGOs to follow universal design for learning principles.

Universal design for learning

“‘Universal design’ means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. ‘Universal design’ shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.”¹⁰

Universal design for learning therefore means ensuring that every aspect of the learning environment, materials, and teaching and learning processes are as accessible as possible, to as many people as possible, without always needing to create additional or separate versions, options or facilities. For example, in India a project has been working on publishing children’s books with printed and Braille pages in the same book. This enables blind and sighted learners to use exactly the same books and to read together, without anyone being made to feel their book is different.¹¹

Developing an education system based on universal design for learning is a longer-term process of change, but one we should be constantly working towards.

Reasonable accommodation

Reasonable accommodation in education is about making more immediate adjustments to improve individual learners’ access, participation and achievement in education alongside their peers. It is about finding innovative and affordable solutions that suit the local context and that use or adapt resources that are already available or feasible to obtain. It is not about having to buy or make expensive, high-tech solutions if that is not financially feasible at the moment.

Some reasonable adjustments can be low-cost or even no-cost, such as: providing extra time for tests or allowing a test to be taken in a different format or location; changing where a learner sits in the classroom; creating a more flexible timetable; allowing extra breaks; rearranging the furniture to make a clear pathway to the learner’s desk; arranging for a friend or volunteer to take notes, and so on.

Other reasonable adjustments may incur costs, such as providing basic assistive devices, or adapted equipment, furniture or teaching and learning materials, or making adaptations to the school infrastructure. Sometimes the scale of the adjustment is decided based on the funds or resources available – what the school can reasonably afford or fundraise for. When this happens, the adjustment may not offer the perfect solution yet, but it is something that is feasible immediately and makes a positive step towards improving accessibility and inclusion for the learner. For instance, a teacher might photocopy pages from textbooks in expanded size onto A3 paper for a learner who can access very large print. The teacher may only have a small fixed budget for photocopying each term and therefore cannot copy entire books but picks the pages that are most essential for understanding the lessons. If further funding can be found, then the amount of photocopying can be increased, or the school might be able to buy expensive large-print editions of the books if they have been published.

¹⁰ UN (2006). ‘Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’. Adopted by the UN General Assembly, 13 December 2006, A/RES/61/106. Article 2.

¹¹ Ahuja, A. & Shrivastava, R (2017) ‘Universal Design for Learning in the Classroom: A Way Forward?’. See:

www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/Universal_Design_for_Learning_in_the_Classroom-India.pdf

Sense International's appropriate contributions:

- We may choose to directly provide infrastructure and equipment or material support to specific schools. **But** to ensure longer-term sustainability we should also...
- Contribute to the training of teachers and head teachers to help them become innovative problem-solvers who have the capacity and confidence to make reasonable accommodations for learners with deafblindness (and other disabilities).
- Advise and lobby government and other NGOs to embrace universal design for learning principles, so that no new education project or school is designed without considering the needs of learners with deafblindness and other disabilities.
- Partner with other NGOs to directly support or lobby for efforts to develop locally made, affordable assistive devices.

4.3.6. Support school communities to be participatory and plan school improvements collaboratively

The most successful inclusive education initiatives are those that listen and respond to the needs of learners, parents, families, teachers and the community; not those that simply follow a pre-determined formula of actions. Developing a culture of participation in schools and across the education system is a long-term process of change beyond the scope of a single disability organisation on its own.

Sense International's appropriate contributions:

- Find out about other organisations that are working on projects such as whole-school improvement, quality inclusive education, developing parent-teacher associations and school management committees, and so on. Develop collaborative partnerships with them to advise and support them to make their stakeholder engagement and consultations accessible to and relevant for learners with deafblindness and their carers and representatives.
- Encourage and support the development of school inclusion teams (SITs), in schools that Sense International directly supports and/or in other schools in the geographical areas where Sense International operates. SITs consist of various stakeholders (teachers, parents, learners, local community members and leaders, DPO representatives, etc). Their role is diverse, such as identifying barriers to access, participation and achievement in their school community; collaboratively developing innovative solutions (e.g. they could help develop solutions on the continuum from home-based to school-based learning); and reaching out to other providers and sectors for advice and support.

4.3.7. Support schools / education systems to develop or adapt individual education planning approaches

Individual education plans (IEPs) are used in many countries to document and monitor the specific learning and support needs of individual learners. Each IEP should ideally be developed and monitored through collaboration between teachers, parents, the learner and specialist support personnel, where available. In some

contexts, individual schools develop their own IEP formats and processes; in other places there are district or national IEP systems in place. It may be beyond the scope of a small disability-oriented NGO on its own to bring about the widespread development or implementation of IEPs, but contributions can be made.

Sense International's appropriate contributions:

- Work with government and NGO partners who are involved in developing IEP systems to ensure that they develop planning approaches that: a) meet the needs of learners with deafblindness; and b) involve appropriate methods for engaging learners with deafblindness in the process of developing and monitoring their own IEPs.
- Explain the advantages of IEPs and provide examples including advice on setting objectives. Also set standards for how frequently IEPs should be reviewed.

4.3.8. Support schools / education systems to improve safeguarding

Inclusive schools are safe schools. If a school is not safe for learners, then it cannot be considered inclusive, regardless of what other positive steps it is taking. Many government and NGO initiatives focus on school safety and on child protection and safeguarding in schools. Depending on the context they might focus on:

- safe journeys to and from school;
- preventing sexual abuse or harassment of learners by teachers, learners or community members;
- preventing inappropriate child work (e.g. teachers asking learners to run errands or carry out domestic work for them);
- preventing corporal punishment or any form of violence in the classroom;
- ensuring that learners are not expected to pay extra or perform any tasks or services for teachers to 'earn' good grades or pass exams;
- developing and monitoring health and safety standards for infrastructure, which might include for instance fencing off unsafe areas, creating a secure school boundary, making stepped areas safer to use, etc;
- developing and monitoring health and safety standards for teaching and learning practices in schools, ensuring that teachers assess any potential risks in the activities they plan and take steps to mitigate these risks;
- promoting learner health and well-being (covering for instance physical and mental health, sexual and reproductive health and rights, nutrition, and substance abuse);
- encouraging teachers to look out for any changes in a child's behaviour, health and/or appearance which could indicate abuse, and act promptly and appropriately on any direct disclosures.

Developing comprehensive safe schools initiatives is beyond the scope of a small disability NGO alone, but important contributions can be made.

Sense International's appropriate contributions:

- Work with government and NGO partners and schools where Sense International is supporting learners, to audit school safety from a deafblindness perspective (e.g. use a checklist and work with stakeholders to develop an action plan that they can own and deliver).
- Work collaboratively with partners, parents groups and school management committees on improving school safety initiatives to ensure they address the specific needs of learners with deafblindness and are designed to use accessible communications.
- Provide guidance and sign posting to relevant services and information.

4.3.9. Support special education settings to redefine their roles through an inclusion lens

Attending a special education setting some or all of the time is not always appropriate, even if one is available. Decisions about every learner's education pathway will factor in what is in their best interests, from an indivisible rights perspective.¹² Decisions also need to consider the 4 As, as outlined in the CRPD General Comment 4 on inclusive education:

- availability – what education settings are available to the learner?
- accessibility – how accessible are the available settings; this includes their affordability?
- acceptability – to what extent do the available settings holistically respect learners' requirements, cultures, views and languages?
- adaptability – how well do the settings follow reasonable accommodation principles?

Taking in these considerations, special education settings may be, but may not always be, the most appropriate option for learners with deafblindness.

In this document we have discussed a continuum of education provision for learners with deafblindness, from home-based through to mainstream school-based. Special education settings where they exist (e.g. special schools and special units) have a role to play across this whole continuum. Teachers and professionals with skills gained from working in special schools/units can also be a resource to assist with inclusive education in other settings.

Supporting mainstream settings: Staff from special settings can support teachers, teaching assistants and SITs in mainstream schools to develop IEPs, access appropriate assistive devices, and make suitable reasonable accommodations. They can offer itinerant support for learners with deafblindness, such as regular one-to-one sessions within the mainstream school to build communication skills. They can also facilitate collaborative 'team teaching' sessions, working with the regular teacher and teaching assistant to develop differentiated curricula, lesson plans and teaching and learning materials.

¹² Human rights are indivisible – no one right automatically takes priority over others.

Supporting home- and community-based education: Staff from special education settings can be involved with designing and supporting high quality home- and community-based inclusive education which, among other benefits, promotes social inclusion, peer-learning and 'real-world' learning. They can work collaboratively with teachers from mainstream schools, with CBR workers, with parents, other family members and community volunteers to design a programme of learning at home and in the community (with some mainstream setting engagement if appropriate) that suits the individual needs and abilities of a learner with deafblindness.

Sense International's appropriate contributions:

- Advocate for changes in perceptions on education. The continuum of education put forward in this paper may not conform with existing government, NGO, community or parent perceptions of what education systems should look like. Sense International can have a significant advocacy role to promote the idea that education can be inclusive, good quality and collaborative both within and beyond the formal mainstream school.
- Support special settings to redefine and bring innovation into their roles and contributions to inclusive education for learners with deafblindness.
- Test, critically reflect on, document and share lessons from interventions that promote the continuum approach of blending home-based, community-based and mainstream school-based inclusive learning opportunities, supported by specialist settings where available.

5. Summary of key commitments

The following table provides a quick reference list of the key commitments we are making, and principles we will adhere to, with regard to supporting inclusive education for learners with deafblindness.

| We will... | We will not... |
|---|---|
| Focus on making realistic, strategic, collaborative contributions towards change using our specific deafblindness expertise | Be over-ambitious and try to achieve projects and changes that are beyond the scope of a small, disability-focussed NGO working alone |
| Focus on contributing towards longer-term changes | Deliver quick projects that operate in isolation from the broader changes needed in education systems and society |
| Focus on a twin-track approach, changing mainstream settings to be inclusive and supporting the needs of individual learners with deafblindness | Provide only individual support for learners without also trying to change the system for future learners |
| Promote a broader vision of inclusive education as a continuum from home to school | Focus narrowly on inclusive education in formal settings / schools |
| Make programme decisions about what is realistic and appropriate through participatory consultation with key stakeholders, especially people with deafblindness | Develop any inclusive education projects or advocacy campaigns without consulting and giving a direct voice to people with deafblindness and their families and representatives |
| Recognise that regular teachers need a solid foundation of core skills on which to build inclusive education expertise, and expertise relating to learners with deafblindness | Expect regular teachers to become inclusive immediately if they have not received adequate basic training in how to be good teachers |
| Encourage the development of teaching assistants who promote the active participation of learners with deafblindness in mainstream settings | Endorse systems of teaching assistants that lead to or perpetuate the segregation of learners with deafblindness from their peers |
| Support those working in education to better understand and notice learners who experience functional difficulties | Expect teachers to have medical skills or to fulfil the role of absent medical, rehabilitation or other specialists |
| Provide practical support with accessibility and build capacity among education personnel to fulfil reasonable accommodation and universal design obligations | Provide equipment in isolation from contributing towards sustainable systemic changes |

| We will... | We will not... |
|---|--|
| Promote and support the active engagement of people with deafblindness in school improvement initiatives and in individual educational planning | Endorse projects that make decisions for learners with deafblindness without consulting them and their families and representatives |
| Invest in improving safeguarding of learners with deafblindness in all forms of education | Tolerate any breaches of the safety, security and dignity of persons with deafblindness (or any other stakeholders) in projects that we support or partner with |
| Encourage and support special settings to develop innovative, supportive and collaborative roles for themselves within inclusive education | Support segregated special school settings in isolation from other efforts to promote the inclusion of learners with deafblindness on the continuum of education from home to mainstream school. |

For more information, examples or support please contact Sense International UK.

Annexes

Annex 1: UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Within the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007), Article 24 relates to education. General Comment No. 4 on the right to inclusive education was published in 2016 to provide more details and clarity on implementing Article 24.

Article 24 requires States to “enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community” (para. 3).

Regarding people with deafblindness, it specifies that education should be “delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development” (para. 3c). See the full text below.

General Comment 4 recognises that “some groups are more at risk of exclusion from education than others, such as: persons with intellectual disabilities or multiple disabilities, **persons with deafblindness**, persons with autism or persons with disabilities in humanitarian emergencies.” (UNCRPD, 2016, p.3, emphasis added)

The General Comment reiterates that “In accordance with article 24, States parties must ensure the realization of the right of persons with disabilities to education through an inclusive education system at all levels, including preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary education, vocational training and lifelong learning, extracurricular and social activities, and for all students, including persons with disabilities, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others.” (UNCRPD, 2016, p.3).

It stresses that in moving towards the realization of these rights, reasonable accommodations may need to be made. ‘Reasonable accommodation’ is defined in the UNCRPD as: “necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms” (Article 2).

The General Comment further clarifies that in order to implement Article 24, “the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the general education system should be prohibited, including through any legislative or regulatory provisions that limit their inclusion on the basis of their impairment or the degree of that impairment, such as by conditioning inclusion on the extent of the potential of the individual or by alleging a disproportionate and undue burden to evade the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation. General education means all regular learning environments and the education department (UNCRPD, 2016, p.7).

This means that no one can be excluded from education on the basis of their disability and that schools or other education settings cannot claim that making a

reasonable accommodation is placing 'undue burden' on them. (As we saw above, accommodation/adjustments need to be reasonable – affordable and achievable – within the current financial and practical capacity of the school, so if an accommodation is reasonable it cannot be considered an undue burden.)

For Romania:

The European Union provides an example of experiences in middle-high income countries. Recent analysis of implementation of inclusive education for people with disabilities illustrates that “The inclusive enrolment rates range from 93.47% to 99.88%; the total average for the 26 countries is 97.54%” (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017, p.25). The EU recognises that to make education inclusive it requires “moving away from a ‘one-size-fits-all’ education model, towards a tailored approach to education that aims to increase the system’s ability to respond to learners’ diverse needs without the need to categorise and label them” (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017, p.8).

Full text of Article 24 of the UNCRPD - Education

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:

- a. The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
- b. The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
- c. Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.

2. In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:

- a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
- b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual’s requirements is provided;
- d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
- e) Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:

a) Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;

b) Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;

c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.

4. In order to help ensure the realization of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.

5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.

Annex 2: Key definitions

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities identifies 4 key terms that help us understand what inclusive education is and is not:

Exclusion

“Exclusion occurs when students are directly or indirectly prevented from or denied access to education in any form.”

Segregation

“Segregation occurs when the education of students with disabilities is provided in separate environments designed or used to respond to particular or various impairments, in isolation from students without disabilities.”

Integration

“Integration is a process of placing persons with disabilities in existing mainstream educational institutions, as long as the former can adjust to the standardized requirements of such institutions.”

Inclusion

“Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences. Placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes without accompanying structural changes to, for example, organisation, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies, does not constitute inclusion. Furthermore, integration does not automatically guarantee the transition from segregation to inclusion.”

(UNCRPD, 2016, p.4)

Annex 3: Examples of Sense International practice contributing to the improvement of inclusive education

In different countries Sense International has undertaken projects to improve inclusive practices. In this table, examples of our work are described with the outcomes in relation to the inclusive education agenda.

| Project | Outcomes towards the inclusion agenda | Potential developments |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Community Based Rehabilitation/Education In these projects trained outreach teachers, based at a specialist school provide education programmes for children in their own homes. Education is undertaken by family members under guidance of the outreach teacher. In the longer term the goal is to support children to engage in the wider community and access a local school setting. (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, India, Bangladesh)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowering CYPwDB to develop functional life skills. • Supporting children to be school-ready and enabled to fully participate in the school curriculum alongside their sighted/hearing peers. • Raising family and community awareness. • Increasing social inclusion – also through support to the parents especially through parent’s groups. • Use of tablets with videos for parents. | <p>Expand the role of outreach teachers to assess suitable education options with the goal of securing education placements for CYPwDB. We are using tablets and videos here to support parents and there may be further opportunities with technology.</p> |

| Project | Outcomes towards the inclusion agenda | Potential developments |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Teaching assistants We work with local schools to recruit, train, fund and provide teaching assistants to support learners with deafblindness to access education in mainstream schools. Individual support is provided to enable access to the curriculum. (Tanzania, Bangladesh, India)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocating for reasonable accommodations. • Increasing opportunity for inclusive education. • Raising awareness (community, family, school level). • MOE recognises importance of the role of TAs. | <p>Provide training for teaching assistants to act as intervenors with CYPwDB. Expand the support role to include opportunities for break out/ small group support teaching rather than just class-based assistance. Main aim is to get government to set up a system of TAs and to pay for it.</p> |
| <p>Developing curricula for learners with deafblindness We work with local specialist teachers and Ministry of Education (MOE) officials to adapt curricula to meet the needs of learners with deafblindness. In some countries, Curricula are MOE approved, in others they are available as supporting resources. In some countries, like Kenya, there is a special organisation in charge of curriculum development which needs to be brought on board with the work from the start. Adapted curricula maybe for home-based and school-based learning. (Romania, Peru, India, Uganda, Kenya).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustrating differential curricula. • Developing life skills and school readiness. • Highlighting specific needs of learners. • Raising awareness at policy / MOE level. | <p>Work with MOE to approve adapted curricula in all countries. Demonstrate how differential curricula can be implemented in practice alongside mainstream curricula. Ensure arrangements for adapting exams</p> |

| Project | Outcomes towards the inclusion agenda | Potential developments |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Early Intervention Screening and identifying infants as young as possible and maximizing developmental opportunities through providing therapeutic intervention. Early intervention may take place at a resource centre, clinic or home setting, by trained early interventionists (teachers or therapists). (Romania, Peru, India, Uganda, Kenya)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimise developmental opportunities. • Increase family / community awareness. • Creating high expectations from parents and professionals for the child's progress and future. | <p>Create pathways from Early Intervention projects into Early Childhood Development (ECD) / pre-school / kindergarten / playgroup and then school placements. Creating partnerships between education and health services.</p> |
| <p>Vocational training projects We support government or private funded vocational training centres to include YPWDB. We have developed extended curricula and created links with local businesses. (India, Bangladesh, Uganda, Romania, Peru)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased community awareness. • Developing local skills and providing services. • Demonstrating personal-worth and contribution to society. | <p>Transition planning may lead to increased vocational training and employment opportunities. Involve adult services in secondary education provision i.e. options, work experience. Training for vocational teachers on inclusion of YP with deafblindness.</p> |
| <p>Teacher training We work to get existing national teacher training institutions or universities to run courses either face-to-face or online training to increase awareness of the educational needs of learners with deafblindness and teaching approaches. We work with MOE to embed these within qualified teacher training programmes. (Peru, Romania, India, Tanzania, Kenya)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the success of teaching and improved achievement and outcomes for CYPwDB. • Successful implementation of differentiated curricula. • Raised awareness amongst teachers – increased readiness to receive learners with deafblindness in class. | <p>Build awareness training on deafblindness into qualified teacher training. Post graduate training for specialist teachers in teaching learners with deafblindness. Including distance learning. Inclusion awareness training for specialist /advisory teachers.</p> |

