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Gertrude Fefoame, Sightsavers' Global Advocacy Advisor

Main Key points

**TOWARD INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

**A Personal Perspective on Inclusive Education AS A TOOL: TO BE FULLY INCLUDED IN THE COMMUNITY; TO AVOID SEGREGATION; TO Learn TO Live Together**

This narration is from an experience in a town in Ghana around the early-70s where there were no formal inclusive education programs in the country. Learners with any reasonable difficulty in seeing were usually sent to the special school for the blind or dropped out of school. I describe it as an “informal inclusive education experience.”

**1. What is about inclusive education that facilitates inclusion in a community, avoids segregation and to learn to live together?**

a. Inclusive education is community based.

b. It involves collaborative efforts of stakeholders.

c. Inclusive education provides a platform for sharing, consultation and broad decision making, usually on consensus basis. It gives room for discussion and tries to address concerns.

d. The stakeholders are cross-cutting. They include:

- State involvement.

- Role models and mentors are critical; especially those from organisations of person with disabilities.

- Community leadership including traditional leaders.

- Parents, including parents of other children in the school.

- Children, including other children in the school.

- Professionals.

e. It builds awareness.

f. It is sustainable as stakeholders are often available.

**2. How did inclusive education help me in society?**

One of the objectives of education is to live and be lived with.

a. Inclusive education equips the learner with disability the same values, knowledge, skills and practices that are common to the other learners and thus is facilitated to fit into the community.

b. It made me appreciate the fact that I am different, but at the same time, I am same as the other learners. This concept/understanding was built among the community of the school.

c. Others were able to learn from me as I also learnt the expectations of the society. It exposed me to both the positive and negative attitudes from the community. This built in me the spirit of ‘accommodation’ as well as appreciation as I learnt to relate and tolerate attitudes I deemed unpleasant.

d. Long-lasting friendships were developed.

e. It inculcates the need to look for areas to assist others as a sharing mechanism (this was to avoid dependency syndrome on others).

f. Inclusive education develops strong ties with family, school, church and community.

g. To be an advocate for oneself, raise awareness and do well to behave properly in order to raise the reputation for persons with disabilities.

**3. What is to be done to make it better?**

Development of a healthy learning environment and provision of adequate Support Services to ensure quality education is achieved

These include

a. Acceptance, recognition and respect. Once these fundamentals are achieved, it makes the provision of the other support services cheaper and effective.

b. Human Support. In Africa, this is critical because systems and provisions when available may not be adequate and consistent. Human support could be drawn from family, classmates, neighbours, teachers and mentors from the organisations of persons with disabilities.

c. Provision of reasonable accommodation such as assistive devices is essential

Accessibility-physical, information and communication are critical to the success of the intervention.

Other areas of healthy learning environment include; policy formulation, curricula adaptation, inclusive teaching methods and other systems need to be put in place.

Inclusive education is the reliable approach that needs to be practised. All required systems and processes need to be put in place in order to offer quality education to every child. It is however envisaged that there may be some casualties along the way. That has to be avoided. But even if that will happen, the gains will outweigh the loses. And therefore I encourage all to embrace inclusive education. I am so optimistic because in my five year secondary education, I could not read print, nor did I know braille. Neither I, my family, nor the institution knew about inclusive education then. I completed successfully the informal inclusive education example. I therefore emphasise that, with strong will by all stakeholders the efforts we are making now should yield positive results.