

PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA



Research Title

**FINDINGS ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN
PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

Report prepared by:

Wilberforce Kato

(Research Officer, Disability)

CERTIFICATION:

Report read and certified

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles Tuhaise', written over a horizontal line.

Charles Tuhaise

SENIOR RESEARCH OFFICER

Date: April 11, 2000

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Milton Tumutegyereize', written over a horizontal line.

Milton Tumutegyereize

PRINCIPAL RESEARCH OFFICER

Date: 11/04/2010

FINDINGS ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (CWDs) IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

Introduction

The purpose of the research was to obtain information on children with disabilities in primary schools for members of parliament representing persons with disabilities, service providers, planners, policy makers and other stakeholders. This information is expected to play a significant advisory role in improving the living conditions of children with disabilities at primary school level in particular and at all other levels. The objectives were: (1) To establish the number of children with disabilities being catered for by Universal Primary Education in the whole country and per district; (2) To obtain the number of special needs education teachers so far trained by Ministry of Education and Sports plus the number of these teachers serving in primary schools; (3) To know the facilities available in primary schools which enable CWDs to fit in school environment; (4) To establish government's plan for the CWDs after primary level; (5) To establish the challenges faced by CWDs in primary schools.

Methodology

The statistical methods that were employed in data collection were two. (1) Secondary / documentary data which involved photocopying relevant documents from the Ministry of Education and Sports, and other stakeholders such as Uganda Society for the Disabled Children (USDC), Uganda National Institute of Special Education (UNISE). (2) Personal interviews with different officials in Special Needs Education Department - Ministry of Education and Sports, UNISE.

Findings

It was discovered that there are 150,559 CWDs in primary schools of which 85,537 are male and 68,022 are female¹. This number was further grouped basing on the nature of disability per district (refer to table 2 & 3). Information on the multiple disability was not available at the time of compiling the report.

The Ministry of Education has so far trained 296 teachers in special needs education. The number excludes the figure for 1996, which was not available. The training of teachers in special needs education started in 1988. The courses conducted at UNISE are Diploma in Special Needs Education, Diploma in Community Based Rehabilitation, Diploma in Mobility Rehabilitation and Bachelor of Education in Special Needs Education. The ministry also conducts training courses / workshops country wide to increase on the number of these teachers and the special needs education component has

¹ National Primary Schools Mapping Census 1999 - Planning Unit, Ministry of Education and Sports.

been introduced in Teacher Training Colleges. It was also learnt that 580 special needs education teachers are serving in special schools with a total population of 1,728 pupils (see table 6). There are special needs education teachers serving in mainstream primary schools but their number could not be established.

The ministry set up minimum standards for schools as a provision for accessibility of CWDs to school environment. These include ramps, improved toilets and blackboards, clearly marked footpaths for both mainstream learners and those with visual impairment, sufficiently lighted environment and others. There are very few schools, which have complied with minimum requirements and these include the schools where the ministry has constructed boarding facilities and resource rooms. The Ministry of Education has so far constructed 14 boarding facilities and 37 resource rooms in order to meet the special needs of CWDs (see table 5). The resource rooms are equipped with teaching and learning materials such as Braille textbooks, Braille Kits, tape recorders, cassettes, sign language dictionaries and others. Unfortunately, the number of boarding facilities / resource rooms is still small and have so far been constructed in few districts.

Secondary education for the deaf learners has started at Ngora High School in Kumi district. More consultations are going on with secondary schools for wider provision for CWDs. This is in line with government's plan for CWDs after primary level. The government also encourages vocational education as one of the ways to benefit children with special education needs.

The challenges being faced by CWDs were classified as institutional, socio-economic and environmental challenges. The institutional challenges include organisation of school programmes, lack of trained teachers in special needs education, lack of instructional and compensatory aids and inadequate curricular programmes. Poverty, ignorance, negative attitudes and practices were grouped under socio-economic challenges.

Introduction

1.1 Background

The government of Uganda is committed to uplifting the standards of living for persons with disabilities by streamlining, strengthening and extending services to community. The major services rendered are aimed at prevention, detection and / or rehabilitation of disability fall into three main sectors, namely, education, health and community services (social rehabilitation and welfare).

The key policy issues covering the education of children with disabilities are contained in the Government White Paper on Education (1991) and the Universal Primary Education policy. The Government White Paper on Education recommends inclusive education as the best approach to accessing education to children with special needs. The children with special needs are supposed to be integrated in the mainstream primary schools. This calls for adaptation of both school environment and curriculum as well as retraining of teachers to acquire the requisite skills.

The 1998 Government pronouncement on the Universal Primary Education aimed to guarantee access, equity quality and relevant education that is affordable by the government and the majority of Ugandans - Ministry of Education and Sports, 1998.

Two of the UPE Policy objectives are; to make education "equitable" in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities; and to eradicate illiteracy while equipping every individual with the basic skills and knowledge with which to exploit the environment for both self and national development. One of the key features of UPE Policy is that children with disabilities (special needs) have priority over non disabled children.

Where as it is true that a big number of children with disabilities have registered for UPE, an examination of what happens after the child has been offered a vacancy at school raises many difficult and challenging questions. For example, are there equipment, materials and well- qualified teachers for the blind and the deaf child?

Can physically impaired children walk the long distances involved in going to and from the school in both urban and rural areas? Are the physical and social environments conducive or accessible for persons with disabilities?

Therefore, the purpose of the study was to provide information on children with disabilities in primary schools to members of parliament representing persons with disabilities, service deliverers, policy makers, planners and disability organisations. The study is expected to provide a handy source of information for members of parliament and stakeholders when trying to improve on the living conditions of children with disabilities in primary schools.

1.2 Historical Development of Special Needs Education in Uganda:

Efforts to make provision of education for children with disabilities in Uganda can be traced from the 1950's, when the British Empire Society for the Blind (now known as Sight Savers) was founded. In 1955 the first school for the blind was built in Soroti district, seven years later, at Wanyange Girls Secondary School, the first attempt to integrate blind and sighted pupils was made by establishing a unit in the school.

In 1968 at Iganga Secondary School a training centre for teachers of the blind was established. The centre ran courses for teachers of the blind until 1988 when teacher training for special needs education began at the Institute of Teachers Education Kyambogo (ITEK). However, in 1973 a department of special needs education was introduced in the Ministry of Education, whose roles are to co-ordinate all issues affecting special needs education programmes in the country. The department also liases with other ministries, institutions and non-governmental organisations which are involved in providing educational and other services for persons with disabilities in the country. The development of special needs department by government has been difficult due to limited resources. In many instances education services for disabled people have been provided by the private institutions, established and maintained by voluntary organisations.

On 21st August 1991, following negotiations between the Republic of Uganda and the Kingdom of Denmark, an agreement was signed to set up the Uganda National Institute of Special Education (UNISE).

The objectives of the institute were established as follows:

- To train teachers and other personnel to work in the field of Special Needs Education and Rehabilitation to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and learning difficulties in Uganda.
- To be a resource centre for the production and dissemination of information on persons with disabilities and learning difficulties.
- To undertake research in disabilities and other related fields for better understanding and development of persons with disabilities and learning difficulties.
- To initiate outreach programmes to promote greater awareness among teachers, parents, leaders and the general public about persons with disabilities and learning difficulties; and to promote collaboration among agencies involved in disability as well as enhancing organisations of persons with disabilities.

The idea of establishing UNISE originated in December 1988, when the Ministry of Education in Uganda approached the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) to explore the possibility of setting up such an institute. As a result of this, DANIDA began supporting teacher education in special needs education at the Institute of Teachers Education Kyambogo, and following the signing of the 1991 agreement; the construction of UNISE began in April 1993. On 7th October 1994, the then Vice President of Uganda, Dr. Samson Kiseka (the late) laid the Foundation Stone of the UNISE campus on the behalf of the President, His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. The campus was completed by the end of 1995 and UNISE activities were transferred there in January 1996. UNISE received legal status and parliamentary recognition as an Educational Institution in Uganda in August 1996.

UNISE works closely with another Danida supported programme, the Educational Assessment and Resource Services (EARS) / Special Education Programme, which operates at district level throughout Uganda. The main objectives of EARS / Special Education are the prevention of disability, the early assessment and identification of children from new-born to 18 years with special educational needs, and the subsequent

integration of these children into the mainstream system. The focal points of the programme are EARS/Special Education Centres, which are located in every district in Uganda, and are the centres from where the district wide special education programme is co-ordinated. EARS / Special Education aims to work in co-ordination with other district level services in the community to provide an integrated, multi-sectoral range of services for persons with disabilities and learning difficulties.

UNISE as the centralised institution and EARS / Special Education as the decentralised, district level programme complement each other in providing a comprehensive, effective service in special needs education to children with special needs in Uganda.

1.3 Objectives of the research:

- ◆ To establish the number of children with disabilities being catered for by Universal Primary Education in the whole country and per district.
- ◆ To obtain the number of special needs education teachers so far trained by the Ministry of Education and Sports plus number of these teachers serving in schools.
- ◆ To know the facilities available in primary schools which enable children with disabilities to fit in a school community / accessibility.
- ◆ To establish government's plan for the children with disabilities after primary level.
- ◆ To establish the challenges being faced by children with disabilities in primary schools.

1.4 Significance of the research:

The study has been helpful in generating information that led to formulation of possible policy recommendations and measures aimed at revitalising the smooth progress of children with disabilities in primary schools. The challenges limiting the progress of children with disabilities were identified so as to be in a position of formulating policy recommendations. It is expected to play a significant advisory role for members of parliament representing people with disabilities and other stakeholders when trying to find possible remedial solutions to the challenges being faced by children with disabilities at primary level in particular and at all other levels.

2.0 Methodology:

The statistical methods that were employed in the data collection were basically two.

1. Secondary /documentary data which involved photocopying relevant documents from Ministry of Education and Sports and other stakeholders like Uganda Society for the Disabled Children (USDC), UNISE.
2. Personal interviews with different officials in Special Needs Education Department - Ministry of Education and Sports, UNISE.

3.0 Research findings:

These were presented according to the stated objectives.

3.1 Numbers of children with disabilities in schools.

It was found out that there are 150,559 children with disabilities in primary schools of which 82,537 are male and 68,022 are female. They were further grouped basing on the nature of disability and table 1 indicates the number of each category.

Table 1. Number of Children by Nature of Disability.

Nature of disability	Female	Male	Total
Hearing Impairment	18,480	22,462	40,942
Visual Impairment	15,389	13,279	28,668
Mental Retardation	18,005	24,320	42,325
Physical Disabilities	16,148	22,476	38,624

Source: National Primary Schools Mapping Census - Planning Unit - Ministry of Education and Sports 1999.

Table 2. Number of Children with Disabilities in each District.

No	District	Nature of Disability								Total		Grand total
		Physically impaired		Hearing impaired		Visually impaired		Mentally retarded		M	F	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F			
1.	Adjuman	217	111	220	182	135	96	128	93	700	482	1182
2.	Apac	808	526	810	617	443	440	672	489	2733	2072	4805
3.	Arua	828	749	1145	1029	660	859	2369	1830	5002	4467	9469
4.	Bugiri	449	286	427	396	201	296	284	204	1361	1182	2543
5.	Bundibugyo	138	72	106	74	33	34	83	59	360	239	599
6.	Bushenyi	656	416	407	376	319	421	395	278	1777	1491	3268
7.	Busia	336	200	336	272	337	293	295	236	1304	1001	2305
8.	Gulu	453	255	720	555	340	425	362	241	1875	1476	3351
9.	Hoima	713	257	355	278	278	317	267	126	1613	978	2591
10.	Iganga	822	605	732	612	453	640	905	634	2912	2491	5403
11.	Jinja	269	693	131	125	120	124	221	200	741	1142	1883
12.	Kabale	422	344	412	355	219	296	391	325	1444	1320	2764
13.	Kabarole	612	359	715	540	587	576	571	361	2485	1836	4321
14.	Kalangala	9	15	18	12	9	8	91	50	127	85	212
15.	Kampala	286	245	165	168	134	203	233	162	818	778	1596
16.	Kamuli	594	424	438	371	247	322	340	259	1619	1376	2995
17.	Kapchorwa	209	163	198	204	131	194	135	108	673	669	1342
18.	Kasese	333	268	366	285	202	212	327	216	1228	981	2209
19.	Katakwi	496	324	728	582	307	334	788	565	2319	1805	4124
20.	Kibaale	284	214	260	263	305	298	521	417	1370	1192	2562
21.	Kiboga	181	104	196	179	102	127	224	177	703	587	1290
22.	Kisoro	172	116	284	214	153	176	127	71	736	577	1313
23.	Kitgum	1052	657	1052	683	527	501	1742	1229	4373	3070	7443
24.	Kotido	268	289	257	157	89	72	184	98	798	616	1414

Table 2.continued.

No	District	Nature of Disability								Total		Grand total
		Physically impaired		Hearing impaired		Visually impaired		Mentally retarded				
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F			
25.	Kumi	668	479	859	615	527	493	914	696	2968	2283	5251
26.	Lira	1177	717	1477	1135	743	740	1372	937	4769	3529	8298
27.	Luwero	319	303	341	372	217	326	567	523	1444	1524	2968
28.	Masaka	568	506	301	320	264	391	594	508	1727	1725	3452
29.	Masindi	379	256	480	386	300	290	355	290	1514	1222	2736
30.	Mbale	1156	704	1022	1033	710	797	983	800	3871	3334	7205
31.	Mbarara	1026	688	767	633	465	526	593	402	2851	2249	5100
32.	Moroto	79	46	103	56	38	25	117	54	337	191	518
33.	Moyo	117	69	237	193	106	87	199	84	659	433	1092
34.	Mpigi	562	436	343	321	282	383	749	565	1936	1705	3,641
35.	Mubende	317	188	192	151	102	139	361	229	972	707	1,679
36.	Mukono	750	581	713	605	405	620	981	753	2849	2559	5,408
37.	Nakasongola	188	122	164	144	65	174	136	126	553	566	1,119
38.	Nebbi	868	587	775	614	600	730	519	560	2762	2491	5,253
39.	Ntugamo	581	348	349	265	220	340	372	264	1522	1217	2,739
40.	Pallisa	651	473	743	606	445	372	618	423	2457	1874	4,331
41.	Rakai	428	333	616	318	189	245	784	641	2017	1537	3,554
42.	Rukungiri	577	606	520	572	386	423	535	379	2018	1980	3,998
43.	Sembabule	111	85	90	84	71	98	160	114	432	381	813
44.	Soroti	684	427	968	812	400	521	972	687	3024	2447	5,471
45.	Tororo	663	502	924	716	413	405	784	542	2784	2165	4,949
Total		38,624		40,942		28,668		42,325		82537	68022	150556

Source: Planning Unit - Ministry of Education and Sports.

Table 3. Shows number of Children by Nature of Disability in each District.

No.	District	Physically impaired	Hearing impaired	Visually impaired	Mentally retarded	Total
1.	Adjuman	328	402	231	221	1182
2.	Apac	1334	1427	883	1161	4805
3.	Arua	1577	2174	1519	4199	9469
4.	Bugiri	735	823	497	488	2543
5.	Bundibugyo	210	180	67	142	599
6.	Bushenyi	1072	783	740	673	3268
7.	Busia	536	608	630	531	2305
8.	Gulu	708	1275	765	603	3351
9.	Hoima	970	633	595	393	2591
10.	Iganga	1427	1344	1093	1539	5403
11.	Jinja	962	256	244	421	1883
12.	Kabale	766	767	515	716	2764
13.	Kabarole	971	1255	1163	932	4321
14.	Kalangala	24	30	17	141	212
15.	Kampala	531	333	337	395	1596
16.	Kamuli	1018	809	569	599	2995
17.	Kapchorwa	372	402	325	243	1342
18.	Kasese	601	651	414	543	2209
19.	Katakwi	820	1310	641	1353	4124
20.	Kibale	498	523	603	938	2562
21.	Kiboga	285	375	229	401	1290
22.	Kisoro	288	498	329	198	1313
23.	Kitgum	1709	1735	1028	2971	7443
24.	Kotido	557	414	161	282	1414
25.	Kumi	1147	1474	1020	1610	5251
26.	Lira	1894	2612	1483	2309	8298
27.	Luwero	622	713	543	1090	2968

Table 3. Continued.

No	District	Physically impaired	Hearing impaired	Visually impaired	Mentally retarded	Total
28.	Masaka	1074	621	655	1102	3452
29.	Masindi	635	866	590	645	2736
30.	Mbale	1860	2055	1507	1783	7205
31.	Mbarara	1714	1400	991	995	5100
32.	Moroto	125	159	63	171	518
33.	Moyo	186	430	193	283	1092
34.	Mpigi	998	664	665	1314	3641
35.	Mubende	505	343	241	590	1679
36.	Mukono	1331	1318	1025	1734	5408
37.	Nakasongola	310	308	239	262	1119
38.	Nebbi	1455	1389	1330	1079	5253
39.	Ntungamo	929	614	560	636	2739
40.	Pallisa	1124	1349	817	1041	4331
41.	Rakai	761	964	434	1425	3554
42.	Rukungiri	1183	1092	809	914	3998
43.	Sembabule	196	174	169	274	813
44.	Soroti	1111	1780	921	1659	5471
45.	Tororo	1165	1640	818	1326	4949
						150,559

Source: National primary schools mapping census - Planning Unit - Ministry of Education and Sports 1999.

In special needs education the categories of disability, such as multiple disability, 'sickly' or those with 'health problems' are also considered. These comprise of epileptic, diabetic, asthmatic, those with sickle cells, to mention, just a few. Multiple disability includes such children who may be deaf and blind at the same time.

However, information on the number of children with these types of disability in each district was not available.

3.2 Special Needs Education Teachers:

It was in 1988 when teacher training for special needs education began at the Institute of Teachers Education Kyambogo. The training used to be held at ITEK until January 1996 when UNISE activities were transferred to its campus. The courses conducted at the institute include Diploma in Special Needs Education, Diploma in Community Based Rehabilitation, Diploma in Mobility Rehabilitation and Bachelor of Education in Special Needs Education. Some of the trained teachers are distributed in various fields of education such as district education assessment and resource services / special needs education centres, primary schools, special education department at the Ministry's Head Office. The Ministry of Education and Sports conducts training courses / workshops country wide in order to increase on the number of special education teachers. The ministry has also introduced the special needs education component in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs). Information on the exact number of special education teachers so far trained and their deployment was not available at the time of writing the report. However, table 4 and 6 provides some information on the subject.

Table 4 shows number of people trained in different courses

Year	COURSE										
	DIP - SNE		DIP - CBR		DIP - MBR		PGD - CBR		B.EDUC - SNE		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
1990	16	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1992	22	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1994	42	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1996	N/A	N/A			-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1997	26	32	-	-	-	-	9	3	-	-	-
1998	31	18	-	-	-	-	13	1	-	-	-
12	37	30	-	-	-	-	12	2	-	-	-
Total	174	122	-	-	-	-	34	6	-	-	-
	296		-		-		40		-		-

Source: Dean of Studies - UNISE.

DIP SNE - Diploma in Special Needs Education

DIP CBR - Diploma in Community Based Rehabilitation

DIP MBR - Diploma in Mobility Rehabilitation

PGD CBR - Post Graduate Diploma in Community Based Rehabilitation

B. EDUC SNE - Bachelor of Education in Special Needs Education.

N/A - Not Available

Currently, the population of students at the Institute is distributed as follows: 153 students are pursuing a diploma in SNE, 15 a Diploma in CBR, 13 a Diploma in MBR, 11 a post graduate diploma in CBR, and 49 Bachelor of Education in SNE. Of the 28 students offering Bachelor of Education in Special Needs Education who are to graduate in July 2000, 10 students have specialised in hearing impairment, 5 visual impairment and 13 in mental retardation.

The number of special education teachers is still very small compared to the number of children with disabilities in schools. There are few districts, which have appointed the three stipulated teachers at the rank of deputy inspectors of schools as demanded. A case in point, to date Luwero district has not appointed any substantive trained teacher to work at the EARS centre. The acting EARS co-ordinator is merely employed as a classroom teacher in a primary school in Luwero town.

The Institute faces challenges when trying to accomplish its objectives.

- ❖ Limited accommodation for students. The lectures theatres and halls of residence available cannot cope up with the increasing number of students.
- ❖ The government's policy of deleting teachers from the payroll when they go for further training discourages them.
- ❖ Continuous changes in special needs education necessitate a continuous training of teachers and change of the curriculum which may not be possible due to limited financial resources.

3.3 Facilities for Accessibility:

It was discovered that the Ministry of Education and Sports has set up minimum standards for schools as one provision for accessibility of children with disabilities to school environment. The minimum standards for example require that there should be:

- Clearly marked footpaths for both mainstream learners and those with Visual impairment.
- Ramps to access buildings.
- Sufficiently lighted learning environment to cater for all children especially learners with Low Vision and those who have to follow Sign Language for the Instruction and general communication.
- Distractions free learning environment for the children.

A set of drawings for construction has been adjusted to accommodate accessibility.

This includes ramps to access buildings, improved toilet structures and blackboards. The ministry also carries out advocacy and sensitisation of district leaders and accessibility being one of the areas stressed for school management committees to take note of when planning developments in schools. To approve any new building structures such measures should be scrutinised carefully. However, there are few schools, which have complied with the minimum standards. The ministry made sure that the minimum standards were complied with in schools where it established boarding facilities (small homes) and Resource Units in some districts. (*See table 5*). The private schools coming up are also required to follow the minimum standards but the results are yet to be seen.

3.4.1 Government special measures for the deaf and blind children

Special measures are being taken by ministry to provide for the education of children who are deaf or hearing-impaired. These include:

- Sign Language training courses for teachers have been conducted countrywide.
- At least 300 teachers have already benefited from this training programme.
- Methods of teaching children who are deaf have been passed on to teachers at Uganda National Institute of Special Education training programme. For example, in the diploma programme alone, so far more than 100 teachers in the country as from 1988-1999 have been equipped with methods of teaching deaf children (*see table 4*).

- The Ministry of Education and Sports has also started setting up boarding facilities for deaf children. This provision will facilitate the teaching / learning of communication with and among deaf learners within the integrated schools setting.

So far, some boarding facilities (small homes) for the deaf are under construction in Rukungiri, Bushenyi, Mbarara, Kapchorwa, Gulu and Katakwi. (*Refer to table 5*)

These will supplement the existing two special schools (Uganda school for the deaf - Ntinda and Ngora school for the deaf). There could be a possibility of adding a few more small homes or units where resources will allow.

- The Ministry has also constructed Units / Resource rooms in the mainstream schools with a catchment area to serve identified numbers of children with disabilities and ~~the Units have been equipped with teaching and learning materials such as Braille~~ materials, tape recorders, tapes, cassettes, stylus materials and others. The intention of the government regarding construction and equipping more of these Units is to provide services in terms of education to children with disabilities. However, the resources rooms have not yet been constructed in all districts. (*refer to table 5*)
- Assessment of hearing loss is carried out by district education assessment and resources services / special needs education staff and 39 Screening Audiometers have been provided for this purpose. However, information on the number of children in the country who have been screened to date was not available.
- There are on going consultations for the provision of Hearing Aids to learners who are 'hard of hearing'.
- The Ministry of Education has contributed 5 million shillings to support Uganda National Association of the Deaf in the production of Sign Language Dictionaries which will also be distributed to Units / schools.
- The Ministry has also trained teachers in making educational materials from locally available materials for the deaf.
- Secondary education for deaf learners has started at Ngora High School in Kumi district. More consultations are on going with secondary schools for a wider provision for children with disabilities. This is in line with government's plan for children with disabilities after primary level. The government also encourages vocational education as one of the ways to benefit children with special education needs, since quite a

number of them may realistically never aim so high. However, to lead independent lives, they need skills.

There are also special measures being taken by the ministry to provide for the education of learners who are blind or visually impaired. These measures do include:

- The ministry has purchased and supplied 800 Braille textbooks to the schools where children are receiving formal instruction.
- Braille Kits have also been distributed to schools where children with visual impairment are receiving formal instruction.
- Like for the hearing impairment above, some teachers have been trained in reading and writing Braille.
- Sports equipment has been distributed to schools of blind children. More is yet to be distributed. These include balls, show down tables with all its facilities.
- The Ministry has facilitated Sports for the blind at Iganga in the area of transport (1998) and is likely to do the same this year at Mbarara.
- District education assessment and resource services / special needs education staff do assessment of Visual impairment and also make relevant referrals to medical services in their districts. The E-Charts and other assessment materials are at the education assessment and resource services / special needs education centres.
- The Ministry has so far trained 13 Mobility Instructors serving the country in support of blind children. The children are taught mobility skills.
- Like hearing impairment and other kinds of disabilities, teachers have been trained in the teaching / learning methods for blind learners.

There are also non-governmental organisations like Uganda Society for the Disabled Children that has been and continues to be seriously involved in procurement and distribution of teaching / learning materials for especially blind pupils, quite often through ministry of education. The materials include firkins / marburg / picht Braille machines, cassette recorders / tapes, type writers to mention just a few. These materials have been distributed to schools with resource rooms / units.

3.4.2 Education of children with mental retardation

The first formal education provision in Uganda for children and youth with mental retardation was established in the early 1970's. Shortly before 1972, when the Asian Community was expelled from the country, the Victoria Nile School in Jinja had started providing some education for the Asian children with mental retardation. This service ceased on the exodus of the Asians. Another attempt was made by Mercy Children's Centre (MCC) in 1979 in Kampala. The new school didn't progress much due to the little attention paid to it by some parents, teachers and the school administration. MCC was later absorbed into a mainstream primary school. In 1982 an association known as the Uganda Association for the Mentally Handicapped (UAMH) was formed. Since its formation UAMH has established a number of government units for children with mental retardation in the country.

The Ministry of Education encourages integration of children with mild to moderate retardation in the mainstream schools. For those with severe mental retardation, the ministry encourages home based programmes. The teacher is supposed to get in touch with parents so that the children with severe mental retardation can be taught from home. However, there are challenges associated with this strategy since the number of special needs education teachers is still very small.

As regards to other children with severe / profound disabilities who are unable to benefit fully from the existing school system, the government recommends the integration of children with special educational needs as it will provide learners with the kind of education appropriate for their social, cultural, ideological and economic development. However, to cater for children with severe degrees of learning needs who may not benefit from mainstream school placement (integration), the ministry is setting up small boarding facilities in schools while maintaining the already existing special schools.

However, there is a problem with this strategy since it is the parents responsible for footing the boarding fees of these children. Most parents of such children are already burdened with the other requirements for their upkeep even at home. Such facilities can

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therefore only benefit those parents who can afford the boarding facilities as it were. A case in point is a DANIDA funded boarding facility for such children in Kasese district, which is now not functional, because neither the district nor the parent has resources to keep it running.

The education assessment and resource services / special needs education programme has also achieved the following:

- The program has facilitated the districts by giving cars so far covering the former 38 of the old districts. The rest are in plan. Imprest for the districts is sent from Central Government in supplement of the district contribution to the programme.
- ~~Bicycles have been distributed to the districts following the Teacher Development and Management Systems cluster set up.~~
- Construction of offices plus staff houses has taken place in all the former 39 districts and new districts under plan.

Table 5: Shows the distribution of Units and Boarding Facilities.

No	District	Schools	Homes (B/F)	Units	Pending / Progress
1.	Apac	Wigua unit for the Physically impaired Ikwera primary school unit for Blind Ikwera girls secondary school	1 1 1	-	In progress " "
2.	Arua	Arua primary school		1	
3.	Bushenyi	Ruhandagazi primary school	1		
4.	Gulu	Laroo primary school Gulu primary school of the blind Gulu prisons primary school	1	2 2	In progress Finished "
5.	Iganga	Iganga Town Council Primary School Buckley High school Bishop Willis Demonstration P / S		1 1 1	Finished " "
6.	Jinja	Wanyange primary school		1	Finished
7.	Kabale	Kikungiri Primary School	1		completed
8.	Katakwi	Toroma Girls P / S	1		In progress
9.	Kapchorwa	Kapchorwa Demonstration P / S		1	In progress
10.	Kampala	Kyambogo Primary school Bukoto Muslim Primary School Kireka P/S for the mentally impaired Shimoni Demonstration School	1	2 2	Finished " in progress
11.	Kamuli	Parents Primary School		1	Finished
12.	Kasese	Mpondwe Primary School Kinyamaseke Model Primary School Rukooki Model School		1 1 1	completed In progress "
13.	Kibaale	Bishop Rwakaikara Primary School		1	Pending
14.	Lira	Ojwina Primary School	1		In progress

Table 5: Continued.

No.	District	School	Homes (B/F)	Units	Pending / progress
15.	Luwero	Kyegombwa C/U Primary School		1	pending
		Luwero Boys School	1	1	completed
		Nsawo Primary School		1	pending
16.	Mbale	Budadiri Girls Boarding P/S		3	completed
		St. Angella Magale Girls P/S		1	"
		St. Joseph Unit for mental impaired	1	1	"
17.	Mbarara	Tukore Invalids Primary School C/U		1	pending
		Rutsya Primary School	1		In progress
18.	Mpigi	Kitemu Integrated Primary School		1	completed
		Butambala School for the deaf		1	pending
19.	Mukono	Nakaziba Primary School		1	completed
		Bishop West Primary School		1	"
20.	Rukungiri	Nyakibale Lower Primary School	1		In progress
21.	Soroti	Hilders Primary School		2	Completed
		Nakatunya Primary School		1	"
		Apuuton Primary School		1	"
22.	Tororo	Agururu Primary School		1	In progress
Total			14	37	

Source: EARS / Special Needs Education Department - Ministry of Education and Sports.

Table 6 shows staff establishment ceiling summary of special education. It indicates the number of pupils with different categories of disability plus the number of teachers allocated to them. This is for some schools in various districts of Uganda.

There are 1,728 pupils in special schools with a total of 580 special needs education teachers.

Table 6: 1999 Staff establishment ceiling summary for Special Education.

District	School	M / R		V / I		H / I		P / D		Total	
		PP	TR	PP	TR	PP	TR	PP	TR	PP	TR
Apac	Ikwera Negri Disabled P/S	65	22	-	-	89	30	85	28	239	80
Bushenyi	Bushenyi Primary School	14	5	6	2	5	2	5	2	30	11
	Bushenyi Town School	15	5	1	0	3	1	1	0	20	6
Gulu	Gulu Primary School	-	-	40	13	-	-	-	-	40	13
	Gulu Prisons Primary School	37	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	37	12
	Laroo P.7 Primary School	-	-	-	-	131	44	-	-	131	44
Hoima	St. Benaddetta P / S	-	-	15	5	14	5	-	-	29	10
Iganga	Bishop William Dem. P/S	2	1	35	12	-	-	-	-	37	13
	Buckley High School	-	-	8	3	32	11	-	-	40	14
	Busesa Primary School	2	1	2	1	13	4	-	-	17	6
	Iganga P/C Primary School	5	2	2	1	9	3	-	-	16	6
Masaka	Bwanda Primary School	-	-	-	-	36	12	-	-	36	12
Mbale	Budadiri Girls Boarding P/S	-	-	-	-	48	16	-	-	48	16
	Magale Boarding P/S	-	-	30	10	-	-	-	-	30	10
Mukono	Nakanyonyi P/S Annex	-	-	56	19	-	-	-	-	56	19
Soroti	St. Francis Sch. for the Blind	-	-	8	3	22	7	10	3	40	13
Kumi	Ngora school for the deaf	37	12	29	10	22	7	10	3	98	32
Tororo	Agururu Primary School	8	3	3	1	15	5	8	3	34	12
	Agola Primary School	24	8	3	1	2	1	7	2	36	12
	Butaleja Primary School	10	3	2	1	9	3	11	4	32	11
	Kainja Primary School	6	2	3	1	9	3	13	4	31	10
	Mirikit Primary School	23	8	3	1	5	2	9	3	40	14
Mbarara	Tukore Invalid P/S	15	5	-	-	71	24	30	10	116	39
Kampala	Kyambogo Primary School	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	7	22	7
	Shimoni Dem. P/S	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	7	22	7
	Uganda School for the P/D	-	-	-	-	-	-	75	25	75	25
	Uganda School for the Deaf	-	-	-	-	188	63	188	63	376	126
Total										1728	580

Source: Planning Unit - Ministry of Education and Sports.

Key: M / R - Mentally Retarded, V / I - Visually Impaired, H / I - Hearing Impaired

P / D - Physically Disabled, PP - Pupils, TR - Teachers.

3.5 Challenges faced by children with disabilities:

3.5.1 Institutional Challenges

The challenges faced by children with disabilities are associated with the organisations of school programmes, lack of trained teachers, instructional and compensatory aids and inadequate curricular programmes.

1. School Organisation

Although many schools have integrated disabled children, the majority has not yet done anything to adapt the environment to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities. Most children enrolled in the schools depend very much on the goodwill of their fellow children to help for instance in pushing and lifting their wheelchairs, or guiding them from place to place. Some of the schools have not yet adapted their toilet facilities to enable children who face mobility challenges to use them with minimum difficulty.

Some schools / classrooms are overcrowded and it is apparent that a child with disability and using some appliances like bilateral callipers would naturally find it difficult to sit in those classrooms. Movement within classroom is very difficult. Even where the teacher is willing to give some special attention to the children with special needs, with the overwhelming number of children in the class coupled with the movement problem the teacher would be constrained.

The organisation of the school syllabus and the timetable does suite the non-disabled children in some schools. For instance a blind child or one using a wheelchair, or callipers is expected to report to school at the same time like his counterparts. In class, the slow learners are expected to go along with the other children and compete favourably. In all, although integration is the best for children with special education needs, for it to be effective, the school environment ought to be made accessible and user-friendly for the children. Therefore, the way the ordinary school programmes are organised poses a challenge for children with disabilities to access meaningful education.

(2) Lack of Trained Teachers in Special Needs Education

On the basis of integrated educational approach and the qualification grades of the teachers, most schools are well staffed with experienced grade three teachers. However, very few teachers have qualified to teach children with special needs. Most of the teachers are challenged by the special needs of the children with disabilities and there is need for further training to acquire the necessary skills. In some schools there is at least a special education teacher, he/she serves as a point of reference by other teachers. In such cases the children are at least getting some adequate attention. The special education teacher serves as a Head of Department for special education and hence indirectly supervises the teaching of the children with disabilities.

The quality of education accessed to disabled children is also being affected by the teaching burden arising from increased teacher to pupil ratio. Whereas the recommended ratio is 1:3 in case of children with disabilities, in the ordinary schools it is supposed to be 1:40. But with Universal Primary Education it has shot up to 1:110 or even higher in some areas. This means therefore that the teacher is overburdened and can not manage to give individual attention to the needs of each child, in particular, the child with disability. Furthermore, whereas the teaching of a child with disability, for example a blind child require some special skills say in Braille, the ordinary teacher doesn't have such skills. Some schools lack resource rooms from which such resources and teaching aids could be kept. There is therefore a lot of creative teaching with regard to children with disabilities but this has a limit too. Teaching disabled children is big challenge and balancing between the needs of say one mentally impaired child in a big class and the rest of the children is very difficult. However, there is commitment to improve the situation although this is largely dependent on the improved economic performance and turnover of teachers from the Uganda National Institute of Special Education.

Much as Special Needs Education / Education Assessment and Resources Services programme in its decentralised structure has staff carrying out identification, assessment and placement of learners with special needs to appropriate learning environment, the challenge remains situations that require referral such as referral to audiological

services. There are few audiologists in the country at the moment. Services that require this human resource remain not well solved and yet it affects the performance of disabled children. Other professionals like Speech Therapists, Physiotherapists, Social Workers and Educational Psychologists need to collaborate with teachers in tackling Special Needs Education. For that matter, it still remains a challenge for children with disabilities to have access to quality education without the sufficient qualified teachers / personnel.

(3) Lack of Instructional and Compensatory Aids.

The majority of the children with disabilities in schools do not have access to the relevant and adequate teaching and compensatory aids. Special teaching and learning materials include Braille material, tape recorders, cassettes, stylus materials and others. Compensatory aids do include hearing aids, spectacles, wheelchairs, crutches, surgical boots, braces, walking canes, and others which compensate the lost functions of some parts of the body due to the impairment. The teaching and learning of most children with disabilities depends largely on the provision of these special aids. It's the children with mobility problems that have more access to aids. This is largely because they have more opportunities to access rehabilitation than any other types of disabilities.

However, given this scenario, it is apparent that the children with visual and hearing difficulties have a problem of coping with education life. Without the provision for these aids, children with disabilities must face serious challenges to access education. The apparent lack of these aids and appliances, is not because they are not manufactured in the country, rather, it is the question of cost. They are expensive items for a parent to afford and yet the ordinary school budget can also not afford them. However, only schools with resource rooms have got some special equipment like type writers, cassette recorders/tapes, Firkins / Picht / Marburg Braille machines from Uganda Society for Disabled Children but in insufficient quantities. Government has also supplied some equipment to schools with resource rooms.

(4) Curriculum Inadequacies

Although inclusive education is now the recommended approach to meeting the educational needs of children with disabilities, in Uganda the curriculum has not yet been modified to meet the challenges. The curriculum being used in schools was designed with a non-disabled child in mind. The way schools are organised, the subject matter covered, the programming of the academic, extra- and co- curricular activities are not all favourable to children with disabilities. For example, the school academic year is divided into three terms, within each term and year a certain amount of subject matter following a fixed syllabus must be accomplished and an assessment in form of tests done. However, children with disabilities present with special needs that require special programming and approaches to achieve the required results. For example blind children need extra time to learn Braille, deaf children need time to learn sign language, the mentally impaired children need extra time to master what other children get in a relatively shorter time. All this must be catered for in an integrated school setting. Unfortunately, some of the schools have not bothered to think about modifying their curriculum to accommodate the unique needs of children with disabilities. The children with disabilities are expected to follow the normal routine like their non-disabled counterparts.

According to the UPE guidelines, a benefiting child is supposed to progress to the next class, every year. However, a mentally retarded child may need 5 years or more to learn what takes an average child to learn in a year. Even assessing such a child through an ordinary termly test may not be feasible. For example a test meant for one hour may take the mentally impaired child 20 hours to accomplish. So the question of how to rate the children in class using different measures when there may be several teachers teaching different subjects is yet to be answered. To a large extent this is true for other children with disabilities. Due to their disabilities, they are constrained in one way or the other, hence affecting their performance. All these reveal the inadequacies in the school curriculum in Uganda, which need to be addressed, before the children with disabilities can gain access to fulfilling education in an inclusive environment.

3.5.2. Socio-economic Challenges

There are many socio-economic challenges that stand in the way of children with disabilities' pursuit of education. These include poverty, ignorance, negative attitudes and practices.

(a) Negative attitudes and practices.

Despite the efforts by government and non-governmental organisations to sensitise and educate the public about the problem of disability and opportunities for rehabilitation, many people in the community are still ignorant about the existing opportunities for rehabilitation. A good number of those that are aware don't appreciate the need for ~~accessing the opportunities. For instance, there are a series of rehabilitative actions that~~ are a prerequisite to education, such as corrective surgery, screening and assessment, acquisition of rehabilitation aids and appliances. Unless these are looked at as a rehabilitation package, there is likelihood for the parents and even the children always to maintain the attitude of "He/I can't manage". Most of the parents are aware that their children with disabilities are entitled to education like other children.

Negative attitudes are still an obstacle in disabled children's pursuit of education. Lack of interest on part of the parents in the education of their disabled children, the problems arising from the disability itself, and the lack of teachers are three major reasons for children with disabilities' failure to access reasonable education. Mobility and non-acceptable by parents and community are also challenges disabled children face as they try to access education. This is also purely an attitudinal problem. Most of disabled children don't participate in school games and sporting activities and this due to fear of abuse and disability itself. This means disabled children own negative self-esteem.

The negative attitudes are not merely confined at home and the neighbourhood, but are also part of the school system.

(b) Cost of Education

With the onset of UPE and the children with disabilities being given priority among the four children per family to benefit from free education, the cost of education in respect to children with disabilities would seem now a non-issue. However, cost is still a big

issue and yet many households have very limited incomes that cannot sustain the basic needs of the family. In such circumstances then extra costs for education arising out of the disability such as cost for aids and appliances affect the children with disabilities' chances of enrolment and pursuit of education. Whereas the majority of parents / guardians are peasants who by the Ugandan standard live below the poverty line, they do meet an extra cost in trying to access education to their disabled children. This cost is to cater for necessities like purchasing special education materials, compensatory aids like crutches, wheelchairs, hiring an attendant, paying for a guide, buying drugs, transport and others. Therefore, accessing education to disabled children means a little more cost, and the opportunity cost might not be pleasant for the rest of the family members. ~~So even where the parents have positive attitudes, it is not realistic to justify the extra cost which is likely to be met at the expense of the rest of the family members.~~

3.5.3 Environmental Challenges

The physical environment poses a challenge to people with disabilities, and particularly children in respect to accessing education. Right from home up to the classroom, the disabled child grapples with environmental barriers such as stairs, narrow footpaths / trails through the villages that are muddy and slippery during the rainy season, hills, swamps. Most of the children encounter difficulties in their movements to and around school and therefore need more special assistance to reach and cope with life at school. Some of the common problems are like falling down because of uneven paths and school compound, getting tired because of long distance, getting pain because of crawling, difficulties in climbing stairs, using dirty toilets, and others.

There are few schools that have made an effort to adapt their toilets to make them more accessible and usable by disabled children. Most schools have stairs all over the place leading to the classrooms or offices. This means therefore that there is still quite a lot to be done to modify the environment and make it more accessible for all people including people with disabilities.

4.0 Conclusion

Accessing education to children irrespective of ability is a right. All children should be given equal opportunity to education. Unfortunately, world over, for children with disabilities this is not a right. It is only the few lucky ones who get this opportunity. Since the 1950s, however, the struggle has been on to liberate the people with disabilities from discrimination that has bedevilled their world. First started by the people with disabilities themselves in form of advocacy groups, it has grown into a mass movement, which is now challenging the existence of inequalities in the world.

The disabled people believe that the cause of disabilities can be traced from society, and hence solutions must be found from within the same society. Fortunately, many countries including Uganda have risen to the challenges to respond to the needs of people with disabilities in particular children.

In Uganda, although there is still much to do, government has made strides to put in place favourable policies to help people with disabilities overcome this challenging world. At the socio-political level people with disabilities are represented at every Council up to the National Parliament. In education, the children with disabilities have been given priority of registration among the four children to benefit from Universal Primary Education (UPE). However, policies and laws may be put in place, but the challenges are yet to be overcome. Society being the source of disability, the struggle to realise a world free of challenges to the existence of people with disabilities must start from within the family and local community level. Change of attitude and practices must be the starting point.

In all therefore, children with disabilities in Uganda have been given opportunity to access education, but there are still challenges to overcome.

5.0 Recommendations:

The following recommendations have therefore been generated not only for Members of Parliament representing persons with disabilities but also for the planners, policy makers, service deliverers, parents and guardians to take appropriate action to make the ground level for all children irrespective of ability to access quality education:

1. The Uganda Government White Paper on Education recommends inclusive education as the best strategy for accessing education to children with disabilities. In order to realise this, the current ordinary teachers should be given refresher training organised by Uganda National Institute of Special Education country wide to ensure that every teacher gains the requisite knowledge and skills to handle the needs of disabled children in his/her class.
2. Continued and increased community-level sensitisation of parents, particularly the maternal caregiver, as to the importance of education for their children with disabilities. Illiterate or less educated parents should be specific targets for sensitisation. Male heads of households should be encouraged to see the long-term benefits of releasing finances to put such children through school.
3. Community sensitisation must also target the children with the disability themselves- if at an early age they can catch a vision for their future to see their own worth and potential, they will be more willing to make the increased sacrifices required for regular school attendance.
4. For the teachers in the training, the teacher-training curriculum should be immediately reviewed and a special needs component integrated therein. This should be done at all levels including university. Any delays in introducing this component will mean extra resources being required for the future retraining.
5. The existing educational structures were planned without due regard for the needs of the disabled children. It is therefore recommended that government should formally

continue asking the institutions to modify their structures to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. For example, in schools ramps rather than stairs, a white line along the walls to guide the visually impaired, adopted toilets seats and rails to assist people using callipers and artificial limbs should be the norm. To approve any new building structures such measures should be scrutinised carefully.

6. Parents of children with disabilities should play a key role in sustaining their children's attendance by doing the following:
 - a) Communicate supportively and regularly with their child's teacher.
 - b) Request that their child sit at the front of the class.
 - c) ~~Report cruel behaviour of classmates.~~
 - d) Require another child to travel slowly to school alongside the child with disabilities, as protection. In addition, parents can help other children who have disabilities by word of mouth testimonies of how they have accessed help for their own child.

7. Special needs teaching and learning aids plus compensatory aids are some of the items that make the cost of education too expensive for an ordinary Ugandan parent. It is therefore recommended that government set aside more funds to create resource rooms for special needs instructional materials. Besides, government and non-governmental organisations like Uganda Society for the Disabled Children implementing a community based programme, should train parents and local artisans in making and maintenance of simple local aids and appliances such as walking aids, ear moulds and others. These are very important, but expensive items if left to the specialised open market. There should be budgetary allocations for children with disabilities at all levels, so that mobility aids and appliances are provided. Donations and subsidies should focus on relieving children with mobility disabilities from pain as they move long distances. This includes providing wheelchairs, bicycles, properly fitting crutches braces and supports, surgery and physiotherapy. Districts should also revive bursaries for needy disabled children especially those who must go to boarding schools or those costs are extra ordinary.

8. The National Curriculum Development Centre should review the current school curriculum to accommodate the needs of disabled children. This review should go beyond primary education to include secondary and tertiary levels of education. Professionals with specialised knowledge in disability should be incorporated in the Centre's activities.

9. Even with the best trained teachers, due consideration should be given to the teaching burden. The current teacher to pupil ratio is rather too high and nothing much can be expected out of it. To facilitate easy learning, a child-centred teaching approach, where peer learning and teaching is an integral part of the teaching process should be encouraged. ~~But the ratio must all the same be reduced to at least 1:45. And in the~~ circumstances where the teacher has integrated children with disabilities in his / her class some special duty allowance should be set aside for such a teacher in order to boost his/her morale.

10. There are a number of disabled children attending school without even their teachers making any recognition of their disabilities. This means that either the teachers are disinterested or they do lack the necessary knowledge to identify the disabilities. It also means that the children are physically in classes but their needs not getting due attention. In such circumstances it is very imperative to take proactive measures to allow early identification and assessment of disabilities. It is therefore recommended that government trains more child monitors who are already working in various capacities like nurses, teachers, social workers and others to help in early identification and assessment of the children at regular intervals. The parents also need to be motivated to take their children for assessment. This would help the child's history of growth and development monitored closely and appropriate action taken whenever the need arises.

11. Teachers' special awareness regarding the needs of children with disabilities can greatly assist:
 - a) During rainy days, be lenient with lateness or absence

- b) If during the rainy season several days are missed, send work home so the child does not miss too much academic work.
- c) Make an effort to supervise all children during break times, so cruel behaviour does not occur towards such children.
- d) Place the child at the front of the classroom so that she/he doesn't miss out on the actual teaching.
- e) Make sure he/she gets all assignments that other children do.
- f) Provide alternative physical exercises for the child during physical education class; find equipment that the children can play with.
- g) Encourage the other pupils to be friendly towards the children with disabilities e.g. ~~help carry the children's books or lunch, assist in moving the children, or play games~~ with them.

12. Poverty was one of the considerations for government to adopt a Universal Primary Education so as to alleviate the burden of education on the needy families. The cost of accessing education to a child with disability even under UPE is still not affordable for the ordinary parent. Given the fact that most of the disabled children do come from relatively very poor families, and that the raising of the child with disability means a huge opportunity cost for the family, it is recommended that government gives children with disabilities an automatic registration for UPE just like orphans. This will inevitably reduce the temptation of some parents hiding their disabled child in order to give opportunity to the non-disabled children.

13. Raising a disabled child means inevitable extra cost, which eats deep into the family income. It is therefore recommended that the government and other credit schemes like the "Entandikwa", Poverty Alleviation Programme and other credit programmes should consider the existence of a child with disability in the family as one of the criteria for prioritising the beneficiaries.

14. The current curriculum for primary and post primary schools in Uganda is examination oriented and biased towards non-disabled people only. Although recommendations have been made to vocationalise the curriculum, efforts to operationalise the idea is yet to bear fruit. In this case Vocationalisation of the curriculum would be one of the ways to benefit the children with special education needs, since quite a number of them may realistically never aim so high. However, to lead independent lives, they need skills. Vocationalisation is therefore the most singular opportunity that would give them hope and make mainstreaming a realistic proposition.

~~15. Local authorities should keep a register of disabled children within their areas of jurisdiction and give assistance to them whenever possible in order to enable those children grow up with dignity among other children and to develop their potential and self reliance. Local administrators, politicians and others should be trained in understanding people with special learning needs.~~

16. There should be close collaboration among service providers in educational, medical and social rehabilitation to provide an efficient, complete range of services to children with disabilities.

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