



ARCMUN

Aristotelio College Model United Nations

**United Nations International Children's Emergency
Fund
(UNICEF)**

**Guaranteeing equal access to education for children with
disabilities in developing regions**

Study Guide

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1. Welcoming Letter

Dear Delegates,

We are honestly pleased to welcome you all to Aristotelio College Model United Nations 2019 and, specifically, to the UNICEF Committee. Without any further ado, we would like to congratulate each and every one of you for taking part into this year's edition of ArcMUN and promise that we will do anything within our powers to facilitate you throughout the conference in order to have an unforgettable experience.

The Study Guide that you are holding in your hands aims at helping you gain a better insight into the topic of the Committee and offers you a starting point for your research. Nevertheless, it is highly advised to conduct a thorough examination on your country's position concerning the matter discussed and elaborate on your key national policies within the context of the position paper you will be requested to deliver before the conference. We thank you in advance for your in-depth understanding and cooperation and we are looking forward to meeting you in person!

Best Regards,
Theodora Bekiari, Chair,
Elena Keperti, Co-chair,
Emmanouela Pagoni, Co-chair.

2. Introduction to the Committee

United Nations International Children's Fund, also known as UNICEF was established by the United Nations General Assembly in the aftermath of the Second World War, in 1946. The initial objective of this body was to provide support and relief to children living in countries devastated by war. Along with the development progress, UNICEF has shifted its mandate to not only provide assistance and help for children living in countries devastated by war, but also to ensure that the rights of all children are fulfilled. The committee has contributed significantly in promoting the Convention on the Rights of the Children that now has become one of the most ratified conventions in the world. Last but not least, UNICEF is also widely known by its development programs.

UNICEF is present in 190 countries and territories to save children's lives, to defend their rights, and to help them fulfill their potential, from early childhood through adolescence. According to UNICEF every child has the right to grow up in a safe and inclusive environment. Areas that UNICEF deals with are: Adolescent development, Children uprooted, Communication for development, Gender equality, Child protection, Children with disabilities, Environment and Climate change, and Social Inclusion.

It upholds the rights of children with disabilities across Europe and Central Asia, from promoting their best possible care to supporting their education and participation. It supports services to families with young children to identify and respond to any disabilities at an early age, giving children a chance to reach their potential and keeping families together. Home-visiting programs

– an approach that spans child protection, health, nutrition and early childhood development – give families support and connect them to specialized services.

UNICEF aims to make schools inclusive and child-focused, recognizing that the obstacles to learning and participation are not the ‘fault’ of a child’s impairment, but rather the capacity of schools to remove those obstacles. It tackles the discrimination that keeps children with disabilities isolated, supporting training to change mind-sets and develop skills among medical staff, teachers, psychologists, occupational therapists and social workers, and working to change public attitudes towards disability.

3. Introduction to the Topic

Concerning the issue of Children with disabilities, UNICEF Tries to lift the barriers that keep children isolated, make sure that they stay with their families, have good education and participate in community life.

In many parts of the developing world, children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to stigma and discrimination, and are often segregated. They do not appear in national statistics, they are ‘invisible’ to decision makers, service providers and the public. Their rights are often violated: this can be done through the lack of early detection or diagnosis of their disabilities, or via their exclusion from education and participation in their communities. The violations of their rights are often severe: worldwide, up to 68% of girls and 30% of boys with intellectual or developmental disabilities will be sexually abused before their 18 birthday¹.

People tend to ‘fix’ children with disabilities instead of trying to change their attitudes towards them. They take a “medical” point of view, trying to correct “defects”, instead of accepting them and providing support to help them reach their potential.

Furthermore, certain areas do not have the appropriate services that could recognize or diagnose child disability at younger ages. This may lead to lack of appropriate support for families. As a result, children may end up in institutions, since this is considered a better solution for the child’s welfare. Worldwide, children with disabilities are up to 17 times more likely to live in institutions than other children².

It is estimated that across Europe and Central Asia, millions of children are out of school. They are put in the so called “special schools” and are excluded from typical education³. Certain teachers still refuse to teach children with disabilities, while many parents often claim that their children will not be sufficiently educated if there are children with disabilities in the same class as theirs.

¹ Unicef.org. (n.d.). *Children with disabilities*. [online] Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/eca/children-disabilities> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2019].

² i.d at 1**

³ Unicef.org. (2016). *Rapid Review on Inclusion and Gender Equality*. [online] Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/eca/reports/rapid-review-inclusion-and-gender-equality> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2019].

Moreover, the means of transport and the buildings may not be designed having people with disabilities in mind. Thus, children with disabilities are excluded from social life and participation in community life due to lack of accessibility. Their own families may not feel inclined to advocate for their children's' rights, as stigma may prevent them from asking for information or help. Families may struggle to balance earning a living with caring for a child with disabilities, consequently increasing the risk of institutionalization for the child.

4. Definition of Key Terms

Education⁴

Education is the process of facilitating the acquisition and the imparting of knowledge (general or particular as for a profession) through; experiencing life lessons that provide an understanding of a phenomenon or years of schooling that incorporates studies of a variety of subjects commonly through; instruction from an individual or composed bibliography. It is, also, the formation of skills, values, beliefs and habits; the development of reasoning and judgment or generally, of one self or others' preparation intellectually for mature life.

Child

A child is a minor, a human being below the legal age of majority (legally), especially between the stages of birth and puberty (biologically), who is not yet an adult⁵.

Disability

Disability is conceptualized as a condition or function judged to be significantly impaired relative to the usual standard of an individual or group, covering impairments that may be cognitive, developmental, mental, intellectual, physical, sensory, or some combination of these⁶. Other relevant deteriorations can be activity limitations, and participation restrictions, that impair, interfere with, or limit a person's ability to engage in tasks or actions or participation in typical daily activities and interactions in areas of life, and may be present from birth or occur during a person's lifetime⁷.

Developing region

For analytical purposes, WESP⁸ (World Economic Situation and Prospects) classifies all countries of the world into one of three broad categories: developed economies, economies in

⁴ www.dictionary.com. (n.d.). *the definition of education*. [online] Available at: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/education> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2019].

⁵ Merriam-webster.com. (n.d.). *Definition of CHILD*. [online] Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/child> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2019].

⁶ Dictionary, D. (n.d.). *DISABILITY | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary*. [online] Dictionary.cambridge.org. Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/disability> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2019].

⁷ World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Disabilities*. [online] Available at: <https://www.who.int/topics/disabilities/en/> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2019].

⁸ Un.org. (2018). [online] Available at: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wesp/wesp_current/2014wesp_country_classification.pdf [Accessed 25 Dec. 2018].

transition and developing economies. At the same time, the HDI⁹ (Human Development Index) was created to emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone. As a result of that, a developing country (or a low- and middle-income country (LMIC), less developed country, less economically developed country (LEDC), underdeveloped country or Third World country) is a country with a less developed industrial base and a low Human Development Index relative to other countries, where the average income is much lower than in industrial nations¹⁰. However, this definition is not universally agreed upon and there is also no clear agreement on which countries fit this category¹¹.

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Table C
Developing economies by region^a

Africa		Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean
North Africa	Southern Africa	East Asia	Caribbean
Algeria	Angola	Brunel Darussalam	Barbados
Egypt	Botswana	China	Cuba
Libya ^b	Lesotho	Hong Kong SAR ^c	Dominican Republic
Mauritania	Malawi	Indonesia	Guyana
Morocco	Mauritius	Malaysia	Haiti
Sudan	Mozambique	Myanmar	Jamaica
Tunisia	Namibia	Papua New Guinea	Trinidad and Tobago
Central Africa	South Africa	Philippines	Mexico and Central America
Cameroon	Zambia	Republic of Korea	Costa Rica
Zimbabwe	Singapore	Taiwan Province of China	El Salvador
Central African Republic	West Africa	Thailand	Guatemala
Chad	Benin	Viet Nam	Honduras
Congo	Burkina Faso	South Asia	Mexico
Equatorial Guinea	Cabo Verde	Bangladesh	Nicaragua
Gabon	Côte d'Ivoire	India	Panama
Sao Tome and Principe	Gambia	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	South America
East Africa	Ghana	Nepal	Argentina
Burundi	Guinea	Pakistan	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
Comoros	Guinea-Bissau	Sri Lanka	Brazil
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Liberia	Western Asia	Chile
Djibouti	Mali	Bahrain	Colombia
Eritrea	Niger	Iraq	Ecuador
Ethiopia	Nigeria	Israel	Paraguay
Kenya	Senegal	Jordan	Peru
Madagascar	Sierra Leone	Kuwait	Uruguay
Rwanda	Togo	Lebanon	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
Somalia	Uganda	Oman	
Uganda	United Republic of Tanzania	Qatar	
		Saudi Arabia	
		Syrian Arab Republic	
		Turkey	
		United Arab Emirates	
		Yemen	

^a Economies systematically monitored by the Global Economic Monitoring Unit of DPAD.
^b The name of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was officially changed to Libya on 16 September 2011.
^c Special Administrative Region of China.

Developing regions

Arab States (20 countries or territories):

Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, State of Palestine, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

East Asia and the Pacific (24 countries):

Cambodia, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Mongolia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Viet Nam

Europe and Central Asia (17 countries):

Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

Latin America and the Caribbean (33 countries):

Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

South Asia (9 countries):

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

Sub-Saharan Africa (46 countries):

Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tomé and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Eswatini (Kingdom of), United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

⁹ Hdr.undp.org. (2019). *Human Development Index (HDI) | Human Development Reports*. [online] Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

¹⁰ O'Sullivan A, Sheffrin SM (2003). *Economics: Principles in Action*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458: Pearson Prentice Hall. p. 471. ISBN 978-0-13-063085-8.

¹¹ "[Composition of macro geographical \(continental\) region](#)". United Nations. Archived from [the original](#) on 6 March 2010.

¹² **i.d at 8

¹³ Hdr.undp.org. (2019). *Developing regions | Human Development Reports*. [online] Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/developing-regions> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

5. History of the Topic

5.1 History of Education Accessibility

The League of Nations was created in 1920 and the United Nations in 1945, being its successor. Until then, and even before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, children with disabilities usually did not have access to education.

Before 1900

The topic goes back to the Ancient Greece and Rome, two eras that, although they are well-known for their contribution to philosophy, literature, and medicine, were not the best of times for individuals with disabilities. Aristotle, one of the greatest philosophers, believed, as did most others in Ancient Greece, that there should be a law "to prevent the rearing of deformed children"¹⁴. Children who were blind, deaf, or mentally handicapped were publicly persecuted and reported to have been killed by their parents. Even in the period of the "The Renaissance", that resurrected the idea of the perfect body based on Classical Greek and Roman ideals, access to education was limited primary to aristocrats and only rich people could afford to be educated.¹⁵ This means that disabled people that had the financial means were generally educated, while those who were poor and disabled did not have the opportunity to do so.

First and Second World Wars

The two world wars that occurred in the previous century resulted in an even greater number of disabled children and destroyed the majority of the means in order for them to go to school. Almost all children with disabilities that lived during World War I and World War II did not have access to some form of formal education¹⁶. Due to the racist character of World War II, disabled children were denied their most basic rights and not only did they not have access to education, but were also subject to cruel and inhuman behaviour¹⁷. However, many people strongly believe that both world wars have contributed to the transformation of the public opinion towards disability and have also led to the realisation that disabled children should have the same rights as their non-disabled peers¹⁸.

Postmodernity

In recent years, children with disabilities enjoy more educational opportunities than ever, even when they grow up in developing regions. Given the fact that education is considered to be one of the most effective ways to break the cycle of discrimination and poverty that children with disabilities often face¹⁹, enormous progress has been made. The Universal Declaration of Human

¹⁴ Aristotle. and Rackham, H. (1944). *Politics*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

¹⁵ The Great Courses Daily. (2018). *The Italian Renaissance - The Education and Learning During the Renaissance*. [online] Available at: <https://www.thegreatcoursesdaily.com/education-in-the-renaissance/> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

¹⁶ Wheatcroft, S. (2013). *Worth saving*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

¹⁷ Encyclopedia.ushmm.org. (2018). *The Murder of the Handicapped*. [online] Available at: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-murder-of-the-handicapped> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

¹⁸ News.bbc.co.uk. (2018). *BBC News | Health | War transformed attitudes to disability*. [online] Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/353682.stm> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

¹⁹ Globalpartnership.org. (2018). *Children with disabilities*. [online] Available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/focus-areas/children-with-disabilities> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

Rights²⁰, adopted in 1948, states that “*everyone has the right to education*”; a right that was previously not recognised from the international community as a fundamental human right. Unfortunately, severe problems regarding the issue remain intact. Thus, the world should realise that, even though the problem has not changed, attitudes towards it are significantly different.

5.2. Actions that have already been taken

World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons

The year 1981 was named the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) by the United Nations, in a try for progress to be made worldwide in order for the rights of disabled people to be recognised and respected²¹. A major outcome of this year was the formulation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 3 December 1982, by Resolution 37/52²².

The World Programme of Action (WPA) is a strategy in an international level, aiming to enhance equalization of opportunities, disability prevention and rehabilitation. It pertains to full participation of persons with disabilities in national development and in social life. In addition to this, the WPA emphasizes on the need to approach disability from a human rights perspective.

Its three chapters provide a concrete analysis of definitions, concepts and principles relating to disabilities; an overview of the world situation related to the issue; and set out recommendations in national, regional and international levels.²³

“Equalization of opportunities” is a central theme of the WPA and its guiding philosophy for the achievement of full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of social and economic life. One of the most important principles underlying this theme is that issues concerning persons with disabilities should not be treated in isolation, but within the context of normal community services.

Millennium Development Goals (MDG 2)

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) met its deadline in 2015 and before this year great progress had been achieved. There are three dimensions compiled within MDGs; social, economy and environment, in line with human rights as its basic principle. The main objective of the MDGs is to promote sustainable development by eradicating poverty.²⁴

Specifically, goal number 2 was to achieve Universal Primary Education for all children, regardless of any disabilities they may have or the country they live in. The aforementioned goal

²⁰ Un.org. (2018). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

²¹ Un.org. (2019). *The International Year of Disabled Persons 1981 | United Nations Enable*. [online] Available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/the-international-year-of-disabled-persons-1981.html> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

²² Un.org. (2018). *A/RES/37/52. World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/37/a37r052.htm> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

²³ Un.org. (2019). *World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons | United Nations Enable*. [online] Available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/world-programme-of-action-concerning-disabled-persons.html> [Accessed 19 Dec. 2018].

²⁴ Un.org. (n.d.). *United Nations Millennium Development Goals*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

was partially met, as enrollment in primary school in developing regions has reached 90 percent.²⁵ However, aggregated analysis from 51 countries found a 10 percentage point gap in primary completion rates between people with and without disability, a likely underestimate given the undercounting of people with disabilities.²⁶

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was unanimously adopted by United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At the Agenda's heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership.²⁷

One of the SDG targets, namely target 4.5, is that, by 2030, gender disparities in education will be eliminated and equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations will be achieved.²⁸

Unfortunately, according to the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018 of the UN Secretary General²⁹, the lowest participation rates in early childhood and primary education are found in sub-Saharan Africa (41 per cent) and Northern Africa and Western Asia (52 per cent), which means that disabled children in those developing regions are often not educated properly.

6. Legal Framework

The idea of a legal framework to surround the issue of access to education for children with disabilities quickly started to spread and created the need of immediate measures that needed to be taken in order for the issue to be resolved.

6.1 Framework Regarding Disability

The rights of disabled people are recognised by a number of United Nations documents, such as, but not limited to:

- The *Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons (1971)*³⁰, providing that the mentally retarded person has a right to such education and training, as will enable him or her to develop their ability and maximum potential.

²⁵ UNDP. (2018). *Millennium Development Goal 2*. [online] Available at: http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sdgooverview/mdg_goals/mdg2/ [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

²⁶ En.unesco.org.(2018).[online]Available at: https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/gem-report/files/GAW2014-Facts-Figures-gmr_0.pdf.pdf [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

²⁷ Sustainabledevelopment.un.org. (2018). *SDGs .. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*. [online] Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

²⁸ Sustainabledevelopment.un.org. (2018). *SDGs .. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*. [online] Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

²⁹ Division, U. (2018). — *SDG Indicators*. [online] Unstats.un.org. Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2018> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

³⁰ Assembly, U. (2018). *A/RES/26/2856 - Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons - UN Documents: Gathering a body of global agreements*. [online] Un-documents.net. Available at: <http://www.un-documents.net/a26r2856.htm> [Accessed 19 Dec. 2018].

- The *Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975)*³¹, stating, among others that people with disabilities shall enjoy equal rights without any exception whatsoever and without distinction or discrimination on the basis of national or social origin and state of wealth.
- The *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)*³² that has been signed and ratified by the United Nations member states and reaffirms that all disabled persons must enjoy every human right and fundamental freedom.

6.2 Framework Regarding Education Accessibility

A great number of treaties, conventions and protocols on the right to education have been published in recent years, with many of them applying to the education of disabled children in developing regions as well. These include:

- The *Declaration on the Rights of the Child (1959)*³³, clearly stating that the child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, with no discrimination of any kind.
- The *Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)*³⁴, the most widely and rapidly ratified international human rights treaty in history, recognising specific rights for minors.
- The Resolution *A/RES/70/209 (2015)*³⁵ of the United Nations, calling upon the international community to provide equitable quality education at all levels.

7. Discussion on the Topic

7.1 Effects on the society

Changing attitudes

One way of changing attitudes is to find ways to fight ignorance and make children with disabilities “visible”, by bringing disability into political and social discourse. In this way decision makers and service providers will be sensitized and the public will become aware that disability is part of the human condition.

Fighting discrimination

A challenge that children with disabilities and their parents have to face is discrimination. Discrimination is found in many aspects of everyday life: from people in services such as health,

³¹ Assembly, U. (2018). *A/RES/30/3447 - Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons - UN Documents: Gathering a body of global agreements*. [online] Un-documents.net. Available at: <http://www.un-documents.net/a30r3447.htm> [Accessed 19 Dec. 2018].

³² Un.org. (n.d.). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) | United Nations Enable*. [online] Available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html> [Accessed 19 Dec. 2018].

³³ Unicef.org. (2018). [online] Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/malaysia/1959-Declaration-of-the-Rights-of-the-Child.pdf> [Accessed 19 Dec. 2018].

³⁴ Treaties.un.org. (n.d.). *UNTC*. [online] Available at: https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en [Accessed 19 Dec. 2018].

³⁵ Undocs.org. (2018). *A/RES/70/209 - E*. [online] Available at: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/209> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

education and protection, to laws who claim to protect equal rights, to general public who lacks awareness regarding children with disabilities and their needs of rights. International agencies and their government and community partners can help lift prejudice by informing their officials and public servants, make them realise the rights, capabilities and talents of children with disabilities. Parents organizations can help make children's rights acknowledged so as for the children to be valued and cherished.

7.2. Effects on children

Supporting children and families

A review of 14 developing countries found that people with disabilities are more likely to be poor than those without disabilities. In addition, they are more likely to have less education, worse jobs, poorer living conditions and health. What makes the situation worse, is the higher costs for medical care that families with children with disabilities have to cover. Healthcare costs further reduce the family income and worsen the household's standard of living.³⁶

Governments should adjust their programs and make additions to their budget to aid children with disabilities: adjustments could be done in the fields of education, health care and recreation, in a way to reserve funds for children and people with disabilities.

Inclusive education

Children with disabilities are denied in a large part their right to education and this undermines their ability to enjoy the full rights of citizenship or take up valued roles in society.

Household survey data from 13 low-and-middle income countries depict that children with disabilities aging 6-17 years are more at risk of not going to school, than their fellow students with no disabilities³⁷. As long as a child with disability is deprived of its right to equal education countries and governments fail to fulfil their obligation for universal primary education.

Assistive technology for children

Technology can provide assistance for children with disabilities with services and products adapted or specially designed to improve their lives. This kind of technology is called assistive technology and it represents the difference between deprivation and the enjoyment of rights in the life of children with disabilities³⁸.

Assistive technology products can be simple (a walking stick to aid mobility) or complex (a GPS navigation device for the vision-impaired). In order for the products to be effective, there should be assistive technology services like fitting the product to the child's needs, of providing maintenance and repair.

Assistive technology can provide the means of the children's development, improve their health and facilitate their participation in communication, mobility, self-care, household tasks, family relationships, education, recreation and leisure. It can even improve the quality of life of these

³⁶ Ft.dk. (2013). *URU, Alm.del - 2012-13 - Bilag 185: UNICEF's statusrapport: The State of the Worlds Children 2013*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20121/almadel/uru/bilag/185/1254953/index.htm> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2019].

³⁷ i.d at 36**

³⁸ Publications, A. (2018). *Assistive Technology Devices: New Products and Information*. [online] Disabled World. Available at: <https://www.disabled-world.com/assistivedevices/> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2019].

children and their families, considering the following example: if a boy or a girl cannot walk he/she might be confined to life indoors with no chance to attend school or accompany his/her family outside their home. When he/she gets a wheelchair, he/she can go to school, participate in activities out of school with his/her fellow pupils and claim equal participation in school life.

For many children, assistive technology can be the means to safeguard their rights and secure more enjoyable life. Assistive technology may enhance their participation to education, thus leading to better jobs, higher income, and thus, avoiding poverty in older life.

Community based rehabilitation³⁹

Governments may have laws and services to cater for people with disabilities. For a person with disability to be an equal member of a community, measures of rehabilitation should be taken in order for the persons with disabilities to be independent, achieve social integration and improve their quality of life.

When rehabilitation is done in the community, it means that people with disabilities have equal opportunities and all local forces (parents, services, families) take into consideration their fellow citizens' needs. Communities can reduce discriminations and prevent marginalization of people with disabilities, thus helping them live with dignity in their community.

8. Block positions

European Union

The EU human rights approach on disability issues supports the active inclusion and full participation of these people in society by addressing this issue as a matter of rights rather than of discretion. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is endorsed by the EU and is in line with the European Commission's Disability Strategy 2010-2020⁴⁰ adopted in 2010. Its objectives, among other things (accessibility, participation, equality, employment, social protection, health, external action) also include the priority area of education and training in which it promotes equal access to quality education for people with disabilities and lifelong learning. Some of the initiatives launched by the European Commission on the basis of this strategy are the European Special Needs and Inclusive Education and a special study group on disability and lifelong learning⁴¹.

United States of America

In the US, students with learning disabilities are guaranteed to be provided free education with personalized assistance through federal laws, two of which are:

³⁹ Nlep.nic.in. (n.d.). *Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR)*. [online] Available at: <http://nlep.nic.in/pdf/cbr.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3Ky3clQvF7iVTXN9fnG4d39jYz7NGOGpFbMxZnYD3WNPgKWTCpwf7ipIE> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2019].

⁴⁰ Ec.europa.eu. (2018). Persons with disabilities - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission. [online] Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1137> [Accessed 25 Dec. 2018].

⁴¹ **:i,d at 36

1. ***Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)***⁴²: In accordance with this law, the authorities are entitled to provide specific training to infants and children with disabilities.
2. ***Section 504***⁴³: The article 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act applicable to all public-school areas and in line with the US Department of Education (OCR), the Civil Rights Service, is a law on citizens' rights that prohibits all programs and activities, whether public or private, receiving federal funds from disability-based discrimination.

African Union

The African Union Commission (AUC), its Member States, civil society institutions as well as bilateral and multilateral donor organizations recognize the position that the provision of education is fundamental to the sustainable course of educational development for all people, especially for children and adults with disabilities.

This is reflected in the corresponding paper of this study as well as in the core education policies published by the African Union⁴⁴:

1. ***The Second Decade of Education for Africa 2006-2015***: Plan of Action (published 2006).
2. ***The Africa Union Outlook Report on Education 2014***: Continental Report (published 2014)

Central Asian Union

As far as the education of people with disabilities is concerned, governments in Central Asia have inherited the policy of separating the former Soviet Union, with the result that the quality and quantity of education has declined throughout Central Asia after independence, affecting children with disabilities⁴⁵. This policy now appears to have evolved into complete exclusion from educational processes. Appropriate government committees examine children at the age of 6 and, after making the diagnosis, decide whether the child should attend a regular school, a special boarding school or stay at home, leaving no room for choice to the parents⁴⁶. Thus, the medical model of political separation also applies to educational policy and practice.

⁴² Ldonline.org. (2018). How does the special education system work in the United States? | LD Topics | LD OnLine. [online] Available at: <http://www.ldonline.org/article/27971/> [Accessed 25 Dec. 2018].

⁴³ Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund. (n.d.). *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 - Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund*. [online] Available at: <https://dredf.org/legal-advocacy/laws/section-504-of-the-rehabilitation-act-of-1973/> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2019].

⁴⁴ Anon, (2018). [online] Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Nora_Groce/publication/320757243_Disability_Inclusion_in_African_Regional_Policies_Policy_review_findings_from_the_ESRCDFID_Bridging_the_Gap_disability_and_development_in_four_African_countries_project/links/59f9a924a6fdcc075ec9c9b2/Disability-Inclusion-in-African-Regional-Policies-Policy-review-findings-from-the-ESRC-DFID-Bridging-the-Gap-disability-and-development-in-four-African-countries-project.pdf [Accessed 25 Dec. 2018].

⁴⁵ Digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1333&context=gladnetcollect> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

⁴⁶ **i.d at 45

9. Questions to be addressed

1. The international community and specifically the UN have addressed the issue of universal access to education since its founding, in 1945. Why is it, though, that to this day the issue still exists and is a privilege that not all the humans around the world fully enjoy as their fundamental human right?
2. What are the main reasons why children with disabilities are not properly educated in countries that are under development?
3. Which may be the impacts of disabled children not attending school to their personal development?
4. How is society, both at a national and at an international level, affected by the fact that children in developing regions are often not educated?
5. Is the existing legal framework efficient or is it necessary to further enhance it in order to effectively address the issue?
6. Is the provision of adequate infrastructure for the proper education of disabled children (e.g. wheelchair accessible school buildings, braille books) a possible scenario in conflict-affected areas? In what form this assistance should be provided and by who?
7. In which ways can global awareness of the issue be raised?
8. How can governmental and non-governmental organizations cooperate in order to address the issue under discussion?
9. How can the cooperation between developed and developing countries be encouraged in order for them to exchange practices on the education of people with disabilities?

10. Conclusion

To conclude, it is true and evident that universal access to education is in general one of the most important goals humanity has set and should be achieved with the cooperation of each and every one of the member states of the United Nations. Sadly, a great number of children worldwide do not have the chance to attend primary school, let alone have access to higher education. It is indisputable that children with disabilities are in a way worse position in regards to this issue than young people who are not disabled. This unfortunate situation is even more noticeable in developing regions around the world, where the financial sources are limited, the frequent armed conflicts create colossal problems and stereotypes are continuously present. As such, it is more than necessary to point out that education is not a privilege to be enjoyed by a selected few, but a right to be exercised by everyone.

“Is there a child who does not dream of being counted and having her or his gifts and talents recognized? No. All children have hopes and dreams – including children with disabilities. And all children deserve a fair chance to make their dreams real.”⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Unicef.org. (2013). [online] Available at: https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_SOWC_2013.pdf [Accessed 19 Dec. 2018].

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