Guiding questions for outlining our understandings and perspectives of inclusive education

Contribution by Italian Development Cooperation – Central Technical Unit Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Mina Lomuscio, Raimondo Cocco, Alessandra Curti, Lara Marchi)

1) WHAT ARE THE VALUES UNDERPINNING EDUCATION POLICY AND/OR CURRICULUM IN YOUR OWN CONTEXT?

The Art. n. 34 of the Italian Constitution assure the right to education: “the school is opened to all…”

School is considered an educating community that welcome every student with the goal to build relationships and pedagogical premises in order to promote the best development of the child.

Act no.59/1997 e the law n. 275/1999 foreseen that formal educational system should create the most favourable conditions for and implement all the proper actions in order to achieve for all the students the best educational results.

The values underpinning education policies in Italy are inspired by equality, freedom, respect for the diversity, acceptance and integration of the person “without any distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions”.

It is the commitment of the Italian Republic to remove all the obstacles of economic and social nature which can limit the personal freedom and guarantee same opportunity for all and the effective participation in the political, economic, social and cultural life, both for individual and their communities in the country.

2) HOW DO YOU / YOUR INSTITUTION DEFINE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

The Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGDC) of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs funded a number of initiatives geared towards persons with disabilities in the field of education, health, labour, social welfare and cultural life.

Thanks to such a national legislative framework, the Italian Cooperation has always considered disabilities in the context of an inclusive approach, much beyond providing special services for persons with disabilities. The Italian Development Cooperation (IDC) is committed to de-institutionalization, school integration, training and rehabilitation at national and local levels.

The foundation of the Italian current laws is the Framework Law No. 104 of February 5, 1992 for the Assistance, Social Integration, and Rights of Persons with Disabilities1. This Law drew inspiration from an approach based on promoting human rights and gave way to a more modern and fitting culture of inclusion. This framework law hinges on the integration of the

1 http://www.governo.it/GovernoInforma/Dossier/agevolazioni_disabili/L_104.pdf
initiatives and on a **holistic approach** toward persons with disabilities and their families, ensuring that persons with disabilities are assisted generally and individually.²

In 2002 the IC approved the Guidelines for persons with disabilities. The objective of the document was to favour equal opportunities in education; not only to formal scholastic education, but to all kind of non-formal education offered by families, organizations, groups or members of the local community, etc.

Persons with disabilities were provided access to learning not by segregating them in separate schools but by changing the ordinary school system so they could be integrated and their special needs met.

Integrated education is centred on the persons and adapted to their specific needs, respecting differences, and educating them to cooperate and respect diversities, valuing talents and promoting the child-to-child approach as main educational tool.

In 2007 Italy signed and ratified the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD)³. With the Convention has been consolidated the **social model of disability** according which disability is due to the interaction between the deficit of functioning of the person and the social context⁴.

Article 24 of the CRPD (education) was written taking into consideration the Italian model. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, IC shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and life long learning directed to:

- a. The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
- b. The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
- c. Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.

In July 2010 the Italian Development Cooperation updated the “Guidelines for the introduction of the disability issue within the policies and activities of the Italian Cooperation. – Ministry of Foreign Affairs” that contain a set of recommendations in order to strengthen the efforts to promote disability in the Italian development agenda, in accordance with the spirit of the UN Convention. The Guidelines were drafted with the involvement of civil society organizations, national and local institutions and universities. On the basis of the Guidelines, the IDC is currently funding initiatives to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in several countries⁵.

In line with the objective of this guidelines, Inclusive education is one of the disability-specific initiatives aimed to promote a disability mainstreaming approach.⁶

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⁴ Guidelines on integrating education of students with disabilities – Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) http://www.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/115c59e8-3164-409b-972b-8488eec0a77b/prot4274_09_all.pdf
⁵ “Guidelines for the introduction of the disability issue within the policies and activities of the Italian Cooperation. – Ministry of Foreign Affairs “
⁶ Mainstreaming is: “integrating the disability perspective in all phases of development policies and processes: design, implementation, monitoring and assessment in view of promoting equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in all aspects of life - social, economic and cultural. By developing a participatory approach, the mainstreaming strategy ensures that all players are involved, responsible, connected and integrated.” See publication ‘Disability, International Cooperation and Development: the Experience of the Italian Cooperation 2000-2008’ and ‘Creating an inclusive society: Mainstreaming Disability based on the Social Economy Example’ European Standing Conference of
In many projects funded by the IDC in the sector of education has mentioned the ICF (International Classification of Functioning) that is the universal instrument used to describe and measure health. The new classification measures health, and thus also disability, but it takes into consideration the person as a whole, within his or her environment. So, in measuring health, the environmental aspects are considered first and foremost, and linked directly to the health status. It follows that disability is defined as a health status in an unfavorable environment.

3) WHAT IS THE ROLE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE EDUCATION POLICY?

In the past decades Italy considered disability utilizing a medical model in which the disability was related to physiological and psychological abnormalities (caused by disease, disorder or injury) that needed medical treatment. Along this time the model used to understand disability has progressively changed and Italy has been one of the first countries that started to apply a social model which consider disability as a result of all the disadvantages caused by the physical and social restriction of the lives of people with disabilities.

For this reason coherently Italy signed and ratified the UN Convention for persons with disabilities: “disability is an evolving concept and results from the interaction between a person’s impairment and obstacles such as physical barriers and prevailing attitudes that prevent their participation in society”.

As of the 1970s, the Italian Parliament enacted several of laws to support national and regional polices for the integration of persons with disabilities:

- **Act no. 118/71 (art.28)** establishes that also disabled students are to fulfil the obligation of compulsory education in common schools, except for the most severe cases (which included the blind, the deaf, the severe intellectually and physical disabled, such as the tetraplegic, that is those that cannot move their four limbs and often cannot speak).

- **In 1977 Act no. 517** established the principle that all disabled pupils of the primary and middle schools from the age of 6 to 14 years are to be included (imposing also that all the teachers of the class are obliged to prepare an educational plan, supported by a specialised teacher for “didactic support” and that the State, the Local Authorities, and the local health units are to define an administrative and financial plan). Administrative relations among the different services had to be governed by “agreements” among the different public institutions, which could sign agreements with private organisations to fulfil the obligations they undertook with the “agreements”.

Over time, education support systems were extended to high school and university levels. Today, each university has an office that provides educational aid, access to students’ quarters, and individual services for students with disabilities.

- In 1987 the Constitutional Court issued **sentence no. 2155/87** recognising the full unconditional right of all disabled pupils, even in situations of severity, also to attend secondary schools, and imposing all the authorities involved (school administration, local authorities, local health units) to provide the services of their competence to support general school integration.

- Since the early **1990s**, Italy’s commitment to establishing a set of provisions in support of persons with disabilities has been based on the full recognition of their rights and their

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Co-operatives, Mutual Societies, Associations and Foundations (CEP-CMAF), 2007
dignity. Important legislative and financial instruments were developed which translated into services, mostly at the regional and local levels. Provisions that ensured opportunities and good practice were promoted and developed based on a progressive acquisition of responsibility by relevant government agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), and private citizens.

- The right to education for all persons with disabilities, from elementary school, was confirmed by Law No. 104/92, which contributed to placing Italy on the cutting edge in developing a fully inclusive school system. This Law sets principles and values, recognizes the rights of persons with disabilities as citizens’ rights, identifies interventions, and provides for services that ensure autonomy and social inclusion; it provides for instruments and operative processes supporting the family and the autonomy of persons with disabilities, specifically regarding those with severe disability.

- The Italian legislation on persons with disabilities significantly evolved when Law No. 68/99 on Provisions for the Right to Work of persons with disabilities was passed in 1999. The scope of this law is to “promote job placement and integration of persons with disabilities in the job world through support services and targeted placement.” This law is spearheading European and international efforts. It adequately and innovatively regulates the right to work of persons with disabilities and for the first time it recognizes not only the need for mandatory quotas – which were established by Law No. 486 in 1986 – but the need to bring forth the abilities and the potential of the workers. For this purpose, the Law establishes targeted placement, a process that evaluates the workers so as to match them with the best job opportunities. These core values were at the root of the International Classification of Functioning.

- Italy also adopted other legislative provisions that anticipated principles recognized by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, such as Law no. 4/2004 to facilitate access of persons with disabilities to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment. This Law was followed by implementation laws that defined rules and processes to guarantee access to information systems to persons with disabilities.

- With Law No.18 of March 3, 2009, the Italian Parliament ratified the CRPD, which added an International legislative tool to the body of laws already in force in Italy in support of the integration of persons with disabilities and their families. The ratification law also established the National Observatory on the Condition of persons with disabilities. Within two years of the ratification, and every four years thereafter, the Observatory will issue a detailed report on the measures that were taken to ensure that the provisions mandated by the Convention are implemented and progress is achieved in related areas. Moreover, with the objective of setting the stage to progressively implement the principles of the Convention, the Observatory will “set up a two-year plan of action to promote the rights and the integration of persons with disabilities, in compliance with national and

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8 A consultative body to provide scientific and technical advice on disability matters, composed by 40 members, of which 14 appointed by associations of persons with disabilities, three by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, and others from different ministries.
The Observatory will also promote the collection of statistics on disability and assign studies aimed at identifying priorities for actions and interventions for the rights of persons with disabilities.

4) WHAT ARE THE STRUCTURES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

Ever since the enactment of the Law No. 104/92, various institutions, organizations, governmental bodies and political decision-makers have embraced the themes regarding disability and opened new opportunities for associations, volunteer organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), cooperation and private citizens, supporting the promotion of the fundamental rights and favouring the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Act. no. 104/92 establishes responsibilities of the Ministries, regions and municipalities.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies – Directorate General for inclusion and social policies - act as the focal point for Italy, in coordination with other relevant ministries and departments, as well as regional and local authorities. This Ministry promotes policies: a) to support persons with disabilities and b) to monitor the implementation of the legislation.

Regions can implement several actions in the social, educational and rehabilitation field within the National Health Plan and the regional planning of health, social or educational-cultural services.

Municipalities carry out social and health interventions provided for act. No. 104/92 within the framework of the regional legislation giving priority to the improvement, reorganization and strengthening of existing services.

The decentralization occurred in the last decade entailed the assumption of responsibility by the decentralized agencies in the matters assigned to them. The Regional School Offices assumed a strategic role in order to planning the actions and manage the resources in favor of inclusive education of pupils with disability.

Therefore, in order to identify the needs of the local area and promote related actions, it’s essential the collaboration between local authorities (regions, regional health agencies, municipalities), services (local health offices, cooperatives, communities), and schools.

5) WHAT ARE THE MAJOR DEBATES AROUND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ON DIFFERENT DOMAINS (E.G. CURRICULUM, STRUCTURES, EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT, LEGISLATION, POLICY, SCHOOL-RELATED ISSUES, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES)?

In Italy the national organisations and federations representing persons with disabilities have been involved in the decisional processes on disability issues, at national, regional and local level.

The debate on inclusive education takes into account the “Guidelines on integrating education of students with disabilities” of the Ministry of Education. The guidelines identify issues and proposals for action on various issues and institutions involved in the integration process and recognizes the educational responsibility of all school staff.

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Moreover the Guidelines confirm the necessity of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in accordance with the Local Authorities and the families of children with disabilities. The IEP is the document which describes the integrated action prepared for the pupils with disabilities for the realization of the right to education.

Every three years a national Conference is held to discuss the way in which the basic Law on the social integration of disabled persons, Act no. 104/, is implemented in Italy. (Ministries, Regions, the representatives of the associations of the Local Authorities, the trade unions of Workers, the enterprise, the associations of the disabled and their families, the most important federations of volunteer organisations and the co-operatives that manage services on behalf of the local authorities are invited).

The Italian debate tries to give answers to:

- What is a good inclusive education?
- How can activate the learning processes in children with different abilities?
- What skills must have a good teacher to work with children with disabilities?
- How to train teachers so they are well prepared for the inclusive education?
- How can inclusive education be adapted methods of assessment?
- How to deal with the problem of immigrated children with disabilities?

This last bullet point it’s very important. In Italy more and more immigrated children are present in the Italian schools: between primary and secondary school Italy has approximately 15,000 students out of a total of more than 500,000 immigrated in the classroom. The number of them increase with very high rates. Data available from the last year (2009/10) indicate that, while the complex of immigrated students increased by 7% over the previous year (from 500,000 to about 540,000), the number of immigrated students certified with disabilities has increased at a very high rate up to 20%, from about 12,300 to ca 14,500 pupils.

Therefore, Italy is facing a double educational challenge because the needs of their non-national students (very different linguistic and cultural background) join the specific needs related to different kind of disabilities.

The Italian experience helps the IDC to formulate projects in less developed countries where various linguistic, cultural and religion backgrounds are often present in the classrooms.

**Resource Centers for Integration**

A very important issue being discussed is about the creation of the new Resource Centers for Integration (RCI), the upgrading of the professional skills of the learning support teacher in education, careful monitoring and finally a small-scale testing of a new model inclusive education for pupils with disabilities.

It could be possible main maintaining the actual level of resources allocated (human resources, technologies, public-school and more) through a more flexible utilization of these resources, avoiding those very steal mechanism that make more difficult the inclusion process.

This new approach consists in the upgrading of all the teacher (not only learning support teacher) through: a) high specialized training in order to have all the teacher able to teach to the pupils with disabilities in the classroom, b) to ensure the full co-responsibility of all teachers c) enhance the autonomy of schools and enabling effective collaboration between schools, family, social and health services and local community.

A RCI should have the task to examine projects submitted by schools and allocate resources for integration.
The Italian debate mentioned above inspire the IDC in the formulation of projects in less developed countries taking into consideration the cultural, economical, social and political background of each country.

6) WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN YOUR WORK IN DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION?

The Millennium Goals, in particular those concerning poverty reduction and health, will continue to inspire Italian Co-operation, as will sustainable development and protection of the environment.

The document “Italian Development Cooperation 2010-2012 - Programming guidelines and directions” refers to internationally adopted criteria in the field of aid effectiveness and to the specific recommendations made to Italy by the OECD in the 2004 and 2009 Peer Reviews. The programming guidelines are based on a comprehensive concept of development assistance, founded on shared responsibilities and managed through transparent co-operation between donors and recipients, the public and private sector and civil society, central institutions and local governments.

The commitments made at the EU and international levels, and in the perspective of the Italian G8 Presidency, to reduce aid fragmentation and maximise the value added of each donor, make it necessary to identify a limited number of priority sectors for the three-year period.

1. Agriculture and food security, 2) Environment, land use and natural resource management, with special emphasis on water 3) Health 4) Education 5) Governance and civil society, including support for e-government and information and communication technologies (ICT) as a poverty reduction tool 6) Support for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

Italian Co-operation will also remain committed to certain cross-cutting issues during the coming three-year period through integrated and multisectoral initiatives, such as promoting women’s empowerment and assisting vulnerable groups (minors, the disabled).

With regard to minors, Italian Co-operation will carry out initiatives to protect and promote the fundamental rights of young children, adolescents and young people in order to foster the sustainable development of the communities to which they belong, thereby strengthening the crucial role played by new generations in developing peace and democracy. In particular, initiatives will be undertaken to reduce the exploitation of child labour for sexual or commercial purposes, and the genital mutilation of young girls and adolescent women. There will also be activities to support justice systems for juveniles that take into account their special needs and are aimed at their social reintegration, and to protect child and adolescent soldiers and victims of armed conflicts.

With regard to the disabled, in line with the New York Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 13 December 2006, Italian Co-operation will promote initiatives based on the principle of social inclusion and an approach of community-based rehabilitation. The financing of programmes to promote social legislation on disability will continue to be a priority sector, ensuring the continuity of the Italian commitment of recent years.

When drafting the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006, Italy had the possibility to carry out a propulsive action by making its contribution to certain priority areas, for those concerned instance to the role of international cooperation, the importance of adopting specific measures for women and children.
with disabilities, inclusive education, as well as the important role that family has for a person with disabilities.

With the approval of the CRPD, the Italian Cooperation has a specific role to play based on the mandate assigned by Art. 32 of the Convention. In line with the principles of the Convention in 2008 the IDC approved the “Guidelines for the introduction of the disability issue within the policies and activities of the Italian Cooperation” updated on a yearly basis, which lists priority areas and four cross-sector themes among which “persons with disabilities”.

The Italian Guidelines foresee: a) Training activities b) Twin track approach c) Intervention in cases of emergency d) Specific financial investment to fund initiatives for people with disability e) Enactment of measures concerning “Accessibility” f) Ensuring coordination and consistency of policies on disability to improve Cooperation activities g) Systematic data collection according to the OECD – DAC categories h) Collaboration with other cooperation agencies for development i) Involvement and support of organizations of persons with disabilities l) Valuing the NGOs m) Business community involvement n) Sharing information and experiences with Italian institutions and utilizing their knowledge and experience o) Monitoring and evaluating the application of Guidelines.

The aforementioned Guidelines provide for the involvement of DPOs in developing cooperation programs. They are based on a human rights approach where persons with disabilities are recognized “the right to develop their individual capabilities through full integration in their own socio-cultural context.”

The concept of inclusive education that IC wants to create, through its projects, is based on an approach that is able to meet the needs of every single child taking account the individual needs and have to be able to identify time, objectives, activities, laboratories, educational activity and adequate staff.
ITALIAN REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- Constitution of the Italian Republic.
- Law No. 482/1968 on Compulsory Job Placement of People with Disabilities.
- Law No. 118/71 on Conversion of Legislative Decree No. 5, 30 January 1971, into Law and New Regulations Concerning Disabled Persons.
- Law No. 517/77, articles 2 and 7, prescribing regulations on the evaluation of students and on the abolition of re-sitting exams as well as other regulations modifying the school system.
- Guidelines for Rehabilitation Activities, Programming Department, Ministry of Health, Rome, Italy 1998
- Law No. 68/99, prescribing regulations for the right of disabled people to work.
- Initial indications for the implementation of Law No. 68, 12 March 1999 initiating the Regulations for the Right of Disabled People to Work, Ministry of Labor and Social Security.
- Law No. 127/97; Opinion of the Council of State of March 15, 1999; and Circular No. 72 of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, General Directorate for Employment of October 13, 1999, on compulsory hiring, registration of disabled persons of working age, and reducing age limits for access to public employment.
- Law No. 68 of March 12, 1999, and Decree of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security of November 22, 1999, on criteria on forwarding information sheets by employers subject to the rules and regulations on the matter of compulsory hiring.
- Circular No. 76 of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security of November 24, 1999, on compulsory hiring, first definition of the competences of the central and peripheral offices following the transfer of functions and tasks on the matter of the job market from the State to the regions and provinces.
- Circular No. 77 from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, of November 24, 1999.
- Policy and coordination act on the matter of compulsory employment for the right of disabled people to work, instituted by article 13, section 4, of Law No. 68 of March 12, 1999. Decree of the Prime Minister of January 13, 2000.
- Regulations including provisions for the operation of the National Fund for the right of disabled people to work, instituted by article 13, section 4, of Law No. 68 of March 12, 1999. Decree No. 91 of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security of January 13, 2000.
- Initial indications for the implementation of Law No. 68 of March 12, 1999, including the Regulations for the Right of Disabled People to Work. Circular No. 4 from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, General Directorate for Employment - Division III, January 17, 2000
- Compulsory hiring. Further indications for the application of Law No. 68, March 12, 1999.
- Law No. 62/00 on Regulations for Equality at School and Dispositions on the Right to Study and Learn.
- Framework Law No. 328/00 to implement the integrated system of social actions and services.