Recommendations on Disability and Inclusive Education for NEP 2021 (ITA)

- **Revise education policies, sector plans and strategies** to incorporate a cross-cutting disability inclusion component to ensure adherence to Article 25-A of the Constitution and the federal and provincial Free and Compulsory Education Acts & SDGs 2030/SDG 4.
- **Develop Rules of Business for the Free and Compulsory Education Acts in consultation with persons with disabilities and organizations** working for them.
- **Need for robust data**: To make effective policies regarding inclusive education, there needs to be a sound understanding of the prevalence and types of disabilities affecting children in the country. Research has shown that the full set of Washington Group’s child functioning questions provides sensitive and reliable estimates of the incidence of disability which can be disaggregated across gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status. It is necessary to include these questions in education statistics surveys and collect information annually in order to provide the support that children with disabilities require in schools.
- **Making classrooms more inclusive**: Compared to children without disabilities, those with functional difficulties are more likely to not enroll, and at a higher risk of dropping out of schools. However, there are a significant number of children with moderate to severe disabilities who are enrolled in general education. To make the classroom more conducive for learning for all, there is a need to foster a more tolerant and accepting environment in schools. The role of teachers in normalizing the presence of children with disabilities in classrooms is important. Focus needs to shift to adequately training teachers and socializing them to not only employ differentiated teaching strategies for children with different types and severity of disabilities but also provide continued emotional support.
- **Reforming Special Education**: Although inclusion in classrooms is crucial to integrating children with disabilities into society, providing additional physical and learning support in normal school settings can be quite challenging. As discussed earlier, a significant number of children with moderate to severe disabilities opt for special education schools. These schools are equipped with assistive technologies that might make the learning experience more accessible and better for children with debilitating disabilities such as deafness and blindness. The provincial School Education Departments and Special education departments need to take ownership of special education policy reform and collaborate to mitigate the learning gap between children with and without disabilities. This process would require extensive reform to special education which should include:
  - **Providing awareness about special education for timely enrollment** in special education schools – this will stimulate and facilitate learning amongst the disabled from young ages thereby reducing the disadvantage that they might face later on.
  - **Modification of curriculum** so that it is more sensitive to the pace and needs of children with disabilities.
  - **Required instructional material should be provided** within the schools enabling them to create an inclusive environment along with assistive technologies and access to school libraries/supplementary materials
  - **Extensive teacher training/workforce preparation for special education** to engage meaningfully with CWD including the use of braille and Pakistan sign...
language. Teachers should be trained to effectively deliver the modified curriculum in the designated medium of instruction. Teachers need in-depth understanding of the concept of inclusive education and attitudinal change required to mainstream children with and without disability.

○ **Adaptation of assessment materials** to make them more accessible to children with disabilities enabling them to compete with children of at local & national level. ASER Pakistan/ITA with DeafReach/SightSavers have adapted ASER tools.

- **Early identification, placement and support**: While there has been significant progress in recognizing the space that children with disabilities have in schools and in society at large, considerable efforts still need to be made in order to ensure that these children are identified, accommodated in schools and provided with quality education. **Devise strategies for early intervention and prevention** in line with the best practices from across the world.

- **Prepare a comprehensive list of disabilities**, including neurodevelopmental disorders such as Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia and Dysgraphia etc., which goes beyond the existing categories of disabilities i.e. Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Physical Impairment and Intellectual Disabilities.

- **Hold a high level inter-provincial ministerial meeting of education and special education ministers, respective education and special education secretaries, and key stakeholders** of inclusive education to learn from government-led initiatives (pilots also) on inclusive education and develop a road map for the effective and phased implementation of inclusive education strategies in all provinces.(Govts: Federal/Provincial/ Areas)

- **Increase the federal and provincial sectoral budget allocations to at least 4-7% of the annual school education budgets** so as to cater for the comprehensive inclusive educational needs of children with disabilities, including investment in assistive technologies.

- **Improve the readiness and responsiveness of the school education system** for inclusion in education through:
  
  i. Revision of syllabi to ensure they are disability inclusive.
  
  ii. Revise/review pre-service/professional and in-service teacher preparation modules/curriculum to become more inclusive and rights based.
  
  iii. Orientation of head teachers and education managers, and development of continuous teacher capacities in disability inclusion as part of pre-service & in-service training
  
  iv. Amendments in the assessment system/tools to accommodate the needs of children with disability.
  
  v. Improvements in infrastructure so that they meet national accessibility guidelines.
  
  vi. Provision of learning resources and learning support to children with disability in inclusive schooling environments.
  
  vii. Counselling and placement services for children with disabilities in secondary schools.

- **Conduct disability audits of schools and institutes** as a phased programme to improve physical infrastructure related accessibility for school children who are disabled.
• Incorporate mandatory reporting/EMIS of school children with disability, disaggregated by category of disability and sex, by amending the existing Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), data collection pathways and reporting processes to make them disability inclusive.

• Establish a formal disability and educational needs assessment process for children with disability at sub-district, district, provincial and federal levels that interfaces with a school placement mechanism to ensure inclusion in education.

• Develop an inclusive and accessible environment at technical and vocational training centres and programs within High Schools to promote enrolment of Persons with Disabilities in training programmes and ensure that the enrolment quota for candidates with disabilities is adhered to.

• Assess the current status of technical training programmes for Persons with Disabilities in state institutions as to their appropriateness to emerging market needs.

• Upgrade the technical capacities at state institutions and introduce such training programmes that meet market demands and improve the employability of Persons with Disabilities whilst ensuring the quotas prescribed for placement are fulfilled.

• Evidence gathering and promotion of the best examples of Public Private Partnerships in Disability in Pakistan (e.g. DeafReach, NOWPDP etc.) Sindh & Punjab for wider outreach and progress on inclusive education.

• Develop Active Partnerships with industry to support inclusive education/training initiatives for children with disabilities at schools, communities and homes as part of CSR and community support initiatives.

• Design and Provide Support for parents/caregivers for awareness on positive attitudes towards their children, current government laws, policies, initiatives and programs for inclusive education, social protection and other specialized services.

• Linkages to Social Protection programs (EHSAAS, BISP, PSPA, Bait ul Maal) should be ensured for parents and students as these are becoming progressive and proactive.

• Hold an Annual Stocktaking Convention with all Partners on Children/Youth with disabilities to stock take/review: prevalence, laws, policies, sector plans and initiatives.

Inclusive education is critical in ensuring that education and skills are within reach of persons with disabilities. This requires changes in school infrastructure, investment in teacher training and assistive technology investment and support.

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VIDEO & LAUNCH IN PAKISTAN (http://aserpakistan.org/GEM-Report-2020)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0LDpOyX65M
Report Launched by the Federal Minister of MoFE&PT Mr. Shafqat Mahmood in Islamabad
https://web.facebook.com/watch/?v=2364732337154501&ref=watch_permalink

https://web.facebook.com/watch/?v=299221744622330