

# **Inclusive Education for Children with Visual Impairment in a Developing Country**

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## **I. Introduction**

Concern for the handicapped in the early history of our country started as charitable work by religious and philanthropic citizens. It was only in 1907, when special education was provided for the disabled with the establishment of the Insular School for the Deaf and Blind, later known as the School for the Deaf and Blind.

Several nations in Asia and the Pacific have endorsed the many international and regional instruments guaranteeing the rights of all children and young people. Yet sadly, the vast majority of people with disability in developing countries are segregated and isolated, deprived of even a basic education.

## **II. Rationale**

"No one is useless in this world that lightens the burden of it to anyone else" Charles Dickens

Shaping an education system that embraces all students regardless of race, size, color, ability or disability is the challenge that our country is currently facing. Special educators, school administrators, regular teachers, and support personnel need to collaborate and develop effective inclusive program for children with visual impairment. Thus providing children with visual impairment the same opportunities and educational experiences like that of sighted peers. Allowing blind children and their families to relate in normal situations. And informing the public that visually impaired children can become a productive member of the community. It is in this context that the Department of Education in the Philippines has adopted the policy on Inclusive Education in 1999.

### III. Program Implementation

#### A. Definition of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education in Philippine setting is by integration and mainstreaming. Thereby warm relationship and accepting classroom community embraces diversity and honor differences. For us, it also means preparing and supporting teachers to teach interactively. All areas of learning such as academic subjects and non-academic ones are to be learned by the child thru the SPED teachers. After which the child will be placed in the mainstream and a follow-up lesson will be provided by the SPED teacher.

<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Means:</b>
<b>I</b> -	Integration
<b>N</b> -	Net working
<b>C</b> -	Collaboration
<b>L</b> -	Earning, living, loving
<b>U</b> -	Utilizing all available resources
<b>S</b> -	Support and social services
<b>I</b> -	Implementation of appropriate programs
<b>O</b> -	Organization of appropriate services
<b>N</b> -	Non stop services to all children with special needs

#### B. Teacher Preparation

A summer teachers training program for visually impaired in partnership with the Dept. of Education, Christoffel Blinden Mission, Resources for the Blind, Inc., and Philippine Normal University has been designed to equip them with adequate knowledge and skills essential for the education of visually impaired children. Selected teachers from different regions of the country participated in the training. Training includes Braille reading and writing, orientation and mobility, use of abacus, low vision, preparation of instructional materials, educating multi-handicap children and others.

#### C. School Preparation

Planning is an essential component in ensuring the success of adapting inclusive education in the school. The Department of Education, CBM and RBI conducted an orientation program for school administrators in different regions of the country. Thus, SPED Centers as Resource Centers were established, support services instructional materials for children with visual impairment were provided, technical assistance on the organization/expansion of services were also provided, regular monitoring and evaluation of program implementation thereby conducted.

**Table 1: Enrollment of Visually Impaired Children SY 2005-2006**

Level of Visual Impairment	Preschool	Elementary	Secondary	Residential
Blind	378	736	133	108
Low Vision	153	447	96	49
MH-Blind	211	59		
MH-Low Vision	16	4		
MH-Homebased	38			
Total	796	1,246	229	157

**Note:** There were 2,428 enrollees for the SY 2005-2006.

**IV. Conclusion:**

In developing countries like ours where there are growing numbers of children with visual impairment, inclusion can be apparent as a substitute to reach out children who are not yet reached. Our services for the blind and low vision children has started many years ago but there are only less than 5% who were identified based on the provided statistics. (Please see information on Tables 1, 2 and 3)

Moreover, the Philippine educational system in terms of Special Education has been doing an extra mile to provide quality education to children with visual impairment by providing quality trainings to SPED teachers.

**Table 2: Enrollment of Children with Visually Impaired in Inclusive Schools**

Level of Visual Impairment	Number of Enrolled Children
Blind	811
Low Vision	569
Total	1,380

**Table 3: Enrollment of Children with Visual Impairment in the Mainstream**

Type of School	Number of Enrollment
Residential School	157
Preschool/Self-contained	796
SPED Center	95
Total	1048