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Fonds

open the world
for a child
with a disability



CAMEROON

ADVOCACY FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CAMEROON



The practice of Inclusive Education in Cameroon is backed by both national and international legal instruments. Nationally, the country has three important legislative and policy documents that deal with the right to inclusive education of persons with disabilities. Internationally, the country has ratified the UNCRPD and it is also working on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG4.

The Ministries of basic, secondary and higher education are charged with the responsibility of implementing inclusive education in Cameroon. The Ministry of Social Affairs assesses learners with disabilities through its regional delegations, and issues disability cards so that these learners can benefit from education free of tuition fees.

Although the country has a solid legal and institutional framework to safeguard inclusive education, children with disabilities still experience a number of challenges when it comes to access to mainstream education. Most of the children lack self-esteem and have doubt in their own abilities, because of the stigma and the discrimination that they have experienced since their birth. Their parents, relatives and neighbours may not accept them as equal members of the community.

They often stay at home, isolated and hidden, and not being considered important enough to enroll in school and get a proper education. The teachers lack acceptance and are also not equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to teach children with disabilities. There are not enough teachers, and insufficient teaching materials and assistive devices. Moreover, the schools also lack ramps and appropriate toilets, classrooms and recreational spaces to accommodate these children.

SEEPD programme on Inclusive Education

In Cameroon, the Liliane Foundation collaborates with its Strategic Partner Organization Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services (CBCHS). CBCHS has implemented a programme¹ on Socio Economic Empowerment of People with Disabilities (SEEPD) in the north west region since 2009. The programme aims to empower children with disabilities in the north west region by increasing their attendance in mainstream government schools and convincing the government to make inclusive education standard practice in Cameroon. Advocacy has been an important strategy of SEEPD, targeting diverse governmental decision makers at national, regional and local levels.

¹ Funded by CBM



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ABOUT THE LILIANE FOUNDATION

The Liliane Foundation contributes to a world that is open to everyone and in which poor children with disabilities can develop and use their talents. Together with local organizations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, we make children stronger and their environment more accessible.

The Liliane Foundation supports children with disabilities and their families in the fields of health, education, social contacts and work and income. Through our local partner organizations nearly 60,000 children with disabilities annually get access to education.

Achieving Inclusive Education

For the Liliane Foundation, inclusive education of children with disabilities is one of the most important components of its strategy. Inclusive education offers high quality formal and informal learning opportunities for every child within a mainstream system that adapts to the needs of all learners. In order for children with disabilities to attain meaningful inclusive education, Liliane Foundation considers four general principles: acceptability, availability, accessibility and adaptability.

- > **Acceptability** requires from the government minimal standards on the curriculum and quality of teachers. The school is a safe place to learn.
- > **Availability** means that for every child there is a school or learning opportunity close to their home. The school has qualified and trained teachers and appropriate resources and equipment for children with and without disabilities.
- > **Accessibility** means (implementation of) inclusive policies and legislation, acceptance from teachers, peers and other school staff. The school, classrooms including the toilets are accessible.
- > **Adaptability** means that the education system is flexible and the curriculum can be adapted to the needs of each individual learner.

Contact us

If you would like to know more about Liliane Foundation's approach to inclusive education, you can contact Marije Koeman at our International Partnerships and Programmes Department (mkoeman@lilianefonds.nl, +31(0)73 - 518 94 21).

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CBCHS used diverse advocacy activities to persuade the decision makers of the importance of inclusive education. These included mass sensitization through the media (television, radio and newspapers), formal and informal meetings with politicians, training of education authorities and school administrators, creation of parent support groups, piloting inclusive education in government schools, and providing specialized advisory support to strengthen government capacity in the field of inclusive education.

Since 2009, the SEEPD programme has been able to create 'demand' for inclusive education by sensitization of the general public, religious and traditional leaders, and especially parents and caretakers, to the importance of education for their children. SEEPD succeeded in convincing the government to pilot inclusive education in 17 government schools, demonstrating the possibility of inclusive education to the government. It further lobbied the government to adopt a new, inclusive examination policy for the Anglophone part of Cameroon. SEEPD also provided an embosser to the GCE Board for improved braille translation of exams. Last but not least, SEEPD, in collaboration with 18 Municipal Councils, has signed action plans for disability mainstreaming. A focal person in each Council was assigned to act as an intermediary between the Councils and SEEPD. As a result of increased engagement of the government, and improved awareness and knowledge of teachers and other school staff, the number of children with disabilities who have accessed mainstream schools has increased every year, for example from 259 in 2015 to 318 in 2016.

The next steps for CBCHS, with continued support from the Liliane Foundation, are to widen the implementation programme from regional to national level, and to reach out to more children with disabilities who still do not have access to mainstream schools.



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