Concept note for the
2020 Global Education Monitoring Report
on inclusion

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Background

The *Global Education Monitoring Report* (GEM Report) is an editorially independent, authoritative and evidence-based annual report, produced by the GEM Report team at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The Report monitors progress towards education targets in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations member states in September 2015. Its mandate is drawn from the World Education Forum and the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which requested it to be the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on:

■ SDG 4 (the global education goal) and education in the other SDGs;

■ The implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all partners to account for their commitments, as part of SDG follow-up and review mechanisms.

Accordingly, the GEM Report contains a monitoring part, which primarily reports on progress made on each of the 10 SDG 4 targets, and a thematic part, which focuses on a topic that is key for the achievement of SDG 4, decided upon by the report's international Advisory Board. Following reports on education and the other SDGs (2016), accountability (2017/8) and migration and displacement (2019), the theme of the 2020 GEM Report is inclusion.

Echoing the leading principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to 'leave no one behind', SDG 4 aims to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. As well as featuring in the formulation of the goal, the concept of inclusion appears in other targets, notably in target 4.5, which aims to eliminate 'gender disparities in education and ensure access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable' and in target 4.a, which aims to provide 'safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all'.

This concept note introduces the 2020 GEM Report theme of inclusion. It is a working document, intended to provide a basis for consultation, stimulate discussion and elicit feedback from the report's multiple stakeholders. After briefly discussing the evolution of the concept of inclusion in education, it introduces the Report's definition of inclusive education, proposes a framework for the Report surrounding key elements of inclusion, and raises some of the issues involved in measurement.[1]

THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Concern with inclusive education is relatively recent. Terminologies and approaches have shifted over time. In the 1960s, countries were considering the idea that children with disabilities should be segregated from their peers and health professionals should be primarily responsible for their education. But in the 1970s, a number of countries started to challenge the medical approach for children with special needs and moved towards including them in education systems as a human right. Italy, for example, was ahead of its time: its 1971 law on school integration granted all children with disabilities the right to be educated in mainstream classes, apart from children with the most complex needs, and another law in 1977 mandated that primary and secondary schools adopt the principle of inclusion. Other countries began to place children with disabilities in special schools or in regular schools, if not in the same class as children without disabilities.

In the years that followed, a gradual shift began, away from an official language steeped in references to 'deficits' and 'handicaps'. The 1994 Salamanca Statement, signed by 92 countries, proved a watershed for the global agenda. It accelerated the movement towards inclusive education by expanding the approach from only children with special needs to children from all backgrounds, concluding that 'every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs' and 'a fundamental right to education' and so 'must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain and acceptable level of learning' in regular schools, with additional support in the context of the regular curriculum.

These principles were upheld by the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, which emphasized Education for All as an 'inclusive concept', which 'must take account of the needs of the poor and the most disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health; and those with special learning needs'.

While the principle of non-discrimination in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantee the right to education for all, the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) further specified the right to education for persons with disabilities 'without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity' to 'ensure an inclusive education system at all levels' (§24).

DEFINING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR THE 2020 GEM REPORT

The global dialogue on inclusive education has changed over time. Originally, the concept was understood as narrowly focusing on students with disabilities and was supported by a belief in expert knowledge, whereby specialists would teach students in separate classes. More recently, inclusive education has taken on a broader meaning, encompassing all learners and focusing on policies that make some groups vulnerable to exclusion from education. Educational exclusion reflects structural inequalities. In that sense, exclusion is a universal phenomenon, even if its various forms are context-specific and vary by country.[2]

The Report takes as its starting point general comment 4 of the CRPD Committee in 2016, which specified that inclusive education 'focuses on the full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance and achievement of all students, especially those who, for different reasons, are excluded or at risk of being marginalized'. Inclusive education is a process, not an endpoint.

Inclusive education has been described in its essence as a statement of political aspiration, an essential ingredient in the creation of inclusive societies, and a commitment to a democratic framework for action. It is both a call for democratic education and an education in democracy. It addresses key questions about the kind of world in which

we want our children to live and the role of education in building that world. Accordingly, inclusive education is not restricted to questions about where education takes place (for example, in segregated special schools or regular schools), but also involves a range of *elements* that form educational experiences and outcomes. These elements can include the content of education and learning materials, teaching and teacher preparation, infrastructure and learning environment, community norms, and the availability of space for dialogue and criticism involving all stakeholders. As an example, education cannot be considered inclusive if textbooks promote one ethnic group above others and contain discriminatory content. Inclusive education comes out of a vision of the world based on equity, justice and fairness.

Although shared agreement is emerging on this broader understanding of inclusive education, consensus in the field is not firmly established. Two examples highlight the continuing divergences. First, inclusive education has been criticized as lacking a tight conceptual focus. Some argue that expanding the concept to cover all learners is going too far, making the discussion too vague, which at times has set the inclusive education community against the disability community and has led to the re-emergence of special interest groups advocating for students with disabilities and other specific groups of children. In some countries, the term 'inclusion' is used only to apply to the education of people with disabilities. Differences in interpretation can lead to differences in implementation. The 2020 GEM Report will take the view that the mechanisms of exclusion are common regardless of group and will cover all mechanisms that expose children, youth and adults to exclusion risks, while maintaining a special focus on people with disabilities, a group which has received less coverage in past reports.

Second, while the goal of removing barriers for the education of all children has nearly universal support, national policies and local practice differ across regions and countries. Some argue that the broader view, focused on all students and ensuring that students with disabilities are included in mainstream classes, assumes the availability of adequate resources, which may not be true in poor countries. In other countries with a history of separate schools, the transition may be difficult to make swiftly. Inclusion requires the system to change to suit the child – but this is rarely done, partly because of resource constraints, partly because of mindset, and partly due to a different understanding of the concept. Instead, most countries adopt some form of integration where the child must adapt to the system into which

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2   Partly for this reason, a special regional edition of the 2020 GEM Report will focus on Latin America and the context-specific dynamics of exclusion that operate in this region.

Global Education Monitoring Report

they are placed. In accordance with general comment 4 of the CRPD committee, the 2020 GEM Report will recognize the different contexts and challenges facing countries in providing inclusive education and will adjust its recommendations accordingly.

It is helpful to consider different arenas, dimensions, degrees and elements of inclusion:

- *Arenas* of inclusion include the different communities with which a student interacts, whether in interpersonal relationships, informal groups or formal communities, such as classrooms, schools and community centres.

- Within each arena, individuals can be included or excluded across different *dimensions*:
  - physical;
  - social, since, within a group, not everyone may be heard or encouraged to participate;
  - psychological, since, regardless of the external environment, individuals may perceive themselves as included or excluded;
  - systematic, since, for example, requirements may exist that exclude the poor (such as fees) or migrants and refugees (such as documentation).

- The *degree* of inclusion felt by an individual can also vary, and, as individuals interact in multiple arenas on a regular basis, it is not uncommon to simultaneously feel included in some and excluded in others.

- Finally, *elements* of inclusion, such as national legal frameworks and education policies, governance and finance, curricula and learning materials, facilities and infrastructure, and involvement of communities, are necessary ingredients for inclusive education and represent the suggested framework for this report.

ELEMENTS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The 2020 GEM Report will examine the role of the different elements of education systems that can support inclusion, including laws and policies, governance and finance, school curricula, personnel, and infrastructure, and community norms, beliefs, and expectations. The Report will consider how these elements contribute to system-level and local inclusion of learners who are vulnerable to exclusion. It will also consider barriers faced by learners with overlapping characteristics that make them particularly vulnerable to exclusion, such as poor girls with disabilities. The analysis

will be based on geographically balanced evidence, and will pay special attention to contexts where disadvantaged children might be particularly at risk of exclusion from education, such as in situations of conflict.

National legal frameworks and policies

The 2020 Report will analyse the role of legal tools in supporting the development of an inclusive education system. International declarations represent important commitments to inclusion. However, their impact is limited if they are not supported by national frameworks or if educational stakeholders are not aware of them. Moreover, many countries find it useful to formulate their own explicit statements on inclusion, to reflect the complexities and barriers specific to their contexts.

Laws articulate the rights that underline the inclusion framework and are important in eliminating the barriers to inclusion at the system level. The Report will examine how different national inclusive education laws and policies mandate schools to provide education for all, as well as establish procedures that can support inclusion. For example, in Paraguay the constitution recognized the country as bilingual in 1967 and in 1994 a national policy established bilingual teaching and learning. In some countries, laws have been put in place as a direct response to segregation. For example, in the United States, the 1954 Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka County decision was a landmark case for civil rights. The ruling banned racial segregation in public schools and mandated that states desegregate education.

The Report will also investigate the more nuanced influences of legal frameworks on inclusion, such as when vague or contradictory education laws and policies can hinder inclusion. For instance, despite inclusive education policies, learners may be segregated even in regular schools: in many countries, learners from disadvantaged groups are put together in special classes or based in separate facilities next to regular school premises, as is the case with Roma children in some European countries.

Governance and finance

In many countries, persistent gaps remain between inclusive education policy and practice. In spite of inclusive principles in national policies, local and school levels may not have sufficient support to translate these principles into practice. Weak governance can prevent the implementation of the policies. Absent accountability mechanisms may put the rights of learners at risk. Inclusive education can only work if different sectors collaborate effectively. For instance, in many countries with special needs education systems, responsibility for children with disabilities may

lie outside the education sector or may be shared with the health and social affairs sectors. Likewise, many learners vulnerable to exclusion face overlapping challenges, related to health, security, poverty or remoteness.

The Report will examine the extent to which national education planning and governance mainstream inclusion, involve stakeholders from different sectors, and include the voices of those at risk of exclusion as well as their parents or guardians. In Rwanda, inclusive education development action plans have been organized annually at the district level since 2012. They involve district and sector officials, school practitioners, parents and children, all aiming to hold each other accountable for implementing inclusive education. The Report will also consider the extent to which members of groups vulnerable to exclusion are represented in global education policy-making, both in the process of defining policy and among personnel.

Related to governance, the issue of funding is crucial in ensuring education for all. Funding formulas need to recognize the additional costs associated with the education of vulnerable children, including for accessibility in transport and buildings. The Report will consider different approaches to financing inclusion and the challenges involved when different sectors share responsibility for the education of groups of learners. Resource allocation that supports inclusion involves coordination mechanisms across ministries and tiers of government. It also needs to be taken into account that some funding mechanisms encourage the labelling of some learners as requiring special needs, because that means additional support for schools.

Curricula and learning materials
The Report will analyse how curricula and learning materials are adapted to the principles of inclusive education. It will look at how curriculum development follows the principles of inclusion by involving different stakeholders, inclusion experts and communities, as well as those vulnerable to exclusion. The Report will analyse whether inclusion is mainstreamed throughout different subjects or treated as a stand-alone issue. There is more than one approach to learning: the same curriculum needs to be flexible enough to be taught to learners with different backgrounds and abilities. So, the Report will examine whether and how curricula support the diversification of modes of instruction and learner-centred approaches to learning.

The Report will examine the extent to which textbooks across different subjects use an inclusion lens. Discriminatory or stereotypical content in learning materials can increase exclusion, especially with regard to the role of girls and women in society. Lack of diversity

in content is another obstacle to building a culture of inclusion. Previous GEM Report team analysis found that only 3% of textbooks covered the rights of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex. The 2020 Report will also collect evidence on the provision of appropriate formats of learning materials for learners with disabilities. This can include the provision of textbooks in Braille for learners who are blind. It will also cover the important role that technology plays in delivering learning materials that are adapted to individual learners' needs.

Teachers, school leaders and education support personnel
The Report will look at how staff in schools are prepared to accommodate students of all abilities and backgrounds, especially in cases where a transition from special needs to mainstream schools is taking place. It will consider how prepared staff are to identify special needs. It will investigate how to improve cooperation between special needs and mainstream teachers, as well as between teachers and support personnel, to ensure inclusive practices. The 2013 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Teaching and Learning International Survey showed that 22% of teachers in 34 education systems reported a need for more training related to teaching students with special needs; in Brazil, as many as 60% of teachers reported needing more training. The Report will collect evidence on the level of preparedness and the teaching practices of teachers from special needs education schools. It will examine the extent to which systems provide support to teachers and students in the classroom to carry out inclusive teaching and learning and how different modes of training influence preparedness.

Alongside knowledge and skills, school leaders' and teachers' motivation for and commitment to inclusive education are essential and should not be taken for granted, even in systems where teacher training for inclusion exists. The Report will collect evidence on practices aiming to generate teacher support for and commitment to inclusive education. It will also consider the extent to which such motivation might be curtailed by structural barriers, such as lack of autonomy in adapting curricula. The Report will also cover the extent to which the diversity of the student population is reflected in diversity among education staff, including teachers, school leaders and support staff. Education personnel can be important role models for students and a diverse education workforce can help overcome discriminatory views among all students.

Schools
To access education facilities, people with disabilities need to overcome obstacles such as lack of mobility

Global Education Monitoring Report

equipment, poor transport infrastructure and road conditions, inappropriately designed buildings, and absence of teaching aids. The Report will review the application of universal design principles. It will also look at the availability of water and sanitation, which is a particular obstacle for girls. In Bangladesh, the lack of such facilities forced adolescent girls to skip class.

Beyond just the state of school facilities, the Report will consider schools as communities and as resources for inclusive education. It will analyse how special schools are used in the process. For instance, inclusive education reforms in Burkina Faso have transformed special needs schools into resource centres that can support the learning of children with disabilities in mainstream schools.

The Report will look at non-state provision opportunities, which are increasingly used despite official inclusive education policies. It will analyse whether such provision generates the promised learning environments for learners and how it influences inclusion and equity in the education system as a whole.

The Report will review school selection tactics that might lead to exclusion. For instance, in systems where special schools exist, access to mainstream education can be restricted through the targeted identification of special needs among a particular disadvantaged group. Some vulnerable groups can be disproportionally assigned to special schools through the misdiagnosis of learners based on biased screening tests. Children from disadvantaged groups are placed in special classes within regular schools under the pretext of intellectual disabilities, the need for advanced preparation through catch-up classes, or as a result of explicit actions to separate learners who are seen as more challenging.

Communities, parents and students

Communities with discriminatory beliefs and attitudes can prevent learners from accessing education opportunities. Discriminatory community views concerning gender, disability, race or religion, among others, can not only prevent children from attending school but also have an impact on their safety and learning while in school. The Report will collect evidence on campaigns aimed at sensitizing communities and raising awareness about the value of inclusion.

In many countries, civil society groups, including disabled persons' organizations, have worked to raise parental awareness of the challenges learners vulnerable to exclusion. Many initiatives focus on involving parents and community members in school management and

collecting data to ensure that schools and authorities are held accountable for education for all, and the Report will examine these initiatives. It will also consider the extent to which parents and community members from groups vulnerable to exclusion, for instance those with disabilities, are included in school life and school management.

The Report will examine the diverse education preferences and choices of parents of children with special needs. In some countries, such as Belgium or Switzerland, parents look to special schools as the best place for their children's learning and advocate for identification and special needs placement out of fear that mainstream schools are not sufficiently prepared to meet their children's needs. The challenges faced by parents with disabilities will also be discussed.

The Report will address learners' social and emotional inclusion in school. In many countries, a lot of attention has focused on the issues of bullying and cyber-bullying, which can lead to exclusion from education opportunities, but which can also target students who are already particularly vulnerable to exclusion. The Report will examine how such behaviours can influence learners' access to, and quality of, learning. For instance, students who do not correspond to gender norms in societies are at particular risk of bullying and aggression in many countries.

MEASURING INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

Assessing whether countries are making progress on inclusion requires disaggregated data, as specified in General Assembly resolution 68/261. However, there are many challenges to collecting data on inclusive education. Concerns about privacy, stigmatization and definitions hinder the development of sound tools for monitoring and policy purposes. Policy-makers need nevertheless to ensure compliance with human rights conventions so that the rights of marginalized and disadvantaged groups are not compromised. The Report will look at a range of indicators to capture, on the one hand, education attainment and achievement, and, on the other hand, laws, finance, curricula, teachers and infrastructure.

The GEM Report pioneered the development of indicators of education equity through its World Inequality Database on Education. As part of the 2020 Report, it will look at the experience of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics and its short and extended set of disability questions and module on child functioning. These tools are starting to be used in cross-national surveys, such as the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, as well as in national settings. For example, New Zealand included

the short set of disability questions for the first time in their 2016/7 Social Survey and their June 2017 Household Labour Force Survey. Other cases will also be reviewed, such as the Pacific Indicator Project, which developed a context-specific set of 48 indicators across 10 dimensions, including education.

The Report will review other comparative sources of evidence on inclusive education, both quantitative and qualitative. The European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education cover 30 education systems and focus on the number of students identified with a special education need that are placed in mainstream, special classes or special schools. Kenya has a school-level education management information system with indicators that may be useful in examining inclusive education. A lot can be learned from publications such as the International Disability and Development Consortium and Light for the World #*CostingEquity* report and the Global Campaign for Education *Equal Right, Equal Opportunity* report.

QUESTIONS FOR THE 2020 GEM REPORT

Within this framework, the 2020 GEM Report will ask the following questions:

■ What are the key policy solutions for each of the elements of inclusive education to ensure the achievement of SDG 4?

■ How can common obstacles to the implementation of such inclusive education policies be anticipated and overcome?

■ What arrangements are needed to coordinate among government sectors, tiers of government and with other stakeholders to overcome overlapping dimensions of exclusion?

■ How do education systems monitor exclusion in education (with regard both to individual education attainment or success and to systemic factors) and how can current practices be improved? To what extent systems monitor exclusion from the learning process for learners who are in schools?

■ What channels of financing are used for inclusive education policies around the world? How are they monitored and how do they affect local practice?

This concept note presents the early thinking of the GEM Report team in preparation for the 2020 Report on inclusion in education. The team would like to invite its readers to:

■ Provide substantive feedback to the proposed lines of research

■ Recommend interesting examples of policies and practices from around the world that illustrate what inclusive education policies look like in different countries and how inclusive education is implemented in schools and classrooms

■ Recommend potential areas of new research drawing on already established or previously unexplored sources of quantitative and qualitative data.

Please visit the 2020 Report webpage at bit.ly/2020gemconsultation to submit your comments and suggestions.

Developed by an independent team and published by UNESCO, the *Global Education Monitoring Report* is an authoritative reference that aims to inform, influence and sustain genuine commitment towards the global education targets in the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework.