

CONNECTING CLASSROOMS

**A space to learn for all
children?
Inclusive education and
children with disabilities in
Yangon**





Present by

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A glance of Myanmar and Disability data

Population: 51.4 millions

PWDs population: According to recent 2014 census

- Disability prevalence rate - 4.6% (2.8 millions)
- Only more than 20% of CwDs can access education
- Myanmar government ratified UN-CRPD on 13th December, 2011 (protocol not yet sign)
- The first “Disability Rights Law (2015)” was approved on 5th June, 2015. (By law is processing at present)

Ref. – www.dop.gov.mm (May, 2015 census report)





Background and context

- Children with disabilities' rights to education are protected through international instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and the Education for All agenda.
- However, internationally children with disabilities are recognised as a group who are least likely to be enrolled in school, suggesting that addressing the education needs of children with disabilities is an important component of achieving Education for All and meeting commitments to the UN CRPD Article 24.



Why undertake the study?

- Whilst there is now a commitment to IE principals in the law, there is little evidence about access of children with disabilities to education, on which to inform policy development and practice on the ground.
- The research aims to contribute towards the evidence base and inform the development of policy and practice.
- We hope to also raise awareness of the practical issues faced by children with disabilities, their families and the teachers, by giving them a place to voice their concerns, issues and suggestions.

“Regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all” (UNESCO 1994).



Research aims

- To contribute towards an evidence base for policy makers and other stakeholders about promoting inclusive education for children with disabilities in Myanmar
- To identify needs for the development of inclusive education programmes, such as teacher training.





Research Methodology

- The research used a qualitative methodology and was conducted between July and December 2014 in 11 schools, including 2 special schools, 1 monastic school and 1 international school, in Yangon.
- In addition, 19 children with disabilities who were out-of-school and their parents were interviewed.
- In total, the research involved 222 participants including children and young people with disabilities, their peers without disabilities at school, parents, teachers and principals.



Individual interview

- **11 school principals**, 1 per school
- **49 children with disabilities.**
This included 29 children who were in school and 20 children who were out of school. Interviews with out of school children were conducted jointly with parent interviews.
- **37 parents of children with disabilities.**
This included 17 parents of children who were at school and 20 parents of children who were out of school.
- **1 Department of Social Welfare official** and **1 vice Township Education Officer**



Focus groups & observations

- **13 focus teacher groups, including 60 teachers** (average 5 teachers per focus group).
One focus group per school, except in two schools where two focus groups were conducted.
- **14 focus groups, including 66 peers of children with disabilities** in mainstream schools (average 5 peers per group and average of 2 peer focus groups per school).
- **28 observations of children with disabilities at schools** (1 per school)

“I prefer regular schools If they’re kept together amongst themselves, they will only have their intellect. With able children they can learn”

(Parent of Out-of-school child)



Overall Findings

- *Overall the research found that whereas there was evidence of inclusive learning environments in some individual schools, there was limited evidence of inclusive learning environments in the regular schools.*
- *And there remain significant gaps in the ways in which these commitments have been translated into the everyday practice of schools in Yangon, Myanmar.*



1. Perspectives of children with disabilities

- Children felt most worried about:
 - exam,
 - using the toilets
 - travelling to and from school.
- Children reported that teachers and friends helped them the most at school, highlighting the importance of social relationships.
- Many children with disabilities who were at school had aspirations to become doctors and engineers.



1. Perspectives of children with disabilities (Cont.)

- Most children with disabilities who were out-of-school reported feeling sad about not going school, demonstrating the importance of education for them.
- Many children who were out-of-school simply expressed a desire to return to school or to join other professions which may be considered less academic, such as sports and the arts.



2. Out of School Children

- CWD who are out-of-school face specific and complex barriers in accessing education.
- Poverty was a significant barrier for children who were out-of-school accessing education. Financial constraints included the costs of tuition fees for private and specialist tuition.
- Other factors reported by parents included:
 - a lack of support,
 - acceptance and understanding by teachers,
 - being refused enrolment,
 - peer discrimination and
 - barriers travelling to and from school.

The interaction of these barriers with impairment, led to children being ‘pushed out’ of school as opposed to ‘dropping out’



3. Parents Attitudes

- Most parents interviewed had positive attitudes towards their children's education.
- Parents saw education as a means for their children to gain independence, find employment and overcome stigma.
- The parents of out-of-school children had more modest and less academic expectations of their children compared to parents whose children were at school.



3. Parents Attitudes (Cont.)

- Parents of out-of-school children expected their children to learn basic literacy and numeracy, life and vocational skills.
- More positive behaviours included proactively supporting their children's education and resilience in the face of difficulties.
- Parents tended to have more positive attitudes towards education for children who had exceeded their own level of education and/ or towards children who had had some form of schooling, either in regular or special schools.



3. Parents Attitudes (Cont.)

- In terms of disability, many parents could not clearly describe the causes of their child's impairment. Parents who had never been to hospital or had a medical diagnosis were more likely to believe that causes of the impairment related to 'fate' or 'karma', physical illness and/or unsuccessful medical interventions.
- Parents with more positive behaviours had pro-actively sought medical assistance.
- Parents who reported that they preferred special education for their children stated that this was because of barriers in regular schools such as discrimination, limited support and schools not accepting their children.
- Benefits of regular schools reported by parents included support from other children, social inclusion, schools being close to their communities, continuity in education and affordability.



Parents Attitudes (Cont.)

- Feelings of shame were sometimes experienced by parents of children who had experienced discrimination.
- Parents with more negative attitudes sometimes blamed the child for their situation and often had had limited medical interventions or a diagnosis.
- Negative feelings towards disability were associated with behaviours such as delays in sending children to school as well as not sending children to school.
- Parents were more likely to express negative attitudes towards children who were older, female and had certain types of impairment such as intellectual and sensory impairments as well as CP.
- Furthermore parents with more negative attitudes were also more likely to be facing financial problems and to have children who had less positive experiences of formal education services and had faced discrimination



4. Enrolment

- We found evidence that enrolment of children with disabilities in regular schools is dependent on the discretion of individual principals
- Evidence of children with disabilities being denied enrolment.
- Principals highlighted the lack of guidance from national level about the enrolment of children with disabilities in regular schools.





5. Assessment of Disability

- Whereas the special schools and international private school involved in the study do conduct assessments of disability for students at enrolment, there was no such formal assessment in regular schools.
- Regular schools mostly relied on parents for information about their child's disability.
- However there was also evidence of teachers and principals in some regular schools identifying children's needs through observation and their experience of teaching the children.
- In some regular schools we found evidence of children's needs, particularly related to nonvisible impairments, not being identified or responded to



6. Curriculum and Exams

- The current centralized nature of the curriculum and examination system did not allow schools to readily make modifications based on student needs.
- This presented difficulties particularly as children progressed towards the national examinations and matriculation.
- This may provide some insights into the root causes of the low retention of children with disabilities in education as well as the reduced likelihood of children with disabilities passing matriculation.
- The research found some evidence of adaptations made by teachers in regular schools in relation to exams, such as giving extra time. However overall the evidence suggests that there were only very limited adaptations.



6. Curriculum and Exams (Cont.)

- Teachers reported that excessive national curriculum content was a key barrier.
- Teachers indicated that they had limited time, which led to the provision of less individual support for students especially in higher grades.
- Furthermore the barriers faced by children with disabilities were often specific to their needs. For example:
 - hearing impaired students faced difficulties related to spoken and written language making subjects like Myanmar language difficult, whereas
 - some students with physical impairments faced barriers in writing exams.



7. Teaching Practices & Resources

- Modification to teaching practices and learning materials is an important aspect of inclusive education (UNESCO 2005).
- However, in Myanmar while teachers in special schools are trained as part of their pre-service training in teaching methods for children with disabilities, teachers in regular schools are not.





7. Teaching Practices & Resources (Cont.)

- This research found evidence of good practice in terms of modifications to teaching practices in more well-resourced and specialist learning environments, namely the international private school and special schools.
- Methods included student-centred methods, use of creative methods, being accommodating to students' behaviours, accessing training and utilizing additional resources to aid teaching such as support teachers and peers in the class.



7. Teaching Practices & Resources (Cont.)

- In the regular schools, there was some evidence of adaptations to teaching practices such as assigning peers as scribes and providing individual support to students especially in lower grades. However overall we found little evidence of such adaptations.
- In the regular schools we generally observed whole-class teacher-centred teaching and memorization as opposed to student-centred methods.
- There was a lack of awareness among teachers on how to adapt teaching methods in response to students' individual needs and a lack of training on appropriate teaching methods.
- Limited time and high teacher-student ratios also contributed to less inclusive learning environments.



8. Environment in & around school

- Common barriers identified around schools included:
 - the inaccessibility of roads to schools, particularly during the rainy season;
 - obstacles such as dangerous and unsupervised road crossings;
 - lack of accessible modes of transport and/or assistive devices such as wheelchairs.
- Barriers within the school included:
 - difficulties in moving around the classroom and problems in the use of toilets by children with mobility difficulties and
 - use of equipment such as whiteboards which caused difficulties for children with visual impairments.

8. Environment in & around school (Cont.)

- Our observations in regular schools further confirmed that there had been limited adaptations to the school environment for children with disabilities.
- The research found no evidence of support from government to assist regular schools make adaptations to school premises or by providing assistive devices.
- However there was evidence of such assistance from NGOs in some schools.





8. Environment in & around school (Cont.)

- Parents, teachers and peers all took on valuable roles as care-givers, supporting children to overcome such barriers.
- However this presented secondary problems within families due to the additional time needed to take on extra caring responsibilities.
- Strategies such as parents and teachers manually carrying and lifting the children posed more difficulties when supporting older children.
- Lack of access to assistive devices to assist mobility reduced the independence of children in schools and at times led to their exclusion.
- This evidence may explain some of the difficulties in retaining children with disabilities in education as they grew older.



9. Social Inclusion

- A supportive social network around children with disabilities including peers, teachers, parents and siblings was an important factor in enabling children with disabilities to participate in education.
- Evidence of friendships as well as caring relationships between children with disabilities and their peers at school.
- There was also evidence of bullying and discrimination.
- Parents, teachers and principals played an important role in addressing these situations.

Evidence that children with physical and visual impairments are affected by barriers related to physical accessibility, not only within the school site itself, but also in the environment surrounding the school.



9. Social Inclusion (Cont.)

- We found that some teachers and principals sought to enable children's social inclusion in the school.
- However there were also instances where children were excluded from social activities by teachers as a result of protective attitudes and notions of the children's vulnerability.
- At the same time, we also found positive evidence of resistance where children with disabilities found ways in which they could participate, despite the adverse circumstances.
- Based on interviews with teachers in the private international school, we found that children with diverse needs learning together enhanced acceptance, understanding and social inclusion over time.



Recommendations

1. Legal and policy framework (4 facts)
 2. Poverty and education of children with disabilities (1 fact)
 3. Parent education and services (2 facts)
 4. School enrolment (3 facts)
 5. Assessment of disability (4 facts)
 6. Curriculum and exams (3 facts)
 7. Teaching practices and resources (5 facts)
 8. Environment in and around the school (2 facts)
 9. Social inclusion (3 facts)
 10. Further research (2 facts)
- (Total – 29 facts recommend)



Milestones of National Education Law in Myanmar

- Current Myanmar government start by forming related committees for the starting processes of Myanmar 'National Education Law (NEL)'
- The first 'National Education Law' was approved on 30 September 2014 by president.
- Universities students strike and demand to amend the law in mid January, 2015
- Start four parties dialogue in first 1 February 2015
- Amendment National Education Law was approved on 22nd June 2015 by the president
- Processing for further sector laws



Research as an important document for Advocacy

- In August 2014 ECDC organize the first advocacy workshop with 45 MPs from various political parties at Naypyitaw
- Second advocacy event was conducted at Naypyitaw again through collaboration with other DPOs and was funded by 'Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC)' on 25th September 2014 and more than 35 MPs are attended the events.
- During four parties dialogue we involve as a member NNER, which is one of the four parties and can make input to add and change some articles related to 'Rights to Education' for all marginalize children including children with disabilities.



Compare two, previous and later, National Education Laws

<i>NEL (30 September, 2014)</i>	<i>ANEL (22nd June, 2015)</i>
Definition – Wrong definition of ‘Special Education (SE)’ and no definition of (IE),	Definition – Wrong definition of ‘Special Education (SE)’, clear definition of IE,
Objective – Ability oriented	Objective – Right to education was mention
Policy – Focus / encourage to establish ‘Special schools’, segregate education	Policy – Focus / encourage to promote mainstream education, inclusive education
Body - Didn’t mention about – training special education teacher, forming related special education curriculum, providing reasonable accommodation, etc.	Body - Clearly mention about - the pre- and in-service training of special education teacher, forming related curriculum, providing reasonable accommodation, etc.
The law protects teacher who discriminate children with disabilities (CwDs)	The Law protects right to education of all children, especially CwDs.



Thank



You

