

Assessing National Action on Children with Disabilities



The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) commits nations to guaranteeing civil, political, social, and economic rights to children. This fact sheet series by the WORLD Policy Analysis Center examines the extent to which countries have enacted and passed laws and policies consistent with CRC commitments.

Background

- The CRC calls on States Parties to ensure equity for children with disabilities in Article 2 and emphasizes the responsibility to provide a ‘full and decent life’ with ‘dignity,’ ‘self-reliance,’ and ‘active participation in the community’ for children with disabilities in Article 23.
- Despite comprising one of the world's largest minority populations, children and adults with disabilities still face serious discrimination in all aspects of life. Children frequently lack access to any formal education, let alone a quality education.
- World Health Organization (WHO) data from 51 countries show that children with disabilities have significantly lower primary school completion rates (51% compared to 61% for boys and 42% compared to 53% for girls). Less than 33% of young females with disabilities in low-income countries complete primary school.
- Children with disabilities are less likely to be enrolled in school than their peers without disabilities and are less likely to successfully transition to higher education. These patterns are more pronounced in poorer countries and can differ according to disability.

Findings

Gaps in Fundamental Protections

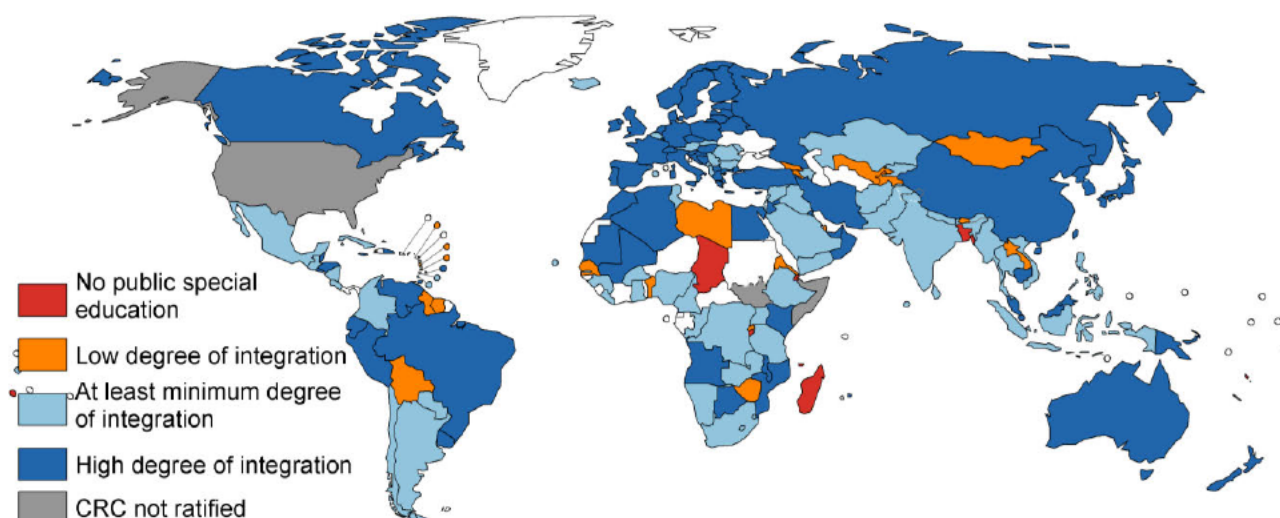
- As fundamental building blocks of a nation’s government and laws, constitutional guarantees provide a foundation for demanding greater equity in the delivery of and access to basic services, such as education.
- Only 22% of States Parties explicitly guarantee equity and non-discrimination based on disability in their constitutions. An additional 2% provide a guarantee, but allow for restrictions on this guarantee when persons with disabilities are not fully able to enjoy their rights. Guarantees are significantly higher based on gender (85%), race/ethnicity (76%), and religion (76%).
- Although protections remain uncommon, 41% of constitutions adopted after CRC ratification ensure equity and non-discrimination based on disability status, compared to only 12% adopted before CRC ratification.
- Only 17% of States Parties explicitly ensure equity in education for children with disabilities. Protections are significantly higher based on gender (63%), race/ethnicity (56%), and religion (57%).

Findings (Continued)

Gaps in National Laws and Policies

- Fewer than half of States Parties (43%) integrate children with disabilities in the same classrooms as other students; an additional 40% integrate them within the same schools.
- 12% of States Parties do not include children with and without disabilities in the same schools, and 5% provide no public special education at all.
- Children with disabilities in low-income States Parties are especially disadvantaged, as over a third of low-income countries (36%) either provide special education in separate schools or do not provide it at all.

Map: Is inclusive education available for children with disabilities?



Source: WORLD Policy Analysis Center, Education Database, 2014

Table: Availability of inclusive education for children with disabilities by income group

Level of Integration for Children With Disabilities	Low-income Countries	Middle-income Countries	High-income Countries	Total Countries
No special education for children with disabilities provided within the public school system	5 (18%)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)	8 (5%)
Children with disabilities attend separate schools within the public system	5 (18%)	13 (15%)	2 (4%)	20 (12%)
Children with disabilities may attend the same schools as their peers but are not necessarily taught within the same classrooms	12 (43%)	43 (51%)	9 (18%)	64 (40%)
Children with disabilities are able to be taught within the same classrooms as their peers	6 (21%)	26 (31%)	38 (78%)	70 (43%)

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