UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation
A.Y. 2024/2025

Human Rights, Disability and Inclusive Education

Empowerment of children with disabilities through Inclusive/Natural Education and Arts

Author: Vitória Viana Assis
Supervisor: Ajda Hedžet

Word Count Declaration: 25674

Acknowledgements

This thesis, a culmination of sustained effort and passion, would not have been possible without the profound supports and guidance of many individuals.

Foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr Ajda Hedžet. Her intellectual brilliance, unwavering availability to help, and unparalleled patience illuminated every challenging step of this research. Her incisive feedback not only refined my arguments but fundamentally shaped my approach to school inquiry. It was a privilege to learn under her mentorship.

I am profoundly thankful to Dr Petra Roter, whose discerning questions and insightful comments in class greatly inspired this work. Her passion for teaching and engaging students challenged me to think more critically about my topic while continuing to hold faith for a better world.

I would like to express my gratitude to the EMA Team and to the entire Global Campus staff. Your efforts to keep this programme alive are incomparable and do not go unnoticed.

A special thank you to the incredible teams of Right Livelihood, ShareMusic & Performing Arts, and ALDEPA. Your support throughout this fellowship research provided me with invaluable materials and learning opportunities. Thank you to my interviewees whose insights brought this thesis to life, transforming it from theory into lived reality.

To the vibrant EMA community and friends I made along the way: thank you for the intellectual discussions, shared insights, and invaluable camaraderie. But above all, thank you for the genuine friendship and laughter that lit up the foggy days of Lido.

A heartfelt thank you to Dhruv, Valentin and Zuzanna who formed a dream team of Student Representatives and offered comfort in stressful times; to Luna, for her boundless kindness, unwavering

support, and invigorating friendship; to Ben, who made moving to Ljubljana easier with his friendship and contagious Irish joy.

Finally, words cannot express my gratitude to my family and friends:

To Fabio, for reminding me have my feet on the ground and for being the best friend through all my moments; to Maria Eduarda, for the tangerines and every precious moment that left a sparkle in my eyes; to Isabela, for our enduring sisterhood; to Rafaela, for understanding me without a single word; to my family in Brazil, who remind me of my roots when I dare to dream and fly far.

To my partner in life, Bárbara, who fills me with the purest love and wholehearted support, even when it means watching me from afar. You keep me strong.

To my twin sister, Valentina, whose faith and love carry me through all of life's storms. Being your sister is the greatest gift.

Lastly, à minha mãe, Maria França Silva Viana, nascida ribeirinha nas beiras do rio Paruru: você é a minha maior inspiração e referência de força, superação, resiliência e bondade. Obrigada pelos seus sacrifícios, sempre fazendo o melhor que podia com o que tinha. No fundo, eu sei que não faria diferente – nem melhor.

Abstract

This thesis investigates how inclusive education, enriched by natural and artistic approaches, empowers children with disabilities to enjoy their human rights, particularly and not limited to conflict-affected settings. Drawing on qualitative case studies from Cameroon, Brazil, Sweden, and Uganda, it examines how inclusion is conceptualised and operationalised amid diverse sociopolitical contexts marked by social inequality, resource scarcity, and armed conflict. The research highlights that inclusive education is a dynamic, rights-based process that fosters agency, participation, and holistic development, transcending mere physical access. Central themes include the critical role of arts and creative expression in overcoming communication barriers and supporting psychosocial well-being, the importance of community and stakeholder engagement, and the challenges posed by governance disconnects and cultural resistance. The study reveals that conflict exacerbates exclusion through damaged infrastructure, stigma, and limited resources, yet inclusive education offers pathways for resilience and empowerment. Methodologically, the thesis employs a mixed-methods design combining qualitative interviews with professionals working with children with disabilities, comprehensive literature reviews, as well as analysis of secondary data, including international normative frameworks and policy documents. While limitations include sample size and direct inputs from children, the thesis contributes and advocates for sustained investment, participatory approaches, and context-sensitive policies to ensure equitable educational access and meaningful inclusion for children with disabilities, whether in stable or fragile environments.

Global Campus Europe

Table of Contents

Introduction

In 2024, more than one in six children globally lived in conflict zones, forced to face unthinkable violations. As one of the most vulnerable sections of the population, children are affected by war not only in the same ways as adults, but also in different ways due to their dependence on care and empathy of adults. As highlighted by Santa Barbara (2006, pp. 891-894):

"[…] impacts in childhood may adversely affect the life trajectory of children far more than adults. Consider children who lose the opportunity for education during war, children who are forced to move into refugee or displaced person camps, where they wait for years in miserable circumstances for normal life to resume, if it ever does. Consider a child disabled in war; they may, in addition to loss of a limb, sight, or cognitive capacity, lose the opportunity of schooling and of a social life. A girl who is raped may be marginalized by her society and lose the opportunity for marriage. Long after the war has ended, these lives will never attain the potential they had before the impact of war".

The United Nations Security Council identified and condemned six grave violation against children in times of war, and between 2005 and 2023, based on the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) established in 2005, more than 347,000 grave violations were verified against children, committed by parties in more than 30 conflict situations across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. Additionally, to the threats against children's development listed by the Secretary General of the United Nations, children with disabilities face a deeper peril when it comes to the impacts of conflict. UNICEF estimates nearly 240 million children – one in ten worldwide – have a disability and the efforts to collect data on these children remains a challenge, even in times of stability, which can be related all the way to the different ways countries define and measure disability, together with low disclosure rates given to discrimination, violence and fear of stigmatisation.

Human rights struggles have long been a keystone of the international order, developing through shifting priorities and global context advancements. In the realm of children with disabilities' rights, Arts and Music together with Inclusive Education, social, cultural and legal political factors can serve a crucial role filling in the gaps where traditional approaches may fail to address, such as systemic exclusion and resource inequality, rigidum and standardised curriculum, and an overemphasis on compliance over growth. However, scholars have highlighted that the combined effort between an artistic and inclusive education, a rights-based framework, and the rights enshrined on both the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) remains ethereal for children with disabilities, particularly in the light of evolving global challenges and advancing human rights standards under the rising number of armed conflicts in the past decade.

The primary goal of this research is to examine educational ways of empowerment of children, with special attention to children with disabilities under conflict situations, and the implementation of Inclusive Education as a way of tertiary prevention of conflict – the damage limitation process. Building on Human Rights-Based approach to Education (HRBA) and the Social Model of Disability (SDM), it also analyses normative framework existing at overlapping international norms, where both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities set out obligations for protection and fulfilment of rights of children. Drawing on the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols of 1977, as well as Resolutions 2475 (2019) and 2501 (2021) passed by the UN Security Council, the international normative framework for the protection of children under armed conflict, urges Member States to provide "timely, appropriate inclusive and accessible assistance to children with disabilities who are affected by armed conflict, including reintegration, rehabilitation, and psychosocial supports"

After all, both Conventions, CRC and CRPD, emphasise that there is no limitation on the scope of proceedings in which the child can be heard. This should not only include issues that are interpreted as "disability-related" but also issues that more generally affect all children.

Research highlights that rehabilitation in conflict-affected setting must go beyond medical treatment to encompass psychosocial support to foster empowerment and social integration (Krahn et al., 2015, pp. 3-6). Inclusive education is recognised as a critical tool of rehabilitation, providing children with opportunities to regain skills, build resilience and participate meaningfully despite disrupted environments (Miles & Singal, 2010, pp. 115-117). Furthermore, scholars argue that rehabilitation requires data-driven approaches to identify children with disabilities, many of whom remain invisible due to stigma and inconsistent definitions across countries. This invisibility hinders targeted interventions, stressing also the important of community-based rehabilitation (CBR) models that integrate education, health, and social services, tailored to support children's holistic recovery and inclusion (Mactaggart et al., 2016, pp- 5-8; Hartley et al., 2020, pp. 12-15). Scholarly consensus aligns with the data showing millions of children living in conflict zones facing grave violations and exclusions. Rehabilitation efforts anchored in inclusive education are essential to mitigate these impacts, promote recovery, and uphold the rights of children with disabilities, especially affected by conflict.

Moreover, it needs to be emphasised that the rights violations experienced by children with disabilities tend to be intensified by the numerous barriers faced when affirming such rights. Scholars researching barriers faced by children with disabilities, therefore frequently examine theoretically and practically how Art and Inclusive/Natural education can serve as a pertinent and dynamic tool in

advancing global human rights protections and how they can play an important role in rehabilitation of children (not only with disabilities) who suffer under armed conflict situations.

While there are no accurate figures on how many children with disabilities are affected by war, 15% of the world's population has a disability, with a higher percentage in developing countries, which only increases in armed conflict and crises (e.g. approximately 28% of Syria's current population is estimated to have a disability, which is double the global average. Furthermore, the majority of children with disabilities in developing countries remain out of school and are completely illiterate, with more than 80% children with little to no access to services). More should be done to put into practice the most effective actions to include children with disabilities in all levels of society, warns UNICEF (2023, pp. 4-6), especially in terms of education, as 90% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school, which leaves them even more vulnerable. As indicated previously, the relevance of this research comes from the attempt to investigate how Inclusive Education is a relevant tool to bridge the gaps between theoretical frameworks and practical implementation for children with disabilities, including in these circumstances in which they are more vulnerable.

The focus on natural and artistic learning environments offers potential solutions to several identified limitations faced by traditional educational settings, particularly in contexts with limited infrastructure. Research demonstrates that arts-based education provides alternative modes of communication and expression that accommodate the diverse needs of children with disabilities, fostering meaningful participation and empowerment (Kolar, Kocijancic, & Kovac, 2024, pp. 5-12). Moreover, art-integrated environments also enable learners to overcome sensory and communicative barriers by creating flexible, accessible spaces that promote engagement through low-cost, multisensory settings that support emotional regulation and cognitive functioning (Upchurch, 2024, pp. 3-7; Newman, 2020, pp. 20-35). Collectively, these findings underscore the critical role of natural and artistic pedagogies in creating accessible, inclusive learning spaces that empower children with disabilities by addressing diverse learning needs and fostering holistic development.

This thesis seeks to investigate: (1) How does Inclusive Education empower the enjoyment of human rights for children with disabilities, in conflict situations? It examines theoretically and practically how Art and Inclusive/Natural education serve as tool for empowering and advancing global human rights protections of children with disabilities in distinct scenarios, including those under armed conflict situations. The master thesis is supported by *four* case studies to serve the purpose of collecting contextual, participant-centred data that can illuminate the complex phenomena and support the development and theoretical construct of this research.

The second chapter approaches framework and elaborates key concepts of the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to education and the Social Model of Disability, critically reflecting on their theoretical foundations, practical applications, and limitations. It aims to contribute to the scholarship on children with disabilities with a nuanced understanding of these normative frameworks, essential for advancing inclusive education for children with disabilities in conflict contexts. Based on multidisciplinary perspectives of the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to education and 'the Social Model of Disability' as conceptual and legal frameworks, the academic focus envisioned for this project is situated within Human Rights expertise and scholars that engage with human rights-based approaches to disabled children. Building on this foundation, the chapter critically engages with the paradigms of inclusive and natural education, drawing on the educational philosophies of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Jean Piaget, and Darcy Ribeiro. Their contributions provide a rich interdisciplinary and global perspective on learner agency, holistic development, and social justice in education, which are integral to the rights-based approach.

The third chapter consists of a normative analysis that turns towards the overlapping protections in international law under the scope of the CRC and CRPD, collectively with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2475 (2019) and 2501 (2019) form a robust international framework that highlights how these treaties mutually reinforce the right to inclusive, quality education and protection, especially in conflict situations. Together these instruments create a layered normative framework that operationalise these rights in conflict contexts by demanding protection, humanitarian access, and accountability.

The fourth chapter shifts focus to the practical dimensions of inclusive education. It outlines the core elements that constitute effective inclusive system, including policy, curriculum, pedagogy, and community engagement. It then explores artistic and natural practices in inclusive education, emphasising their role in fostering creativity, emotional well-being, and cultural inclusion. The chapter further discusses the benefits challenges, and evaluation methods associated with these practices, grounding the discussion in empirical evidence and case studies that illustrate real-world applications and outcomes. The empirical chapter provides critical insights into how inclusive education can be effectively implemented and sustained, particularly for children with disabilities in diverse and conflict-affected settings.

Finally, the thesis concludes by synthesising the theoretical, normative, and empirical findings, reflecting on their implications for policy, practice, and future research. It underscores the transformative potential of inclusive education, especially when informed by human rights frameworks and enriched

through artistic and natural pedagogies, to empower children with disabilities and uphold their fundamental rights in all contexts.

By focusing specifically on children with disabilities — who experience compounded vulnerabilities — this thesis addresses an intersection in scholarship that has received insufficient attention in both human rights and disability studies literature. While scholars have highlighted educational exclusion and exacerbated barriers, the investigation in this thesis aims to complement the existing knowledge by focusing on empowerment and rehabilitation processes and in this way aims to contribute to broader understanding of how rights-based approaches can be operationalised in situations where traditional institutional supports are absent or compromised. Furthermore, the focus on conflict situations addresses a critical gap in disability studies, which has historically emphasised peacetime exclusions and rights violations. Conflict creates unique opportunities for both increased marginalisation and transformative social change, making it an important context for understanding how disability rights can be advanced through education innovation — children with disabilities in conflict situations need approaches that both strengthen their immediate capacity for rights enjoyment and contribute to long-term recovery and development processes —.

2. Implementation tools of HRBA and SMD: Inclusive Education

The second chapter explores two foundational frameworks that guide inclusive education for children with disabilities: the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and the Social Model of Disability (SMD). It begins by defining the HRBA, tracing its historical development from early human rights movements to its current application in education, and critically examining its key strengths and shortcomings. Following this, the chapter introduces the SMD outlining its emergence as a critical response to medicalised views of disability, its influence on policy and practice, and the challenges it faces in fully addressing lived experiences of disability.

It highlights how inclusive education, enriched by arts-based methodologies, embodies the rights and social justice imperatives central to these frameworks by promoting learner agency, participation, and equity. Lastly, the chapter concludes by reflecting on the importance of acknowledging the limitations inherent in both HRBA and SMD, while affirming their continued relevance as guiding tools for advancing inclusive education. The analysis is grounded in a comprehensive review of secondary sources, including scholarly literature and practice-oriented resources on human rights, disability studies and inclusive education.

2.1 From early integration models to current rights-based and equity-focused approach to inclusive education

The earliest approach to inclusive education known as 'integration model' emerged in mid-20th century, particularly in the United States, as a response to the limitation of separate educational institutions. It placed children with disabilities in regular schools but often required them to adapt existing systems, sometimes relying on withdrawal classes or remedial education. Early integration models maintained the structure of traditional schooling, making "additional arrangements" for exceptional children rather than fundamentally changing school environments to meet multiple diverse needs (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997, pp. 12-15). As Winzer (2009, p. 157) explains, although 96% of students with disabilities were served in general school buildings, the degree of their inclusion in the mainstream classroom was limited. The students with disabilities that participated in the integration model therefore often attended special classes or "resource rooms" separate from their peers for part of the day, and the mainstream classrooms remained largely unchanged in curriculum and teaching methods (Winzer, 2009,

pp - 155-160). Similarly to integration, the model of "mainstreaming" which was developed parallel to integration model, focused on placing children with mild disabilities into regular classrooms.

However, it differed from integration due to the significant support from but with significant support from paraprofessionals or withdrawing remedial instruction (e.g., a student with a mild learning disability might attend general education classes but receive targeted reading intervention in a separate resource room supported by a paraprofessional) (Salend, 2001, pp. 110-115). Notes that mainstreaming aimed to fit children into existing educational environments bit did not challenge the fundamental design of these environments, often resulting in stigmatisation and limited access to the full curriculum.

The mainstreaming approach was therefore rooted in the medical model of disability, emphasising remediation and normalisation of the child rather than addressing societal barriers. Warnock's (1978) influential report in the UK further articulated types of integration included in this model — locational, social, and functional – highlighting that many children with disabilities that were included in this model were physically present in mainstream schools but often segregated socially or functionally through separate classes or curricula (Whiterose, 2003, p. 4).

This typology of integration therefore illustrates how early integration models often perpetuated separation within the mainstream setting rather than true inclusion. In practice, integration models relied heavily on "remedial classes" where children with disabilities received specialised instruction outside the mainstream classroom (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2011, pp. 78-82). This not only reinforced the notion of difference but also limited opportunities for meaningful peer interaction and participation in the full school community (Whiterose, 2003, pp. 3-5).

However, by the late 20th century, the concept of inclusive education also began to take hold, which increasingly advocated for restructuring schools to meet the needs of all learners – not only those with disabilities (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006, pp. 16-18). The shift to inclusive education therefore recognised that learning difficulties could arise from a wide range of social, psychological, economic, linguistic, or cultural factors, not just physical or intellectual disabilities. The "inclusive education" paradigm in this way called for systemic changes to curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture to accommodate all learners equitably (Winzer, 2009, pp- 199-205).

Furthermore, since the late 20th century, the evolution of Inclusive Education spanned from early integration models to contemporary rights-based approaches and has been importantly shaped by several theoretical and legislative milestones. Although the Human Rights Approach originates earlier, notably with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, its principles have been progressively integrated into to inclusive educations since the late 20th century. The UDHR's

recognition of education as fundamental right for all children, regardless of ability, provided a foundational ethical and legal basis that informed later inclusive education policies and practices (United Nations, 1948, art. 26; United Nations, 2021, pp. 2-3). The mention of the UDHR, as well as the following approaches in the next paragraph, represent an evolving continuum of human rights ideals, that laid normative groundwork and progressively operationalised educational model for inclusive education and its understandings in the present.

The Special Needs Approach, prominent around the 1990s, focused on addressing the needs of children with disabilities in ensuring their access to mainstream education, emphasising tailored support within existing systems but did not fully challenge systemic barriers (Mittler, 2000, pp. 47-49). Building on this, the Equity and Diversity Approach emerged in the 2000s, expanding the focus beyond disability to include all marginalised and vulnerable groups, thereby emphasising equity and diversity as central to inclusion in education (Florian, 2014, pp. 519-521). Finally, the Transformational Approach, developing since 2005, advocates for systemic change in education to accommodate all learners, moving beyond individual accommodations to whole-school reform — it reflects a mature stage in the evolution of inclusive education, where rights-based principles and equity considerations converge to promote genuine inclusion (Slee, 2011, pp. 75-78).

On the other hand, there are important normative instruments, such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) which emerged as a result of the 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain. The resulting Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, endorsed by 92 governments and 25 international organisations (UNESCO, 1994, p. iii; European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2014, p. 4), called for ordinary schools to accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, linguistic, or other needs. It emphasised that inclusive schools are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all.

On top of that, as another international milestone, the previously mentioned CRPD, which was adopted on the 13th of December 2006 and entered into force on the 3rd of May 2008, additionally contributed to the process that established inclusive education as a legal and ethical imperative (Ainscow, 2020, p. 23; UNESCO, 2020, p. 15). It aimed beyond integration, requiring not only access, but also meaningful participation and achievement in quality education for all (Norwich & Kelly, 2004, pp. 112-113; Mittler, 2012, pp. 35-37). The foundation of inclusive education therefore rejects segregation not only in the CRPD but also as a broader principle in contemporary inclusive education discourse,

emphasising the rights of children with disabilities to learn alongside their peers in mainstream settings (Ainscow, 2020, p. 25).

Moreover, it is important to highlight that in the 21st century scholars such as Mel Ainscow (2020, pp. 22-25) and Lani Florian (2014, pp. 518-520) have further expanded the concept of inclusive education to include systemic change, teacher training and curriculum adaptation to foster equity and participation (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011, pp. 345-347). For this reason, inclusive education is today widely recognised as a human right and a cornerstone of equitable education systems (Ainscow, 2020, pp. 23-26; UNESCO, 2020, pp. 14-16). Furthermore, contemporary understanding tends to be defined by the following characteristics: 1) restructuring of schools and teaching to accommodate all learners; 2) a focus on participation, belonging, and achieving full human potential to every student; 3) the recognition of diverse needs of children, including those arising from disability, language, culture, and socioeconomic status; and 4) ongoing reforms to teacher training, curriculum assessment and school culture (Ainscow & Miles, 2008, pp. 20-22; Florian, 2014, pp. 519-521). Moreover, it also stems from the four just discussed characteristics that the concept of inclusive education has evolved from limited integration models that was developed in the mid-20th century to a comprehensive rights-based approach, that is in the third decade of the 21st century is underpinned by international agreements and a growing recognition of diversity and the needs for systemic change (Mittler, 2000, pp. 45-48; Ainscow, 2005, pp. 7-10).

2.2 Inclusive and Natural Artistic Education Paradigms

The philosophical roots of contemporary educational thought draw heavily on figures such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Jean Piaget, and Darcy Ribeiro, each contributing to found ideas that emphasise learner agency, holistic development, and creativity. These thinkers were selected as a starting point for reflection because their work not only provides essential groundwork for education but also offers interdisciplinary and global perspectives that align closely with the aims of this research. Specifically, their theories contribute to understanding how education can be designed to empower leaners, accommodate diverse developmental trajectories, and foster critical engagement – key themes that underpin this study's focus on inclusive education and systemic change (Biesta, 2010, pp. 45-48; Freire, 1970, pp. 34-37; Piaget, 1972, pp. 12-15; Ribeiro, 1999, pp. 475-478).

By situating this research within the intellectual traditions established by these seminal thinkers, the study gains a robust foundation that supports its inquiry into how educational systems can be reimagined to promote equity, participation, and learner centred practices. Their collective emphasis on

learner agency and holistic development informs the conceptual framework guiding this thesis, while their global and interdisciplinary reach ensures relevance across diverse educational contexts.

To better comprehend the approach used to support this research, there is an importance distinction to be made. Although these inclusive educational paradigms share a commitment to the dignity and agency of the learner and oppose exclusionary, one-size-fits-all education, there is a difference to be made between Inclusive and Natural Education. Namely, that Natural Education prioritises the child's natural growth and self-actualisation, often focusing on individualised learning trajectories without necessarily addressing systemic barriers or rights frameworks (Deci & Ryan, 2000, pp. 68.70; Rogers, 1969, pp. 45-47). Inclusive Education, in contrast, is explicitly grounded in human rights principles, aiming to dismantle societal and institutional barriers that exclude children with disabilities, emphasising legal entitlements and social justice (UNESCO, 2020, pp. 14-16; Slee, 2011, pp. 75-77).

This means that natural education's emphasis on the individual can overlook structural inequalities, including those faced by children with disabilities or those living in conflict zones (Foucault, 1977), whilst Inclusive Education's rights-based approach is more attentive to systemic discrimination but faces practical challenges such as resource limitations, lack of trained personnel, and entrenched social attitudes (Hehir et al., 2016, 45-47). Realistically, both paradigms risk idealism without concrete policy, funding, and community engagement. However, for scholars and practitioners, these frameworks still do offer complementary insights: Natural Education's focus on the learner's development and voice aligns with empowerment, while Inclusive Education's legal and systemic orientation provides tools for advocacy and accountability. Together, the Natural Education and Inclusive Education, therefore, can inform useful strategies capable of ensuring that children with disabilities, especially and including in conflict settings, can access education that respects and promotes their human rights (Mendenhall et al., pp. 102-105; Slee, 2011, pp. 80.83).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau is pioneer to inclusive and natural education as his ideas laid foundational principles that challenge traditional, rigid schooling systems He believed children are born inherently good and that education should protect children from harmful societal pressures, advocating for education aligned with the child's natural development, arguing then that education should nurture the child's innate capacities rather than impose rigid structures (Rousseau, 1762/1979). Learning in harmony with a child's innate curiosity instead rigid construction is to respect natural growth and the individuality of the learner. Rousseau's philosophy is the idea that children can learn best through direct interaction with the natural world and sensory experiences, such as play and self-directed exploration (UK Essays, 2025, p.

109) — he inspired progressive educational models such as Montessori and Waldorf schools, which emphasise hands-on learning, and holistic development (Teachers Institute, 2025).

John Dewey (1983) emphasised experiential learning and a democratic education fostering critical thinking and social participation. To him, engaging in real/world problems empowered creativity and flourished critical thinking via reflection and interaction. He believed education should not be about passive reception of information but about engaging learners in meaningful problems to stimulate interests and learning reflection (The Education Hub, 2021, pp. 1-2). For Dewey, education was a social process to prepare individuals to participate in democratic society: schools as miniature communities where cooperation, communication, and respect for others are cultivated (REFERENCES). With this social orientation, children are able to participate fully and can learn with their natural interests engaged. Like other scholars, Dewey viewed education as life itself; that is, a continuous process of adapting to and interacting with the environment. This holistic view aligns with the inclusive and natural principles considered presently, as it also understands a teacher as a facilitator instead of an authoritarian figure (Structural Learning, 2023; SAGE Journals, 2021, pp. 4-6). Importantly, Dewey's Laboratory School (1896) exemplified these ideas by involving children in projects that integrated academic subjects with practical activities, such as learning chemistry through cooking or arts by drawing, thus making learning tangible and somewhat inclusive (SAGE Journals, 2021, p. 5; Open UGA, 2015).

Jean Piaget and his theory of cognitive development emphasises how children actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment. Jean Piaget contributed insights into cognitive development stages (Piaget, 1952). His key points related to stage-specific learning and readiness, as well as social interaction and collaborative learning. Piaget identified four stages of cognitive development – sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational – each characterised by distinct ways of thinking (Simply Psychology, 2025). His emphasis on "readiness" means that education should be adapted to the learner's developmental stage, avoiding premature introduction of concepts and ensuring that teaching matches the cognitive capacities of all learners, including those with disabilities. Although Piaget focused on individual cognitive development, his theory acknowledges the role of social interaction in learning. Collaborative problem-solving and peer interaction help children advance their thinking by fostering cooperative learning environments where learners support each other. Through his dynamic process of assimilation and accommodation, Piaget describes how learners adjust their mental schemas in processes that drive cognitive development: integrating new information into existing schemas and modifying schemas when new information does not fit. Piaget's theory informs special education by helping educators tailor instruction to cognitive

developmental levels, incorporate hands-on activities, and design inclusive classrooms. It optimises learning outcomes for students with disabilities by emphasising active engagement and appropriateness.

Paulo Freire is profoundly relevant to the research of inclusive and natural paradigms because his pedagogy centres on dialogue, critical consciousness, respect for diversity, and the empowerment of learners as active participants in their own education. His educational philosophy challenges traditional, hierarchical, and exclusionary models by promoting education as a liberating process that values students' experiences and cultural backgrounds. Education as liberating and inherently inclusive and humanising. Freire's approach rejects the "banking model" of education, through which knowledge is simply deposited into passive students. He advocates for "problem-posing education", where teachers and students engage in a dialogical process of reflection and action (praxis) that transforms both the learner and society (Freire, 1970/2000, pp. 72-75) — this dialogic method fosters adaptability and respects differences that promotes equity. Paulo Freire's dialogical pedagogy foregrounded critical consciousness and emancipation (Freire, 1970) by its emphasis on enabling learners, especially those with disabilities and marginalised backgrounds, to recognise and challenge oppressive social structures that hinder their participation and learning (Freire & Macedo, 1987, pp. 45-47). This focus on empowerment not only integrates students but transform educational systems to accommodate diverse needs in a meaningful way. His *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) revolutionised educational thought by framing education as a practice of freedom and empowerment, particularly for oppressed groups. It resonates strongly with human rights and democratisation goals and underscores the natural, ongoing process of becoming, where learners are "unfinished" beings who grow through inquiry, dialogue and reflection (Cohn, 1988, pp. 5-7).

Darcy Ribeiro highlighted the cultural and social roles of education (Ribeiro, 1987) due to his pioneering advocacy for a democratic, full-time, and socially equitable public education system that recognises and addresses the diverse cultural and socioeconomic realities of Brazilian children. He emphasised education as a tool for cultural identity and national integration, focusing on indigenous and marginalised populations through full-time schools (CIEPs – Integrated Centres of Public Education) and as a means to provide comprehensive education that includes cultural and social development, going beyond mere academic instruction. For him, schools were essential to guarantee equal educational opportunities for children from poor and excluded groups, enabling them to overcome structural disadvantages and challenges (Faria & Silva, 2023, p. 6; Ribeiro, 1997, p. 476).

Ribeiro critically diagnosed Brazilian public education as elitist and unprepared to receive children from socially and economically disadvantaged groups. He coined the term "pedagogia vadia"

(idle pedagogy) to describe schooling that ignores the material and cultural deficiencies of poor children, yet demands the same performance as from privileged peers, thereby perpetuating exclusion and failure (Faria & Silva, 2023, pp. 6-7; Ribeiro, 1984, p. 19). Education was inseparable from social justice and democracy. He viewed it as a fundamental right that should empower all children, especially those historically marginalised, to participate fully in society — his efforts and anthropological background informed his understanding that education must be culturally sensitive and responsive to the lived experience of students. Ribeiro was instrumental in shaping Brazil's educational policies, including the approval of the Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education (Lei nº 9.394/96), known as the "Lei Darcy Ribeiro," which reinforced inclusive and democratic principles in education.

2.3 Understanding the Human Rights-Based Approach to Education

The HRBA represents a conceptual framework that places human rights and corresponding state obligations at the heart of policy development and implementation, fundamentally transforming how scholars and practitioners understand provision of services to vulnerable populations. This approach aims to address shortcomings of traditional charity-based or needs-based models by recognising individuals as rights-holders with legitimate claims rather than beneficiaries (Greer, S., & Löfving, 2024, pp. 1-10). In this sense, for human rights scholars and practitioners working within framework models, the HRBA offers a systematic methodological framework that not only ensures interventions by duty-bearers address immediate needs, but also very importantly strengthen the underlying structures and relationships that determine whether rights can be claimed and enjoyed overt time — in this way aiming for a long-term resolution (UNICEF, 2015, pp. 12-16; OHCHR, 2012, pp. 8-12**)**.

The HRBA operates through two primary objectives with the aim of creating a dynamic relationship between empowerment and accountability. First, it seeks to empower rights-holders to claim and exercise their rights, moving from passive reception of services to active participation in determining the conditions of their own lives. Second, it aims to capacitate duty-bearers who have obligations to respect, protect, promote, and fulfil human rights, whether those be state or non-state actors) (UNDP, 2006, pp. 7-10; OHCHR, 2012, pp. 15-18). This binary focus serves for a transformative potential that extends past service delivery to encompass systemic change in power relations and institutional arrangements (Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi, 2004, pp. 33-36; Gaventa, 2006, pp. 23-27). Scholars have therefore based the operational framework of HRBA on five interconnected principles, each carrying specific implications for educational programming in conflict-affected settings: Participation,

Accountability, Non-discrimination and Equality, Empowerment, and Legality — "PANEL" (UNICEF, 2015, pp. 20-25; OHCHR, 2012, pp. 20-24).

Correspondingly, Participation represents the first key element of the operational framework that ensures the right of children with disabilities to be active in decision-making processes that affect everyone's rights enjoyments (Hart, 1992, pp. 5-7; Lansdown, 2011, pp. 12-15). Scholars highlight that this principle challenges traditional top-down approaches to humanitarian education by demanding meaningful consultation with children, families, and communities affected by both conflict and disability (Boyden & de Berry, 2004, pp. 45-48; Save the Children, 2016, pp. 30-33).

The second principle, accountability, emerges as mechanisms that require duty-bearers to be held responsible for failing to fulfil their obligation towards rights-holders, with effective remedies available when human breaches occur. Remedies can include judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, such as court cases, ombudspersons, or truth commissions. In educational contexts, this turns to enforceable standards for inclusive education and clear pathways for redress when there is discrimination. For children with disabilities in conflict situations, the principle of non-discrimination and equality demands attention to intersectional bias that add to their vulnerabilities. All individuals are entitled to their rights without discrimination of any kind, requiring active prohibition, prevention and elimination of all its forms. Empowerment is particularly relevant for children with disabilities who have historically been excluded from decision-making processes about their own development and education. This principle aims to ensure individuals and communities understand their rights and can meaningfully participate in developing policies that will either directly or indirectly affect their lives. Finally, the last principle, legality, calls for the approaches to be aligned with legal rights established both in domestic and international law, as this closes the gap between theoretical frameworks and legal obligations that can be enforced.

It follows from the explained principles that the HRBA is grounded in key universal human rights principles – non-discrimination, equality, participation, accountability, and transparency – that guide all aspects of education from policymaking to classroom practice (INEE, 2024). This can also be seen from the UNICEF's "Education for All (EFA)" framework that operationalises HRBA through three interlinked dimensions 1) Access, in which education must be available, accessible, and inclusive for all children without discrimination (Right to Education Project, 2007); 2) Quality, in the way that education should be relevant, child-centred, and resourced adequately to enable children's full development; and 3) Respect, the learning environment must uphold children's dignity, protect their rights, and encourage meaningful participation.

The EFA Framework's importance lies in its global endorsement by 164 governments and its role in shaping international education policy and programming, making a key reference point for inclusive education efforts worldwide (UNESCO, 2015, pp. 1-3). However, limitation include challenges in fully translating rights-based principles into practice, both in peaceful settings and conflict-affected areas. Therefore, HRBA in UNICEF practices recognises and emphasises children as both active rights-holders and duty-bearers (states, educators, communities), accountable for fulfilling these rights (UNICEF, 2008, pp. 10-14). This approach is therefore particularly critical in conflict settings, where education can often serve as a protective and empowering space (Sida, 2015).

In practice, the UNICEF's 'Education for All Framework' (EFA) and Education Strategy 'Every Child Learns' are very appropriate choices as to illustrate the applicability of rights-based approaches because of their comprehensive and adaptable models for inclusive education, especially critical for children with disabilities and those affected by conflict (UNICEF, 2008; UNESCO, 2020). The EFA movement is one of the most comprehensive applications of rights-based approaches to education globally. Operationalised through UNICEF's strategic framework, EFA emerged after decades of international commitment, from the Jomtien Declaration (1990) and its reinforcement through the Dakar Framework for Action (2000). The latter framework welcomed "the rights-based approach to education supported by the UNDH" and committed the international community to achieving education to "every citizen in every society", setting down the foundation for understanding how inclusive education can serve both as a right and a gateway to other rights.

With the vision to ensure all children learn, UNICEF's contemporary Education Strategy adopted three interconnected goals to directly address challenges faced by children with disabilities in conflict situations. Firstly, the goal of equitable access to learning opportunities, which recognises that access alone is insufficient without potential equity, especially when reaching most marginalised children. Under this light, for children with disabilities in conflict areas, there is the bigger challenge of approaches that can overcome conflict-related barriers whilst simultaneously address disability-related exclusions (UNICEF, 2008, pp. 20-23). Secondly, the goal of improved learning and skills for all shifts the focus towards more meaningful educational outcomes, acknowledging that "the conventional assembly of education inputs is not improving learning outcomes". This recognition emphasises adaptability and comprehensive skill development, close to the needs of children who must navigate aforementioned challenges. The third goal of 'every child learns' requires improved learning in emergencies and fragile contexts, directly and explicitly recognising that "conflicts, instability and natural disasters take their toll on education and are a major barrier towards attaining Education for All. It acknowledges how, for

children with disabilities, conflict damages not only physical infrastructure and wellbeing, but also the cultural and social systems that determine exclusion.

As can be seen from the discussed example, the EFA creates space for innovative approaches such as Inclusive Education and Natural and Arts-based methods that can operate in contexts where traditional educational infrastructure may be compromised or non-existent. The framework's reference to country-level ownership also supports locally adapted approaches that can respond to specific and contextual factors affecting children with disabilities, recognising that achieving universal education requires "special technical support" for the complex crises contexts (UNESCO, 2000, pp. 5-8).

2.4 The Social Model of Disability

The SMD represents a paradigmatic shift in understanding disability. It aims to move inclusive tools away from the individual deficit models that view disability as 'individual flaws' or in need of 'pity', such as the Medical Model or the Charity Model, to structural and environmental analyses of exclusion and marginalisation (Oliver, 1996, p.32). The key insight of scholars that designed SMD's is that disability results from social barriers, rather than individual impairments, which provides a powerful lens for understanding how conflict situations can actually create, compound, or alleviate disabling conditions through environmental and social changes.

Nevertheless, with the emergence of alternative paradigms (e.g. the Human Rights Model), the SMD remains highly pertinent for addressing specific challenges faced by children with disabilities, such as inaccessible environments, discriminatory attitudes, and systemic exclusion. Added value is seen besides peaceful situations, in conflict scenarios, such as the increased risk of violence, the lack of access to basic services (e.g. health, education, and social services), and the multiple harm created via stigma and discrimination.

The connection between the SMD and rights-based approaches is well established in scholarly literature, positioning disability not merely as a social phenomenon but as a matter of human rights and social justice. The SMD's emphasis on removing societal barriers aligns closely with the principles enshrined in human rights frameworks such as the CRPD, which consequently highlights how disabling conditions are rather exacerbated by systemic failures to uphold rights that respect dignity, non-discrimination, and participation (Devandas et al., 2017; Shabana et al., 2024, pp. 2459-2462).

For human rights scholars and professionals working with children with disabilities in peaceful and conflict-affected settings (Oliver, 1996, pp. 45-48; Shakespeare, 2013, pp. 20-22), the SMD offers several analytical tools. Firstly, it directs attention away from the attempt to "fix" children and toward

transforming the environments and systems that create barriers to their participation and learning. In conflict situations, this is particularly valuable considering scenarios where traditional support systems may be disrupted and that requires creative adaptation of environments rather than waiting for specialised services to be restored. Secondly, the SMD's focus on collective actions and social change, too, resonates strongly with rights-based approaches that emphasise systemic transformation over individual accommodation (Mitra, 2020, pp. 5-7; Thomas, 2007, pp. 110-113). In education, this translates to designing learning environments that are inherently accessible and inclusive rather than perpetually reproducing exclusionary systems with add-on supports — for children with disabilities under conflict situations empowerment comes by positioning them as part of broader community recovery efforts, instead of separate cases that require specialised intervention.

However, valid criticisms of SMD have emerged in the period of two decades marked by the application of SMD model in practice and scholarship. Scholars firstly argue that the SMD structural focus can minimise the real impact of impairment on an individual's lived experiences, potentially overlooking the need for impairment-specific supports; especially in conflict zones where resources often are severely constrained. Consequently, the SMD's emphasis on barrier removal, while powerful, may not fully address the complex trauma and psychosocial needs that children with disabilities experience. Secondly, it has been pointed out that the model's analysis can sometimes obscure the ways individuals' experiences of violence require both systemic change and individualised support. For example, children who have acquired disabilities through conflict-related violence may not be captured by the model's separation of impairment from disability (e.g. the complex process of adapting to both changed bodily capabilities and psychosocial environments).

The SMD emerged in the late 20th century as a response to the dominant medical model, which focused primarily on individual impairments and sought "cures". Disability rights activists and scholars began to challenge this perspective by emphasising the role of societal structures, attitudes, and environments in disabling individuals. This paradigm shift was driven by growing advocacy for civil rights, accessibility, and inclusion, highlighting how social exclusion and physical barriers, rather than impairments themselves, were the root causes of disability. The development of the SMD was thus both a political and intellectual movement aimed at transforming how society understands and addresses disability. However, despite its transformative impact, the SMD has faced criticism for sometimes overlooking the lived realities of impairment and the complex interaction between individual health conditions and social factors. Critics argue that the model can underemphasise the importance of medical care and personal experiences of pain or limitation, prompting the development of more integrative

frameworks such as human rights models that seek to balance social and medical perspectives (Williams, 2015, pp. 22-23).

Developed by disability rights activists, among which Michael Oliver (1990) was especially important, the SMD reframes disability as the result of societal barriers rather than individual impairments. In his seminal work *The Politics of Disablement*, Oliver (1990) articulates that even though individuals may have impairments, it is the failure of society to accommodate these differences that leads to disablement. In his contribution, Oliver (1990) calls for the removal of physical, attitudinal, and institutional obstacles to enable full participation of persons with disabilities. In this way, his work and SMD aim to shift the focus from "fixing" the child to changing society and stands in contrast to the medical model, which locates disability within the individual and diagnosis and treatment as primary means of addressing exclusion.

In education, the SMD is directly linked by shifting the focus from students' impairments to the removal of barriers within educational environments — the SMD underpins inclusive education by calling for systemic transformation of accessible infrastructure, adapted curricula, and teacher training to accommodate diverse learners (Barnes & Mercer, 2010). Children with disabilities, especially in conflict situations, face acute challenges, as armed conflicts exacerbate existing barriers. Schools are destroyed, resources become scarce, and networks of support disintegrate. Because the breakdown of social order and prioritisation of immediate survival needs in conflict settings leave these children's educational and development needs unmet, entrenching cycles of marginalisation and poverty (Mendenhall, Devries, & Ismail, 2017, pp- 102-105; Save the Children, 2019, pp. 12-15), the relevance of inclusive education is even more profound in conflict-affected environments. The rights-based approach aims to not only foster resilience, but also social cohesion and long-term peaceful and sustainable development by equipping all children with the skills and confidence to participate in an active manner (UNICEF, 2015, pp. 20-23; UNESCO, 2020, pp. 22-25).

However, one cannot dismiss the fragility of the practical application of inclusive education for which the X calls in peaceful and in conflict zones. Limited funding, shortage of resources and trained experts are examples of challenged that hinder the creation of truly inclusive classrooms. Only 3% of humanitarian aid is currently allocated to education, according to the World Bank. This funding is distributed globally but is particularly focused on fragile, conflict and violence (FCV) settings, with the World Bank being the largest external financier of education in these contexts. However, children in conflict-affected areas are among those most in need quality learning opportunities Moreover, there is also the risk of superficial inclusion, where children with disabilities may be present but do not receive

the tailored support they require, highlighting even more the importance of prioritising inclusive education in both, peace and conflict settings, planning and policy.

2.5 Limitations and Critiques of Framework Approaches

The HBRA and the SMD share foundational principles and common aims centred on promoting inclusion, dignity and equality for marginalised populations, including children with disabilities. Both frameworks emphasise the removal of structural and systemic barriers that prevent full participation and seek to empower individuals as rights-holders, whilst advocating for accountability of duty-bearers and highlighting the importance of non-discrimination, participation and social justice in educational spheres (Lubell, 2005, p. 742; Sida, 2022, p. 4). While SMD focuses on the analysis and dismantlement of disabling social structures, HRBA provides a normative and legal framework, reinforcing the joint efforts by creating a foundation for internationally recognised rights and obligations, especially in complex settings such as conflict scenarios.

While the overview of key defining features of HRBA and SMD provide valuable conceptual foundations for studying Inclusive Education' tools, the study of their application, especially in conflict-affected settings, reveals significant limitations that must be highlighted. Scholars and practitioners have firstly noted that the HRBA's emphasis on accountability and legal remedies, while theoretically sounds, often encounters practical challenges in contexts where state capacity is compromised, and legal systems may be non-functional or actively hostile to human rights claims. Secondly, for children with disabilities in conflict situations, the assumption that duty-bearers can be held accountable through normal and political channels may not reflect the reality of collapsed or corrupted institutions. Connectedly, the HRBA's participatory principles can be challenging to implement meaningfully with children who have communication disabilities or cognitive impairments, particularly in the chaos and displacement that characterise conflict situations. The assumption that rights-holders can effectively advocate for themselves may not count for the ways that both disability and conflict trauma can permanently or effectively affect an individual's capacity for self-advocacy. This represents a limitation of the approaches that points to the need for a more nuanced understanding on how participation can be facilitated across different types of disabilities and developmental stages.

Moreover, it should also not be overlooked that the UNICEF' EFA framework, despite its comprehensive scope, has been criticised by scholars for its standardised approach to educational quality and outcomes that may not adequately accommodate diverse learning styles and capabilities. Importantly,

scholars have highlighted that its emphasis on measurable learning outcomes can inadvertently reinforce exclusionary practices when applied without sufficient attention to the diverse ways that children with and without disabilities demonstrate learning and development, especially in situations where they are at higher risk for have equally been made visible in the scholarship, particularly regarding its structural determinism and potential neglect of and individual agency and experience (Grech, 2015, pp. 45-47; Mitra, 2020, pp. 10-13). The SMD's emphasis on structural barriers may not fully capture the dynamic ways that agency and environment interact, more specifically in situations of conflict where individuals and communities are actively working to rebuild their lives and social structures (Shakespeare, 2013, pp. 25-28; Goodley, 2014, pp. 60-63). Children with disabilities should not be conceptualised as passive recipients of either oppression or liberation, but rather active agents in reconstructing their own identities and capabilities within changed circumstances (Thomas & Loxley, 2007, pp. 755-78; Runswick-Cole & Hodge, 2009, pp. 38-41).

2.6 Connecting Summary and Partial Conclusion

This subchapter has explored the theoretical and practical intersections between the HRBA and the SMD, as well as key education frameworks (e.g. EFA and 'Every Child Learns'). The SMD's paradigmatic shift from viewing disability as an individual deficit to understanding it as a result from social barriers provides a critical understanding for addressing exclusion, particularly for children with disabilities; and the HRBA complements the SMD's inclusion efforts by grounding it in normative frameworks. However, both approaches face challenges in fragile settings where institutional capacity is weak, and the realities of conflict complicate even more the implementation of rights and inclusive policies. Overall, the analysis underscores the necessity of integrating structural, rights-based, and context-sensitive approaches to create inclusive education systems that are resilient, both in peaceful and conflict-affected environments.

The convergence of the HRBA and the SMD offers a robust conceptual foundation for advancing inclusive education for children with disabilities, with consideration in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. While their shared focus on promoting participation is essential, practical constraints demand careful adaptations. Future efforts should prioritise flexible and contextually informed strategies, aiming to balance structural reforms with recognition of individual agency — inclusion as a lived experience for all children. Both frameworks complement each other: HRBA provides the legal and ethical foundation to claim rights, while the SMD offers a practical lens to identify and dismantle barriers. Together they

are essential for designing inclusive education policies that empower children with disabilities in conflict-affected environments.

3. Analysis of human rights norms and protection tools that ensure Inclusive Education for children with disabilities

The third chapter analyses the legal framework underpinning inclusive education for children with disabilities, focusing on the overlapping provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The aim is to highlight how overlapping international human rights norms mutually influence the right to inclusive, quality education and protection, especially in conflict situations. Alongside the conclusion, the chapter is structured in three parts. In the first subchapter I explore the intersection and convergence of key rights enshrined in both conventions – including education, participation, protection from violence, and family life — demonstrating how these interconnected rights create a comprehensive normative foundation for inclusive education. The subsequent subchapter addresses the practical challenges and legal obligations that arise in implementing these rights within conflict-affected settings. This comprehensive analysis aims to lay groundwork for understanding complexities of applying international human rights normative frameworks to promote inclusive education and safeguard children with disabilities, particularly in contexts of instability and crisis.

3.1 Intersectional human rights protection: the convergence of the CRC and the CRPD

The normative framework protecting children with disabilities emerges from the intersection of two powerful international human rights instruments: the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRC was pioneering in explicitly including disability as a ground for protection against discrimination, notably in Articles 2 and 23, which ensures that no child should face discrimination based on disability and their rights to live a full and dignified life with social integration (UNICEF, 2013, pp. 4-5). The CRPD further supported this framework by adopting a comprehensive human rights model that rejects the earlier medical and charity approaches to disability. Article 7 incorporates the CRC's principles of the best interests of the child and the right to be heard, therefore bridging the two conventions and highlighting the rights of children with disabilities to express their views freely and have those views taken into due consideration (Sabatello, 2014, pp. 3-6).

The joint statement issued by the UN Committees on the Rights of the Child and on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2022 represents a milestone in harmonising their interpretations and

recommendations — it is underscored the interrelatedness of the CRC and CRPD principles concerning children with disabilities and calls for States to adopt comprehensive measures to eliminate discrimination, exclusion and violence. This convergence creates a robust, protective framework that recognises children with disabilities as holders of both child-specific rights and disability-specific rights, requiring states that ratified the CRC and CRPD to address their needs through comprehensive, intersectional approaches (Meekosha, 2011, pp. 45-47; Lundy & McEvoy, 2012, pp. 207-209).

For human rights scholars and practitioners, it is essential to understand the dynamics of intersectionality at these overlapping protections for educational interventions that are legally grounded and practically effective in conflict-affected settings (Petersen, 2019. Pp-. 485-488; Mazurek & Winzer, 2022, pp. 90-92), because this approach highlights the multifaceted vulnerabilities of children with disabilities as both children and persons with disabilities. It needs to be pointed out that the relationship between CRC and CRPD is not merely additive but also transformative. This means that it creates new obligations and opportunities that exceed what either convention might achieve alone (Kayess & French, 2008, pp. 10-12; Mazurek & Winzer, 2022, pp. 3080-3082). However, this transformation is not necessarily positive, for example due to possible persistent challenges in implementation. The gap between internation normative obligations and national policy and practice reflects structural, financial, and attitudinal barriers, which can limit the impact of the CRC and CRPD, hindering the realisation of children with disabilities' rights (OHCHR, 2016, paras. 27-27; OECD, 2023, pp. 45-47).

The CRC established the foundational principle that children are rights-holders rather than objects of protection, fundamentally shifting the perspective on childhood by recognising children as autonomous individuals entitled to a full range of civil, economic, social and cultural rights, while the CRPD extended this rights-based approach specifically to persons with disabilities across all life stages, including children, emphasising full and effective participation and inclusion in society on an equal basis for all (Kayess & French, 2008, pp- 8-10; Sabatello, 2014, pp. 3-5).

When applied together, these CRC and CRPD call for the ratifying states to recognise children with disabilities as full rights-holders whose needs for both protection and empowerment must be met simultaneously, which, in conflict situations, tend to be even a greater challenge. However, it is crucial that the international human rights framework at this overlap addresses not only the general barriers faced by persons with disabilities and the general barriers faced by persons with disabilities and general impacts on children with disabilities living in peaceful or conflict situations, but also the specific ways that these conditions interact to create unique forms of marginalisation and exclusion that affects children with disabilities.

After all, the following overlapping provisions of the CRC and CRPD examined in the following subchapter, particularly those related to the right to inclusive education, provide the legal tools for addressing these complex realities through education programming. Education programming refers to the design, implementation and evaluation of educational policies, curricula, teaching methods, and support services that are grounded in human rights principles and tailored to meet the diverse needs of children with disabilities. These programmes are both protective (e.g. safeguarding children from discrimination and harm) and empowering (e.g. enabling children to fully develop their potential and claim their rights) (DPI, 2009, pp. 1-3; de Beco, 2014, pp. 265-270).

3.1.1 Educational rights: Article 28 CRC and Article 24 CRPD

In Articles 24. of the CRPD and 28. of the CRC, the key provisions regarding the education rights of children are defined. Article 28 of the CRC states that:

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;

(b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;

(c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;

(d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;

(e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

In the first paragraph of Article 28 of the CRC, it mandates that primary education be made compulsory and freely available to all children. Furthermore, it requires higher education to be made accessible on the basis of capacity and calls upon States Parties to encourage regular school attendance to promote sustained engagement. Secondly, the following paragraph emphasises the need for consistent school discipline harmonised with administration that takes into consideration the child's human dignity and in conformity with the Convention's principles. Lastly, the third paragraph aims to promote

international cooperation and hinder ignorance and illiteracy worldwide, with particular attention to the needs of developing countries, thereby recognising education as a global public good (United Nations, 1989, Art.28, paras. 2-3).

It recognises the right of the child to education and outlines the progressive steps States Parties must take to realise this right. The significance behind Article 28 of the CRC is based on the establishment of education as a fundamental right for all children, whilst setting out comprehensive obligations for states to progressively realise this rights in an equitable and inclusive manner (de Beco, 2014, pp. 267-269).

Now, in the first paragraph of the Article 24 of the CRPD, the Convention establishes the fundamental recognition that persons with disabilities have the right to education without discrimination and based on equal opportunity:

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties 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.

It calls for an inclusive education system at all levels throughout life, directed toward the full development of human potential, dignity and respect for human rights and diversity. This is relevant because it frames education not merely as access to schooling but as a holistic process aimed at fostering personal growth and inclusion. Furthermore, the emphasis on lifelong learning underscores the need for continuous educational opportunities beyond childhood (de Beco, 2014, pp. 265-267; OHCHR, 2016, paras. 10-12).

In the second paragraph the article details specific obligations for states to realise the right to inclusive education:

2. In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:

a. Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;

b. Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;

c. Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;

d. Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;

e. Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

It mandates that persons with disabilities must not be excluded from the general education system or from free and compulsory primary and secondary education because of disability. It requires education that is inclusive, quality-driven and accessible within communities. It also introduces the concept of reasonable accommodation and individualised support within the general education system, which facilitates effective learning and aims to maximise both academic and social development – it is an operationalisation of inclusion by demanding concrete measures that move beyond formal access (Kayess & French, 2008, pp. 15-18; Sabatello, 2014, pp- 728-730).

The third paragraph highlights the importance of life and social development skills:

3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:

a. Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;

b. Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;

c. Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.

It stresses the need for education to be delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes of communications for individuals who are blind, deaf, or deafblind, within environments that promote academic and social growth. The focus on specialised learning supports, such as Braille and sign language, particularly respects the diverse needs and identities of learners with disabilities, ensuring that education iso also culturally and linguistically appropriate (Haegele & Hodge, 2016, pp. 3-4; Mazurek & Winzer, 2022, pp. 3080-3081).

Paragraph four addresses the training and employment of educators, including teachers with disabilities and the necessity of incorporating disability awareness and appropriate educational techniques in professional development:

4. In order to help ensure the realization of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.

This provision is critical as it recognises that inclusive education depends heavily on the preparedness and sensitivity of educators and staff, which directly impacts the quality and effectiveness of education for persons with disabilities.

Finally, the fifth paragraph extends the right to education beyond primary and secondary levels, ensuring access to tertiary education, vocational training, adult education, and lifelong learning without discrimination:

5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.

It reiterates the obligation to provide reasonable accommodations to facilitate participation, affirming that education for persons with disabilities is a lifelong right, essential for full societal and meaningful participation and empowerment (Malhotra & Hansen, 2011, pp. 80-82).

The right to education, as articulated through Article 28 of the CRC and Article 24 of the CRPD, creates overlapping obligations that transform how states must approach educational provision for children with disabilities. This can be most clearly seen in §1 and §2(a) of Article 24 of the CRPD, which state:

"States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education […] With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning".

Similarly, Article 28 of the CRC establishes education as a fundamental right for all children, requiring ratifying states to make primary education compulsory and available to all, while progressively introducing free secondary education and ensuring that schools respect children's human dignity. Consequently, Article 28 CRPD builds upon this foundation by specifically addressing the educational rights of persons with disabilities, requiring states to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels

and lifelong learning. The CRPD's approach to inclusive education goes beyond integration to demand fundamental transformation of educational systems to accommodate diverse learning needs and styles. This requires what the CRPD term "reasonable accommodations" (Kayess & French, 2008, pp. 16-18; Artiles, Kozleski, & Waitoller, 2011, pp. 5-7) to ensure that persons with disabilities can access education on an equal basis with others, alongside support measures that facilitate effective education in environments that maximise academic and social development (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011, pp. 356-358; Loreman, 2017, pp. 12-14).

The convergence of the 24. And 28. Articles of the CRPD and CRC creates specific obligations for children with disabilities that exceed the sum of their parts. States must ensure that inclusive education for children with disabilities is not only available but also accessible, acceptable and adaptable — the four dimensions of the right to education established in international human rights law.

Moreover, it is especially in conflict-affected settings, that this convergence demands innovative approaches that can maintain educational continuity while ensuring that children with disabilities are not further marginalised by emergency educational responses. With this in consideration, the human rights normative framework provides support for inclusive education and arts-based approaches, which align with the CRPD's requirement for maximum social and academic development and the CRC's demands for approaches that value children's dignity and needs.

3.1.2 Participation and voice: Articles 12 CRC and 29 CRPD

Article 12 of the CRC states:

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

In the first paragraph it is recognised the foundational principle that children are recognised as active rights-holders with a voice in decisions affecting them, which is particularly relevant because it shifts the traditional view of children as passive recipients of adult protection towards the evolving capacity and agency of children, including children with disabilities. The paragraph underscores the normative obligation of states to create enabling environments where children can freely express

themselves, reinforcing participation not only as a right but also as a procedural safeguard (Bala & Houston, 2015, pp. 6-8).

In the second paragraph, the article specifies procedural mechanisms to operationalise these rights, guaranteeing children's access to justice and decision-making processes. The provision balances the child's right to be heard with respect for legal procedures, ensuring their views are heard personally or via representation, and emphasising that children's views influence outcomes in an age-appropriate manner (Lundy, 2007, pp. 940-942; O'Neill, 2024, pp. 162-164).

Article 29 of the CRPD express a clear affirmation that political participation is a fundamental right for persons with disabilities:

"States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others, and shall undertake to:

a. Ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen representatives, including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected, inter alia, by:

i. Ensuring that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use;

ii. Protecting the right of persons with disabilities to vote by secret ballot in elections and public referendums without intimidation, and to stand for elections, to effectively hold office and perform all public functions at all levels of government, facilitating the use of assistive and new technologies where appropriate;

iii. Guaranteeing the free expression of the will of persons with disabilities as electors and to this end, where necessary, at their request, allowing assistance in voting by a person of their own choice;"

It emphasises the necessity of removing barriers that have historically excluded persons with disabilities from meaningful engagement in political and public life; thus, promoting their complete citizenship and empowerment (Dunn, 2016, pp. 112-115; Lawson, 2018, pp. 45-47). The subsequent paragraphs (a)(i-iii) detail practical measures essential to ensure not merely theoretical, but effectively realised in practice, such as accessible voting procedures, protection of secret ballots, and provision of assistance (Schur, Kruse, & Blanck, 2013, pp. 230-233; Tilley & Barker, 2020, pp. 78-80).

In the second part, subparagraph (b) states:

b. "Promote actively an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, and encourage their participation in public affairs, including:

i. Participation in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country, and in the activities and administration of political parties;

ii. Forming and joining organizations of persons with disabilities to represent persons with disabilities at international, national, regional and local levels."

This provision recognises political participation beyond voting to active involvement in shaping policies and governance structures, fostering collective representation and advocacy, including participation in non-governmental organisations and political parties, as well as forming and joining organisations of persons with disabilities (Charlton, 2018, pp. 158-160; Lawson, 2018, pp. 50-52). By encouraging the formation of disability-led organisations, the article promotes self-representation and empowerment, which are critical for advancing disability rights and inclusive democracy (Dunn, 2016, pp. 118-120).

The right to participation is a crucial area of convergence that extends far beyond formal consultation processes to encompass fundamental questions of agency, voice, and self-determination. Article 12 of the CRC establishes the rights of children to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, with these views being given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity. This provision transformed the understanding of children's roles in decisions about their own lives, moving from paternalistic protecting models to approaches that recognise children as active participants in their own development and rights enjoyment. Furthermore, Article 29 of the CRPD complements this by establishing the rights of persons with disabilities to participate effectively in political and public life on an equal basis with others — CRPD's approach to participation encompasses meaningful involvement in all aspects of social, cultural, and political life, understanding participation as both a right and a mechanism for ensuring that others can be effectively claimed and enjoyed.

For children with disabilities in conflict situations, the human rights normative framework established by these participation rights provides strong support for educational approaches that centre children's own voices and experiences in determining their learning priorities and methods. Inclusive Education approaches emphasise experiential learning, whilst Natural and Artistic tools can offer powerful means for facilitating expression and participation among children who may face communication barriers (e.g. children who may be processing traumatic experiences that are difficult to express through traditional verbal communication, for instance).

3.1.3 Protection and freedom from violence: Articles 19 CRC and 16 CRPD

The Article 19 of the CRC states a comprehensive mandate that obliges ratifying states to safeguard children from harm in all caregiving contexts:

"1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement."

In the first paragraph of Article 19 of the CRC, the vulnerability of children within familial and custodial settings is recognised, placing an obligation on ratifying states to implement a broad spectrum of protective measures, therefore, emphasising prevention and protection as fundamental rights (Krug et al., 2002, pp. 10-12; Gilbert et al., 2009, pp. 5-7). On top of that, the article's inclusive language underscores the multifaceted nature of children maltreatment (e.g. physical, mental, and sexual abuse as well as neglect) which is vital for developing truly holistic child protection systems (Pinheiro, 2006, pp. 15-18).

In the second paragraph, the article elaborates on the procedural and systemic mechanisms to operationalise protection. This is particularly important because it highlights the need for coordinated, multi-sectoral responses that address not only immediate risks, but also provide ongoing support and rehabilitation for affected children and caregivers (Gilbert et al., 2009, pp. 12-15; Fallon et al., 2013, pp. 220-223). Furthermore, the inclusion of judicial involvement further empowers the role of normative frameworks in ensuring accountability and safeguarding children's rights, including children with disabilities.

Together, these paragraphs establish Article 19 of the CRC as a cornerstone of human rights normative frameworks for protection of children, mandating comprehensive, preventive, and responsive measures to safeguard children from all forms of maltreatment.

The Article 16 of the CRPD is based on five paragraphs. In the first paragraph it states:

1. "States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, educational and other measures to protect persons with disabilities, both within and outside the home, from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, including their gender-based aspects."

It emphasises a comprehensive commitment to safeguarding persons with disabilities from multiple forms of harm in diverse settings, acknowledging the heightened vulnerability of persons with disabilities to exploitation and abuse. The need for multidimensional protective measures that address not only physical violence but also gender-specific risks (Degener, 2016, pp. 245-247). This inclusion of

protection both inside and outside home broadens the scope of responsibility for states, recognising that abuse can actually occur in private, institutional, and community environments (Groce et al., 2014, pp. 120-122).

In the second paragraph of Article 16 of the CRC, it is highlighted the importance of prevention and tailored support:

2. "States Parties shall also take all appropriate measures to prevent all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse by ensuring, inter alia, appropriate forms of gender- and age-sensitive assistance and support for persons with disabilities and their families and caregivers, including through the provision of information and education on how to avoid, recognize and report instances of exploitation, violence and abuse. States Parties shall ensure that protection services are age-, gender- and disability-sensitive."

This brings a significant consideration as it mandates that prevention strategies and protective measures to be sensitive to intersecting identities of individuals, such as age, and gender. Furthermore, the emphasis on education and information provision reflects a rights-based approach that empowers persons with disabilities and, therefore, their support networks must recognise and respond to abuse whilst respecting the diverse scope of needs of children with disabilities, too (Degener, 2016, pp. 250-252; Mitra et al., 2017, pp. 9-11).

Subsequent paragraphs reinforce and highlight the protections by requiring monitoring of facilities and programmes serving persons with disabilities (para. 3), promoting recovery and social reintegration in environments that uphold dignity and autonomy (para. 4), and mandating effective legislation and policies, including those focused on women and children, to ensure accountability through investigation and prosecution (para. 5). Collectively, these provisions construct a robust normative framework, underscoring the CRPD's transformative approach to combating violence and abuse against persons with disabilities, especially children in peaceful and in conflict-affected settings (Shakespeare, 2014, pp. 85-88; Mitra et al., 2017, pp. 12-15):

3. "In order to prevent the occurrence of all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, States Parties shall ensure that all facilities and programmes designed to serve persons with disabilities are effectively monitored by independent authorities.

4. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote the physical, cognitive and psychological recovery, rehabilitation and social reintegration of persons with disabilities who become victims of any form of exploitation, violence or abuse, including through the provision of protection services. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment that fosters the health, welfare, self-respect, dignity and autonomy of the person and takes into account gender- and age-specific needs.

5. States Parties shall put in place effective legislation and policies, including women- and child-focused legislation and policies, to ensure that instances of exploitation, violence and abuse against persons with disabilities are identified, investigated and, where appropriate, prosecuted."

Article 19 of the CRC requires states to protect children from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury, abuse, neglect, maltreatment, and exploitations, including sexual abuse, while in the care of the parents, guardians, or other caregivers. This can be most clearly seen from article 16 of the CRPD that on its end establishes parallel protections specifically for persons with disabilities, requiring states to take appropriate measures to prevent all forms of exploitations and abuse, within and outside the home. It also shines light on the heightened risks of violence faced by persons with disabilities, and power imbalances that characterise many disability-related services and supports. It is not only about prevention measures, but also comprehensive support services for victims and accountability mechanisms for perpetrators.

Researchers (Pinheiro, 2006, pp. 22-24; Jones et al., 2012, pp. 45-47) consistently demonstrates that children with disabilities experience violence at rates significantly higher than their non-disabled peers, with additional risks in conflict situations where protective systems are often disrupted and reduced. In educational contexts, the overlapping protections require learning environments physically and emotionally protective, which includes bullying, discrimination, and exclusion.

However, it is also imperative that positive measures, such as social-emotional learning programmes and peer support initiatives, are implemented to create environments where children with disabilities can develop confidence, social connections, and learning skills without fear of violence or exploitation. Natural/Inclusive approaches and Arts can emphasise outdoor and community-based learning that can offer therapeutic benefits for children (Malchiodi, 2015, pp. 78-8; Anderson & Heyne, 2015, 2015, pp. 112-115).

3.1.4 Family rights and community integration: Articles 5,18 CRC and 23 CRPD

In the first paragraph of Article 5 of the CRC it is evident the vital role that parents and caregivers play in supporting children's rights.

"States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention."

It carries relevance because it balances the child's growing autonomy with the protective and guiding responsibilities of caregivers, emphasising that children's evolving capacities should shape how rights are exercised and supported (Lansdown, 2005, pp. 12-15; Freeman, 2011, pp. 45-47).

In the first paragraph of Article 18 of the CRC, the provision emphasises shared parental responsibility as well as the centrality of the child's best interests:

"1. States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern."

By promoting gender equality in caregiving roles, the article underscores that all decision must prioritise the child's welfare, which is expanded in the subsequent paragraph of Article 18 of the CRC in which the provision establish the state's duty to provide enabling environments and resources that support families. Together, Articles 5 and 18 of the CRC highlight a framework that respects parental roles whilst affirming the state's responsibility to support families and uphold the best interests and evolving capacities of the child:

"2. For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children.

3. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible."

In the first paragraph of Article 23 of the CRPD, the provision outlines a clear commitment to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities to family life, including the right to marry and found a family based on free and full consent. It challenges historical prejudices and discriminatory practices that have often denied persons with disabilities these fundamental rights (Gooding, 2018, pp. 112-115). The provision states:

1. "States Parties shall take effective and appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against persons with disabilities in all matters relating to marriage, family, parenthood and relationships, on an equal basis with others, so as to ensure that:

a. The right of all persons with disabilities who are of marriageable age to marry and to found a family on the basis of free and full consent of the intending spouses is recognized;

b. The rights of persons with disabilities to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to age-appropriate information, reproductive and family planning education are recognized, and the means necessary to enable them to exercise these rights are provided;

c. Persons with disabilities, including children, retain their fertility on an equal basis with others"

Further, the article 23 of the CRPD states:

"[…] States Parties shall ensure that children with disabilities have equal rights with respect to family life. With a view to realizing these rights, and to prevent concealment, abandonment, neglect and segregation of children with disabilities, States Parties shall undertake to provide early and comprehensive information, services and support to children with disabilities and their families."

This mandates early and comprehensive support to children and their families, safeguarding family unit and preventing discriminatory practices that isolate children with disabilities from their families and communities (Shakespeare, 2014, pp. 100-103; Arstein-Kerslake & Flynn, 2016, pp. 70-72). Article 23 of the CRPD protects against the separation of children from their parents solely on the basis of disability and prioritises alternative care within the wider family or community — it affirms the rights of persons with disabilities to family life, parenting and community life, while mandates state support to eliminate discrimination again persons and, especially, children with disabilities (Gooding, 2018, pp. 125-128).

The relationship between children's rights, family rights, and community integration represent an important part of the normative convergence with implication for educational programming in conflict-affected settings. This can be most clearly seen from article 5 of the CRC that recognises the rights and responsibilities of parents and extended family members to provide appropriate guidance to children in exercising their rights, whilst Article 18 of the CRC establishes parent's joint responsibility between the state's obligation to support families in fulfilling their child-rearing responsibilities. Article 23 of the CRPD addresses respect for home and family for persons with disabilities, requiring states to eliminate discrimination in all matters relating to marriage, family, parenthood, and relationships. It establishes that persons with disabilities have the right to marry, found families, make decisions in family planning and in any other equal basis as others. For children with disabilities, this provision establishes their future family rights while also recognising their current rights to family life without discrimination.

The convergence of these family-related provisions creates important obligations for educational programming that recognises families as partners in children's education and development - not simply recipients of services (Epstein, 2011, pp. 5-7; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, pp. 150-152). This means that educational initiatives must actively engage families in decision-making processes, respect their cultural contexts, and build collaborative relationships that empower both children and their caregivers to contribute meaningfully to learning outcomes. Moreover, it is in conflict situations that the holistic approach provides tools for family communications and mechanisms that transcend language barriers and trauma-related difficulties, consequently, strengthening community connections (Masten & Narayan, 2012, pp. 361-363; Betancourt et al., 2013, pp. 120-122).

3.2 Partial Conclusion: implementation challenges and legal obligations in conflict settings

As follows from the analysis, the findings reveal that implementing the overlapping CRC and CRPD obligations in conflict-affected settings presents a significant challenge for states and duty-bearers responsible for upholding children's rights, requiring innovative normative and pragmatic responses. International human rights norms establish several obligations for educational provision that are relevant for children with disabilities during peaceful and conflict state, including the protection of facilities, personnel, and the maintenance of school services to the "maximum extent possible", while human rights law demands that states respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of children, including those with disabilities, at all times. This intersection creates a complex legal framework that demands both immediate protection and long-term realisation — the principle of progressive realisation, which allows states to implement economic, social, and cultural rights gradually based on available resources, faces particular changes in conflict situations. However, both the CRC and CRPD establish obligations as immediate and non-derogable, including non-discrimination and core minimum obligations that must be met regardless of resource constraint. For children, this includes access to basic education and protection from violence and exploitation.

The overlapping legal obligations can also create accountability mechanisms that can be used to advocate for improved educational provision for children with disabilities in conflict settings. The monitoring and reporting mechanisms established by both conventions provide tools for documenting violations and advocating for better implementation, while the jurisprudence developing around them guide for understanding state obligations in complex situations. This existing human rights framework therefore supports opportunities for innovative approaches that must be understood not as temporary substitutes for "real" education, but as a legitimate educational approach that can effectively promote children's development and enjoyment in diverse contexts.

While the CRC and CRPD provide a robust normative foundation, several challenges remain in translating these rights into practice, especially in conflict-affected zones. Overlapping mandates of multiple international and national actors, including states, international organisations, and non-state armed groups, can cause implementation gaps or confusion among duty-bearers (Geneva Academy, 2023, pp. 20-22; International Review of the Red Cross, 2024, pp. 9-11). Moreover, enforcement mechanisms are limited, and states often lack resources or political will (OHCHR, 2004, pp. 12-14; UNICEF, 2022, pp. 15-17). Still, understanding the synergy between CRC and CRPD is vital for scholars

to understand better what holistic policies and interventions are capable of upholding the rights of children with disabilities in conflict zones, ensuring education as a means of protection, empowerment, and social inclusion.

4. Inclusive Education and Case Studies

The fourth chapter of this master thesis examines the multifaceted dimensions of inclusive education, aiming to highlight its foundational principles, practical applications, and empirical evidence, particularly in relation to children with disabilities in conflict-affected contexts.

For this reason, it is structured in four subchapters. The first subchapter of the fourth chapter introduces the core elements of Inclusive Education, highlighting the importance to understand these foundational paradigms in order to grasp how inclusive education remains critical in contemporary educational discourse.

The second subchapter defines and situates inclusive education within broader human rights framework, paying special attention to their relevance for children with disabilities, particularly in conflict-affected contexts. This is because scholars argue that in conflict situations, understanding Inclusive Education, artistic and natural practices, is essential for human rights scholars and educators seeking to advance inclusive, equitable education as a pathway to empowerment and democratisation.

In the third subchapter, the applicability, efficacy and adaptability of Inclusive Education will finally be discussed, because artistic and natural methods foster creativity, emotional resilience, and cultural inclusion, making education more accessible and meaningful for children with disabilities.

Finally, the fourth subchapter presents and empirical analysis based on secondary data and interviews with key stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and disability advocates. This section evaluates the benefits and challenges of implementing inclusive education, providing case studies that illustrate successes and ongoing barriers. The empirical evidence offers critical insights into how inclusive education policies translate into practice and impact the lives of children with disabilities (Instituto Alana, 2019, pp. 10-15).

4.1 Core Elements of Inclusive Education

A holistic and sustainable approach to inclusive education should be grounded in a set of interdependent elements that collectively ensure every student – regardless of background, ability, or need – is supported, valued, and empowered throughout their education journey. (Booth & Ainscow, 2016, pp. 15-17; Florian, 2014, pp. 518-520). An inclusive school is defined by collective norms, attitudes, and behaviours that value diversity and ensure every student is included academically and socially (Ainscow, 2020, p. 12). Such a culture can only be built on principles of community, respect,

and shared responsibility, where diversity is celebrated and every member feels safe, valued, understood, and empowered (Khalifa, 2018, pp. 120-122).

In principle, within inclusive education, inclusion is established through clear policy direction, visible leadership commitment, and the active involvement of all stakeholders: students are active contributors, providing feedback, participating in peer mentoring, and actually engaging in collaborative learning, their voices shaping flexible curricula and inclusive practices (Ainscow, 2020, p. 13); 1) teachers are central to fostering inclusivity through adaptive teaching, differentiated instruction, and positive classroom management, acting as facilitators, motivators, and mentors (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011, p. 819); 2) families play another crucial role since parental involvement is linked to improved student outcomes and a stronger sense of communities, hence their collaboration with schools, their support learning at home and their advocacy for inclusive practices (UNESCO, 2020, p. 57); and, 3) communities as external agencies that enrich the learning environment, provide additional resources, and reinforce inclusive values (Epstein, 2011, pp. 110-112; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, pp. 215-217).

Amongst these elements, scholars and international agencies that work in practice on improving inclusive education emphasise eight key understandings of inclusive education, each interlinked to ensure valued academic journey. First, understanding emphasises education system and policy: inclusive Education must be embedded as a core priority within institutional and governmental policies, guided by a clear vision and a sense of shared ownership at all levels of the system (UNESCO, 2020, pp. 22-23). This calls not only for compliance with relevant laws and conventions, such as the CRPD, but also the development of robust quality assurance mechanisms, inclusive funding models, and transparent accountability structures. For example, countries that have successfully implemented inclusive education often have national frameworks that mandate inclusion and provide resources for its realisation (Mittler, 2012, pp. 52-55; Ainscow, 2020, pp. 14-15).

Second, an inclusive learning environment and culture is characterised by a culture of belonging, safety, and mutual respect. Schools must proactively address social and emotional safety, prevent exclusionary practices such as bullying or isolation, and promote early identification and intervention for students at risk (Ainscow, 2020, p. 11; UNESCO, 2020, pp. 36-37). Moreover, the curriculum and assessment allow for multiple learning pathways and recognises the diverse talents, capacities, and ambitions of students. Inclusive assessment practices are adapted to individual needs, with reasonable accommodations and early interventions as necessary (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011, p. 818). For example, differentiated tasks, alternative formats, and formative assessments that inform instruction and support continuous progress.

Furthermore, support services, including learning support teachers, counsellors, speech and language therapists, interpreters and other specialists must be available to address the varied needs of all students. Effective support is proactive, coordinated, and integrated within the regular school setting rather than segregated (Booth & Ainscow, 2016, pp. 25-27). Ongoing professional learning ensures educators are equipped to manage diverse classrooms and respond to evolving needs. Building on this, professional development, thereby, should cover differentiated instruction, cultural competence, and universal design for learning (UDL) as well as collaborative teaching strategies (UNESCO, 2020, p.48). Ongoing professional development ensures educators are equipped to manage diverse classrooms and respond to evolving needs. The continuous professional learning for teachers and staff is critical.

The educational transitions (whether in school, between grades, or from school to work) are essential moments that require targeted support to ensure continuity and stability (Mazzotti et al., 2016, pp. 30-33). The transition planning is particularly important for students with disabilities, who may face additional barriers during these periods, which subsequently highlights the importance of multi-level cooperation: effective inclusion depends on collaboration within schools, between schools, and with external agencies and communities. National and regional cooperation facilitates the sharing of resources, expertise, and best practices, and strengthens the overall system (UNESCO, 2020, p. 54).

Lastly, monitoring, data collection and evaluation are essential to assess progress and inform continuous improvement. Schools must also define what they value in inclusion and align their assessment practices, accordingly, moving beyond a narrow focus on standardised test scores (Ainscow & Miles, 2008, pp. 28-30; Florian, 2014, pp. 520-522).

In summary, it follows from the discussed elements that inclusive education is a comprehensive, multi-dimensional process that requires systemic commitment, adaptable environments, collaborative partnerships, and ongoing reflection. The success of an inclusive school depends on the active participation and shared responsibility of students, teachers, families, and the wider community. With these elements integrated, inclusive education not only improves academic outcomes but also fosters social cohesion, equity, and lifelong learning for all (Ainscow, 2020. p. 16).

4.2 Artistic and Natural Practices in Inclusive Education

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, inclusive education is widely recognised as a multifaceted and systemic endeavour that requires the integration of various core elements to be effective and sustainable. These foundational components – from policy frameworks and learning environments

to curriculum design, support services, professional development, and collaborative partnerships – collectively create the conditions necessary for all learners to thrive (UNESCO, 2020, pp. 22-33). However, beyond these structural and procedural dimensions, inclusive education also benefits from the incorporation of artistic and natural practices that emphasise creativity, experiential learning, and holistic development. Bridging the elements of inclusive education with these creative and ecological approaches offers a comprehensive framework, highlighting the evolving understanding of inclusion as both a structural imperative and a dynamic, lived experience within educational settings (Kuby, 2014, pp. 114-116; Ainscow, 2020, p. 16).

Arts-based approaches in education have increasingly been recognised by scholars (Del Gobbo, Galeotti, & Esposito, 2023, pp. 4-7; Arévalo-Vásquez, Yangali-Vicente, & Sánchez-Ortega, 2024, pp. 780-782) as powerful tools for fostering intercultural inclusion, enhancing communication, promoting creative participation, and supporting emotional development among students. These approaches leverage the unique capacities of the arts to create inclusive, dynamic, and supportive learning environments (Del Gobbo et al., 2020, p. 6).

The integration of arts in education provides a fertile ground for intercultural dialogue and inclusion, particularly in classrooms characterised by cultural diversity. For example, educational projects designed on the basis of arts such as Minority Education Through Art (META) have demonstrated that integrating arts into educational settings can facilitate the inclusion of children from migrant backgrounds and minority groups. By engaging in artistic activities, students are encouraged to express their cultural identities, share their experiences, and appreciate the richness of diverse perspectives. This process not only helps overcome cultural barriers but also fosters a sense of belonging and mutual respect among students from different backgrounds (UNESCO, 2020, p. 93; Taddeo, 2021, pp. 68-70).

The inherently collaborative nature of the arts— such as music, theatre, and visual arts— naturally cultivates communication skills. Group art projects require students to share ideas, negotiate roles, and provide feedback, all of which are essential for effective communication. Cooperative learning in art, where students work together towards a common artistic goal, further enhances these skills by promoting teamwork, conflict resolution, and collective problem-solving. Such experiences also build empathy, as students learn to interpret and appreciate different viewpoints and emotional expressions through art (Hallam et al., 2017, p. 12; Wright, 2012, p. 38).

As a way to creative participation and self-expression, art education encourages students to actively participate in their learning by offering opportunities that fosters motivation, confidence, and

curiosity. Choice-based art education, which emphasises student autonomy, allows learners to make decisions about their artistic processes and outcomes to express their individuality. Project-based learning in the arts reinforces this by involving students in long-term, meaningful projects that integrate disciplinary knowledge and real-world relevance, further promoting engagement and creative participation (Hetland et al., 2013, pp. 45-47; Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013, pp. 22-24).

On top of that, the arts are uniquely positioned to support emotional growth. This is because scholars (Eisner, 2002, pp. 89-91; Malchiodi, 2012, pp. 15-18) have highlighted that artistic activities provide students with safe spaces to explore and process their emotions, build self-awareness, and develop emotional resilience. Through creative expression, students learn to navigate challenges, embrace imperfection, and persist in the face of setbacks, all of which contribute to their emotional endurance and confidence. Moreover, engaging with the arts empowers empathy and perspective-taking, as students interpret the emotions and stories of others, both in their own work and in the work of their peers (Greene, 1995, pp. 112-115; Winner et al., 2013, pp. 25-27).

In respect to methodologies, this section focuses on cooperative, collaborative, and project-based learning in the arts. These approaches were selected because they align closely with the key objectives of fostering intercultural inclusion, enhancing communication, and supporting socio-emotional development through active, participatory learning (Hallam, Rogers, & Creech, 2017, p. 12).

Moreover, cooperative learning involves students working in small groups to achieve shared artistic goals. This method emphasises active participation, mutual support, and the development of social and critical thinking skills. Strategies such as assigning group roles, setting clear expectations, and using peer evaluations help ensure that all students contribute meaningfully to the group's success. Cooperative art projects, such as groups collages or collaborative drawings, foster a sense of community and belonging within the classroom (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 2013, pp. 45-47).

Collaborative and project-based learning are closely related, both focusing on group work and collective problem-solving. In project-based learning, students engage in extended projects that require planning, research, and creative execution, often culminating in a public presentation or exhibition. These methodologies make learning relevant and engaging by connecting artistic practice to real-world contexts and encouraging students to draw on diverse perspective's skills (Hallam et al., 2017, p. 13; UNESCO, 2020, p. 98).

It follows from the analysis that this master thesis focuses primarily on engaging with cooperative and project-based learning tools in the arts, as these methodologies provide a robust framework for promoting inclusion, creativity, and socio-emotional growth within diverse educational settings.

Table 1: Cooperative, Collaborative, and Project-Based Learning in the Arts

Method	Key Features	Benefits
Cooperative Learning	Small group work, shared goals, assigned roles	Social skills, teamwork, critical thinking, inclusion
Collaborative Learning	Group problem-solving, negotiation, peer feedback	Communication, empathy, diverse perspectives
Project-Based Learning	Long-term projects, real-world relevance, autonomy	Engagement, creativity, interdisciplinary connections

Integrating arts-based approaches in education is a transformative strategy for fostering intercultural inclusion, communication, creative participation, and emotional development. Methodologies such as cooperative, collaborative, and projects-based learning in the arts not only promote academic and artistic growth but also cultivate essential social and emotional skills, preparing students to thrive in diverse and interconnected societies. Central to this integration are the concepts of collaboration and co-creation, which emphasise the active participation of teachers, students, artists, and communities in shaping educational experiences that promote inclusion (DCU Educational Disadvantage Centre, 2025, p. 4).

Furthermore, the integration of cultural expressions and interdisciplinary learning and interdisciplinarity within arts education is critical. By incorporating diverse cultural expressions and interdisciplinary learning, educational settings support the formation of identity and belonging for all students, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds. This approach not only validates students' cultural identities but also enriches the learning environment by promoting mutual respect and understanding across differences (UNESCO, 2020, pp. 92-93). Together, these key elements underscore the potential of arts-based education to create inclusive, dynamic, and culturally responsive learning spaces that prepare students to thrive in diverse societies.

4.3 Benefits, Challenges, and Evaluation

The multifaceted benefits of inclusive and artistic education are critical to understanding how inclusive and artistic education offers multifaceted benefits that extend well beyond academic achievement, encompassing the development of social skills, emotional well-being, and a profound sense

of belonging – particularly for children with disabilities and those from marginalised groups. As Hehir et al. (2016) underscores inclusive education settings, when combined with artistic practices, adapt teaching to diverse learners, resulting in improved academic outcomes for all students (pp. 45-60). This foundational insight is pivotal to the research question as it demonstrates that inclusive education is not merely about physical access but about meaningful participation and achievement, essential to human rights. Booth and Ainscow (2011) further emphasise that inclusive pedagogy raises educational standards universally by fostering environments where all learners can thrive (pp. 22-35). This is relevant because socially, arts-based inclusive education cultivates collaboration, communication, and empathy.

In addition, the social dimension of arts-based inclusive education is equally important. Deasy (2022) and Kemple and Heroman (2004) provide empirical evidence that engagement in the arts enhances cooperative skills, conflict resolution and perspective-taking – competences essential for children living in conflict-affected settings where social cohesion is often disrupted. Moreover, Eisner (2022) highlights that creative expression bolsters self-esteem and emotional regulation, crucial for students who may feel marginalised in traditional academic settings (pp. 15-30). The National Endowment for the Arts (2011) corroborates these findings linking arts engagement to reduced isolation and increased emotional resilience.

Finally, the work of Arévalo-Vásquez et al. (2024) demonstrates that diverse artistic languages break down exclusionary barriers, promoting harmonious coexistence in classrooms; all which empower children with disabilities by providing equitable access to learning, fostering social integration, and nurturing emotional health, hence, supporting their holistic development and genuine participation in society. It is argued by the same author that diverse artistic languages have a transformative power.

On the other hand, implementing inclusive and artistic education faces significant challenges that can impede its effectiveness and sustainability. Firstly, there is the lack of adequate resource barrier, including financial support, materials, and specialised personnel. Many educational institutions operate under constrained budgets, limiting their capacity to provide accessible environments and the necessary artistic tools (Ainscow, 2020, pp- 110-120) and teachers often lack sufficient training in both inclusive pedagogy and arts integration. Florian and black-Hawkins (2011) and Loreman (2017) emphasise the critical need for targeted professional development to equip educators with the skills required for these complex teaching demands (pp. 50-65; pp. 88-95). Furthermore, the resistance to change is another obstacle that undermines the ability to deliver effective, differentiated instruction. Educators, administrators, and communities may hold entrenched beliefs favouring traditional, segregated, or standardised educational models.

Slee (2011) and Ainscow (2020) discuss how this resistance is often rooted in cultural norms and institutional inertia, calling for deliberate change management strategies to empower innovation and openness (pp. 40-45; pp. 115-125). Consequently, curriculum redesign, scheduling conflicts, and assessment adaptations require careful collaboration which often is not due. The challenge lies in balancing artistic creativity with academic standards and ensuring that inclusive practices are meaningfully embedded rather than superficially applied. Effective evaluation and quality assurance are critical to the success and sustainability of inclusive and arts-based educational practices. Monitoring should encompass regular classroom observations, students' assessments, and teacher feedback to ensure fidelity to inclusive pedagogical principles and artistic integration. Data-driven approaches enable continuous improvement by informing policy and practice adjustments. The value of systematic data collection and analysis to guide decision-making stresses the importance of feedback loops involving students, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders to refine educational strategies (OECD, 2019; ECIO, 2023).

Inclusive education, especially integrated with artistic practices, plays a crucial role in empowering children with disabilities and serves as a powerful means to develop confidence, resilience, and a sense of agency and autonomy. Empowerment through inclusive education aligns with the principles of human rights and social justice, recognising children with disabilities as active participants in their learning and community life (United Nations, 2006, pp. 10-15). Artistic engagement further exemplifies this empowerment by offering alternative modes of communication and expression, particularly valuable for children who may face challenges with conventional verbal or written forms. Moreover, inclusive education promotes the dismantling of stigma and discrimination by fostering environments where diversity is celebrated, and all students are valued. This cultural shift not only benefits children with disabilities but enriches the entire school community, cultivating empathy, mutual respect, and collaborative citizenship (Hehir et al., 2016, pp. 55-60). In sum, inclusive education empowered by artistic methods is not merely an educational approach but a transformative process that supports the full realisation of the rights, potentials, and dignity of children with disabilities.

4.4 Empirical Chapter

In the fourth chapter I examine four short country-case studies that offer distinct educational professionals/institutions with different and innovative approaches to inclusive education. By employing a qualitative case study methodology, this research seeks to analyse the nuanced realities, challenges,

and successes of inclusive practices as they unfold in varied sociocultural and policy contexts, (with the goal of?). The case study approach is particularly well-suited for exploring layered and dynamic processes of inclusion, because it allows for an in-depth examination of institutional structures, pedagogical strategies, stakeholder perspectives, and the lived experiences of children with disabilities (Shrestha & Bhattarai, 2022, pp. 73-74).

Moreover, through the comparative lens, the fourth chapter provides a holistic understanding of how inclusive education is enacted on the ground, how natural and artistic methods are integrated, and how empowerment is realised or constrained in different settings. The structure and logic of the case studies are informed by established qualitative research frameworks that ensure that each case is analysed systematically and with attention to context, process, and outcomes (Yin, 2003; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Duyul, 2019, p. 3).

The case studies are based on data collected with interviews and field inquiries that yield a comprehensive understanding of how inclusive education – especially when enriched by natural and artistic tools – functions as a vital mechanism for empowering children with disabilities, with mention to those in conflict-affected areas. This study engaged with ten professionals working directly with children with disabilities across four different contexts to explore the multifaceted conceptualisations, operationalisations, and lived experiences of inclusive education. The interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom, following informed consent procedures to ensure ethical compliance, and guided by a structured questionnaire focusing on inclusive education practices, the integration of artistic and natural tools. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to one hour, providing rich qualitative data that reflect real-life practical implementations and the limitations faced by practitioners in the field. The data were anonymised to preserve confidentiality and subsequently organised into detailed case studies, allowing for a nuanced comparative analysis across different sociocultural and geopolitical settings. The chosen methodological approach is relevant because it captures the complexity of inclusive education beyond theoretical frameworks, highlighting the contextual challenges and successes that shape education for children with disabilities (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018)

Regarding conflict-affected settings, the research will examine through the collected data not only how ongoing violence and displacement exacerbate exclusion but also how inclusive education and natural strategies like sensory gardens and outdoor learning can mitigate trauma and support continuity of learning. The fourth chapter emphasises the delicate balance institutions maintain between structured learning and crisis unpredictability, often relying on community-led initiatives to sustain inclusion. Evaluation processes emerge as essential for improvement, whilst data-driven approaches and

participatory feedback loops enable schools to adapt and refine inclusive arts-based interventions. Ultimately, the research examines how inclusive education, grounded in natural and artistic tools, can be a profound act of empowerment and social justice for children with disabilities, not merely an educational strategy.

4.4.1 Action Locale pour un Développement Participatif et Autogéré, Cameroon

ALDEPA is a non-profit organisation (NGO) that operates in Cameroon's Far North, a region deeply impacted by humanitarian crises, displacement, and chronic underfunding (CERF, 2015, pp. 3-5). The NGO serves internally displaced children, refugees, returnees, and children with disabilities, with a special focus on girls and marginalised groups (Sightsavers, 2020, p. 3-5).

The cultural landscape in the Far North region is characterised by ethnic diversity and the challenges of ongoing conflict, which have disrupted traditional schooling. ALDEPA's vision therefore centres on equitable and inclusive education as a fundamental right, in line with Cameroon's national policy and international frameworks (Sightsavers, 2020, pp. 13-15), and responds by providing psychosocial support, positive parenting sessions, and educational interventions tailored to the needs of vulnerable children and families (UNICEF, 2021, p. 5).

The institution actively involves families and communities through sensitization campaigns, women's support groups, and peer education on gender-based violence and child protection. Moreover, artistic and natural tools are integrated by ALDEPA's trained psychosocial facilitators through activities and creative learning projects that foster resilience and self-expression among children affected by crisis (Kinderrechte Afrika, 2021, pp. 8-10). ALDEPA implements inclusive strategies such as accelerated curriculum programmes for out-of-school children, teacher training in inclusive and emergency education, and the provision of accessible facilities (International GC, 2017; Sightsavers, 2020, pp. 16-17). In the context of conflict, teachers employed by ALDEPA are equipped to deliver education in emergencies and support children with special needs and artistic approaches include group activities, peer outreach, and psychosocial support sessions using creative expression to address trauma and foster inclusion (Kinderrechte Afrika, 2021, pp. 9-11). Children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups have shown improved participation, social integration, and emotional well-being, evidenced by increased enrolment and positive shifts in community attitudes (Sightsavers, 2020, pp. 18-20). Evaluation mechanisms include regular monitoring by ALDEPA's programme officers, systematic collection of

feedback from teachers and families, and data collection on programme impact conducted in collaboration with partners such as UNICEF.

The interview with the institution's members focused on inclusion in education, particularly for children with disabilities, and reveals several key takeaways that directly relate to the research question of how inclusive education empowers the enjoyment of human rights for children with disabilities, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Central to the conversation was the broad definition of inclusion as the full participation of all individuals, regardless of their characteristics; underscoring the principle that inclusive education is not merely about physical access but about meaningful engagement and recognition of diverse needs.

The integration of arts as not only a fundamental right, but also a critical tool for overcoming communication and social barriers was a prominent theme throughout the interview. The participant's emphasis on arts reflects a recognition that creative expression facilitates educational development as well as psychosocial well-being, which is especially vital for children facing the compounded challenges of disability and conflict. Moreover, the acknowledgement of gender discrimination within artistic and sporting activities points to the intersectional nature of exclusion, highlighting the need for inclusive education to address multiple dimensions of marginalisation (I1, P1-P6, p. 1).[1]

The discussion further highlights the role of government and organisational efforts in training specialised teachers and creating adapted learning environments as essential mechanisms for inclusion. This institutional support is crucial in empowering children with disabilities to exercise their rights to education and participation. Furthermore, the impact of conflict emerges as a significant barrier to the realisation of inclusive education, affecting school accessibility and resource availability. The participants' call for collaboration between authorities and civil society underscores the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships in sustaining inclusive education amidst instability (I1, P4, p.1). This collaborative approach identifies stakeholder engagement as indispensable for successful inclusion, including parents, communities, and authorities — which reflects the understanding that empowerment through education extends beyond the classroom to encompass social environments that support and uphold children's rights.

During the interview, participants stress the need to value children's natural skills through art and to raise awareness among the community and parents of the importance of allowing children to express themselves freely, regardless of traditional social expectations.

[1] See Appendix A.

Lastly, the meeting addresses inclusive education for children with disabilities. Where participant 5 emphasised the importance of involving people with disabilities in decision-making processes and community activities. Participant 6 also mentioned the progress made in recruitment and awareness-raising to promote inclusion and reduce discrimination and they state the following as future challenges and commitments to be made by different stakeholders: the institution to continue to promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in schools and community activities; the Ministry of Education to further integrate training on inclusive education into teacher training programmes and the government to allocate more resources to support inclusive schools, particularly in conflict-affected areas; the local authorities to improve the accessibility of schools for children with disabilities, in particular by installing access ramps; the parents to encourage their children with disabilities to participate fully in school and community activities; the community to raise awareness of the importance of including people with disabilities in all aspects of social life.

The key ideas from ALDEPA transcript are highly relevant to understanding how inclusive education enables children with disabilities to enjoy their human rights, especially in conflict situations. First, the broad definition of inclusion as the full participation of all individuals is foundational because it aligns with the principle of non-discrimination enshrined both in the CRC and CRPD. The emphasis on integrating inclusive education principles into daily practices is particularly relevant because conflict situations exacerbate existing barriers. Moreover, the recognition of arts as a fundamental right and a tool for overcoming challenges highlights the importance of fostering environments where children with disabilities can express themselves freely and participate fully.

Collectively, the ideas expressed during the interview demonstrate that inclusive education empowers children with disabilities, including in conflict situations, y affirming their right to non-discrimination, participation, and quality education; by addressing systemic barriers; by fostering psychosocial development through arts; and by mobilising community and institutional support. This holistic approach is essential to enabling children with disabilities to enjoy and live their lives despite difficulties.

4.4.2 Instituto Ser Porque Você É, Brazil

Instituto Ser Porque Você É is an NGO based in Brazil's urban environment, serving children and youth with disabilities in a context marked by socioeconomic diversity and a strong tradition of community-based education. The Brazilian context is influenced by progressive inclusive education

policies and cultural values that emphasise social justice and participatory learning (Loreman, 2017, pp. 88-95) which highlights the institute's mission is to foster inclusion, autonomy, and holistic development for every learner. It draws on the philosophies of Paulo Freire and Darcy Ribeiro, and its approach emphasise dialogic education, respect for education, diversity, and co-construction of knowledge with artistic and natural methods as tools, with curricula designed around experiential learning, arts integration, and outdoor activities (Freire, 2000, pp. 72-75). Family and community are integral partners, participating in governance, cultural events, and collaborative projects. In terms of implementation, Inclusive strategies include differentiated instruction, individualised education plans, and the use of assistive technologies. Teachers receive ongoing professional development in inclusive pedagogy and arts-based learning. Artistic practices such as theatre, music, and visual arts are woven into daily lesson, while project-based learning encourages students to explore real-world issues through creative inquiry. Initiatives include inclusive festivals and expositions, and community gardens (I2, P2, p. 2).

During the interview, the role of the arts emerges as a powerful theme, with music, theatre, and dance serving as vital tools for expression and empowerment. This is relevant because it highlights the multidimensional nature of inclusion where education supports not only cognitive development but also emotional and social well-being. Participant 2 recognised arts integration as a human right and reinforced the idea that inclusive education must address diverse modes of communication and participation, which is particularly relevant in conflict-affected settings where trauma and disruption may hinder traditional learning. Moreover, the interview shifted towards challenges identified in the Brazilian context, such as disparities between public and private schools, which underscored the systemic barriers that can ultimately impede the realisation of inclusive education (e.g., public schools' reliance on limited resources and social educators' contrasts with private institutions'' greater capacity). Nevertheless, participant 2 demonstrated the critical role of community engagement through the advocacy of families and neurodivergent associations (I2, P2, p. 2).

The discussed importance of assessment practices was emphasised as a way to reinforce individual potential rather than standardised grading. Setting realistic expectations is particularly important in this individualised focus, because it promotes expression and autonomy, there the resilience and rights of children with disabilities require sustained educational inclusion. The NGO reinforces that inclusive education empowers children with disabilities to enjoy their human rights by fostering environments that recognise diversity and are supported by normative and legal protections.

4.4.3 ShareMusic & Performing Arts, Sweden

ShareMusic & Performing Arts is a Swedish non-profit organisation dedicated to inclusive arts education, working with people of all ages and abilities in a context characterized by strong social welfare, robust disability rights, and a vibrant arts sector (Borgström, 2020, pp. 8-10). The NGO's mission is to create accessible artistic experiences that empower individuals with disabilities, foster intercultural dialogue, and challenge societal norms about ability and creativity. The organisation collaborates with community and family involvement, encouraging public performances, workshops, and collaborative projects through artistic methods. ShareMusic focuses especially on music, dance, and theatre — which are central when emphasising co-creation and celebration of diversity (Borgström, 2020, pp. 12-13).

The NGO offers inclusive a multitude of activities from workshops, residencies to artistic labs, collaborative research projects, seminars, and workshops, to training aimed at enhancing accessibility and inclusion in artistic practices. A significant part of ShareMusic's work involves exploring innovative technologies and digital tools to widen participation and creativity for disabled persons — a rights-based approach that aligns with the CRPD and supports global development goals related to inclusion and sustainability.

A key takeaway from the interviews with participants 2 and 3 was the therapeutic impact of music therapy. Both participants mentioned a project that uses electronic and digital music instruments to include children with disabilities in music creation. These workshops are carefully tailored to accommodate diverse age groups and educational settings, including special schools. The pedagogical approach centres on the use of tools such as tablets and theremins to foster calmness and participation, Subsequently, this model encouraged creativity without constraints of traditional musical notation, promoting inclusivity by allowing learners to engage on their own terms.

The insights from ShareMusic are relevant because inclusion is also reconceptualised not as a static goal, but as a continuous process involving the questioning of norms and the creation of spaces where all individuals can express themselves artistically, regardless of physical, cognitive, or social differences. These understandings align with the human rights approach to disability, specifically the CRC and CRPD, both of which are integrated in this master thesis. Moreover, a critical shift from charity is emphasised, centring the child's voice and recognising children with disabilities as individuals with power and potential — which aligns with the SMD focus on societal barriers rather than individual

deficits. The NGO illustrates, through its commitment that inclusive education, agency, and creative expression, transcends being a mere educational approach. It is a fundamental strategy for empowering children with disabilities to claim their rights.

4.4.4 Soul X-pressions, Uganda

Soul X-pressions is a registered non-governmental organisation (NGO) that operates in Uganda, working with children and youth in both urban and rural areas. The institution works within a context marked by limited resources, and ongoing social and economic challenges. Uganda's rich traditions of music, dance, and storytelling are leveraged to promote inclusion (Nabukenya, 2022, pp. 4-5).

Soul X-pressions' vision is to empower children through the arts, fostering self-expression social inclusion, and community transformation. The institution engages families and local leaders in programme design and delivery, recognising the importance of cultural relevance and grassroots participation. Artistic and natural methods are at the heart, focusing on traditional Ugandan arts and outdoor experiential learning — the NGO's model therefore emphasises nurturing spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical faculties.

The interview with participants 2 and 3 initially focused on creating safe, empowering spaces where vulnerable children can develop confidence and competencies. The community empowerment model described by participant 2, which avoids labelling and promotes self-definition through collective agreements, reflects a transformative understanding of inclusion that fosters individual and communal strength. This is especially relevant in conflict-affected contexts where social cohesion and identity formation are critical for resilience.

Another pertinent theme discussed with both participants is the role of creative expression, particularly arts-based activities and dancing. The discussion revealed systemic challenges, including governance disconnects and resource limitations, which hinder effective policy implementation. However, this points to the importance of community-led initiatives and partnerships that leverage local knowledge and lived experience, rather than relying solely on top-down mandates (e.g., similar to what was discovered in 4.4.1). Moreover, resistance from educators, parents, and official dure to cultural differences ad power dynamics also highlights the need for ongoing training and awareness-raising to foster inclusive attitudes.

During the end of the interview, participant 3 mentioned the need to decolonise human rights and education, highlighting the importance of empowering individuals to define their own human rights and

the critique of international institutions' effectiveness that reflects the need for locally grounded, culturally relevant approaches that not only respect human rights normative frameworks, but also the agency of communities affected by conflict. Comparing these insights with the other case studies reveals common themes such as the centrality of arts and creative expression. Differences arise mainly from contextual factors, such as nature of conflict and governance structure, but the fundamental role of inclusive education as a means to empower children with disabilities to claim their rights remains consistent (I4, P2, P3, p.3).

Discussion

The reflection on the four case studies – ALDEPA in Cameroon, Instituto Ser Porque Você É in Brazil, ShareMusic & Performing Arts in Sweden, and Soul X-pressions in Uganda – reveals both converging themes and contextual distinctions pertinent to the research question of how inclusive education empowers the enjoyment of human rights for children with disabilities, with special attention to situations of conflict. Across these diverse settings, a shared understanding emerges that inclusive education transcend mere physical access, emphasising meaningful participation, recognition of diverse needs, fostering agency and dignity among children with disabilities, and understanding artistic and naturalistic tools as means to express oneself; to enjoy and claim rights.

The pivotal role of arts and creative expression as a vehicle for inclusion, communication, and psychosocial well-being is a central similarity found within the four case studies. ALDEPA integrates rights-based tools to foster resilience among children affected by conflict, while Instituto Ser Porque Você É embeds theatre, music and daily activities such as learning how to use public transport, into pedagogical practices to support cognitive, emotional, and social development. On top of that, ShareMusic's use of electronic and digital instruments exemplifies how technology-enhanced arts education can dismantle communication barriers and promote creativity, and Soul X-pressions leverages traditional Ugandan arts and outdoor experiential learning to nurture holistic development. The consistent emphasis on arts aligns with human rights normative frameworks that recognise cultural participation as a fundamental right (CRPD, 2006, Art. 30; UNESCO, 2009, pp. 15-18).

Another commonality lies in the recognition of inclusive education as a continuous, dynamic process rather than a fixed outcome. This is evident in ShareMusic's reconceptualization of inclusion as ongoing norm-challenging and space-creating, and in Soul X-pressions community empowerment model that fosters self-definition and collective agreements. Furthermore, stakeholder engagement also emerges as a vital theme across all cases: ALDEPA actively involves families,

communities and authorities whilst Instituto Ser Porque Você É highlights the advocacy role of families and neurodivergent associations. ShareMusic and Soul-Xpressions underscore the importance of community-led initiatives and partnerships that leverage local knowledge and lived experience — all these findings resonate with global evidence that inclusive education's success depends on multi-level collaboration and culturally grounded participation (UNICEF, 2017, pp. 22-25).

Differences among the cases primarily reflect contextual factors, particularly the nature and intensity of conflict and governance structures. ALDEPA operates in a region marked by active armed conflict and humanitarian crises, confronting challenges such as school closures and resource scarcity. In contrast, Soul X-pressions functions within Uganda's socioeconomic challenges and governance disconnects, emphasising decolonising human rights and locally relevant approaches. Instituto Ser works in an urban Brazilian context shaped by socioeconomic disparities and a tradition of community-based education, while ShareMusic is situated in a Nordic welfare state characterised by robust disability rights and social welfare systems but grapples with daily conflicts such as inequality and gang violence.

Despite these differences, all cases demonstrate that inclusive education serves as a foundational mechanism for empowerment, enabling children with disabilities to claim and enjoy their human rights. Common challenges across these contexts include cultural resistance, resource limitations, and the invisibility of children with disabilities within formal systems; these issues are addressed through teacher training, awareness-raising, flexible pedagogies, and community partnerships. The synthesis of these case studies underscores that inclusive education is a multifaceted, rights-based strategy that empowers children with disabilities by fostering agency, participation, and holistic development — which aligns with international human rights normative frameworks and offers valuable insights for advancing inclusive education across diverse conflict-affected settings.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore the transformative potential of inclusive education, particularly when enriched by natural and artistic approaches, for empowering children with disabilities in conflict-affected settings. It approached this by tracing the historical evolution, theoretical foundations, and lived realities of inclusive education. The study employed qualitative methods, conducting ten interviews with professional working with children with disabilities across multiple countries. Data were collected via Zoom interviews, following ethical protocols including informed consent, and analysed through anonymised case studies to capture contextual nuances and practical challenges.

In tracing the history, theory, and lived realities of inclusive education, this research has illuminated both the universal promise and persistent shortcomings of efforts to ensure every child's rights to learn, belong, and flourish, regardless of circumstance. Inclusive education is not a regional or cultural luxury; it is a universal human right enshrined in international law and policy, including and as demonstrated in the UN Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), frameworks such as the UNICEF's 'Education for All Framework' (EFA), the Dakar Framework for Action 2000, and the Education Strategy 'Every Child Learns'. These instruments assert that all children, regardless of ability or context, must have access to quality, equitable education. The universality of inclusive education is especially critical in conflict zones, where the intersection of disability and violence multiplies vulnerability and risk (UNESCO, 2020, p. 15; IIEP-UNESCO, 2009, p. 2.4-1). Nevertheless, as this research has shown, universality is more than a legal principle – it is a moral imperative and practical necessity. In conflict-affected regions, the denial of educational opportunities to children with disabilities is not only a violation of rights but a perpetuation of cycles of poverty, marginalisation, and trauma (ICRC, 2024, p 4). The global statistic that over 85% of children with disabilities in low-and middle-income countries do not attend school (Birmingham, 2025) is a stark reminder of the distance yet to travel.

Throughout this thesis, evidence has accumulated that inclusive education empowers children with disabilities in profound ways, particularly when it integrates natural and artistic methodologies. Inclusive classrooms, when properly resourced and supported, foster academic achievement, social skills, emotional well-being, and a sense of belonging for all students, but especially for those most at risk of exclusion (Hehir et al., 2016, pp. 45-60 Booth & Ainscow, 2011, pp. 22-35). Natural and artistic approaches, rooted in the philosophies of Rousseau, Dewey, Freire, and others, enrich inclusive education by valuing experiential learning, creativity, and the whole child. Arts-based projects, for example, have been shown in various studies (e.g., Esiner, 2002; UNICEF, 2017) to bridge cultural divided, foster

communication and support emotional resilience, even amid crisis and as demonstrated in the elaborated field research.

The thesis contributes to the field by bridging theoretical human rights frameworks with grounded, context-sensitive analyses of inclusive education, with careful mention to conflict-affected settings. It reveals that inclusive education is not a static endpoint but a dynamic, ongoing process that requires continual questioning of norms and the creation of spaces for expression and belonging. The integration of arts and natural approaches emerges as a powerful mechanism for communication, empowerment, and healing. Importantly, the research highlights a shift from viewing children with disabilities through a charity lens toward recognising their agency and potential, aligning with the SMD and advancing inclusive education as a strategy for justice and peacebuilding.

The case studies this thesis engaged with that cross four different countries with a wide range of cultural, social, political and historical differences, equally highlighted the value of inclusive education in the context of research has remained ethereal. Such approaches offer children with disabilities alternative ways of expression and participation, allowing them to claim agency and voice in environments that too often silence or overlook them. The research has also laid bare the compounded challenges faced by children with disabilities in conflict zones. Armed conflict not only increases the prevalence of disability – through violence, trauma, and disrupted health services – but also deepens existing barriers to education: damaged infrastructure, lack of assistive devices, insufficiently trained teachers, and pervasive stigma (ICRC, 2024, pp. 4-5). In Syria, for example, only 50% of children with disabilities reported attending school, compared to 84% of their nondisabled peers. The lack of inclusive policies, resources, and data-driven planning further entrenches exclusion. Humanitarian responses often fall short, either by failing to mainstream disability or by relegating children with disabilities to specialised, segregated programmes – an approach that contradicts both the spirit and the letter of international law.

Despite growing awareness, previous data and research on inclusive education for children with disabilities in conflict remain fragmented, often focused on the Global North or on non-conflict contexts. This gap is not merely academic; it has real-world consequences for policy, funding, and practice. Without robust, context-sensitive data, efforts to design, implement and evaluate inclusive education in emergencies remain inadequate, and the most marginalised children continue to be left behind (Children and Armed Conflict, 2023, pp. 21-22). Moreover, the lived experiences and voices of children with disabilities themselves are often missing from research and policy debates. This absence perpetuates a cycle of invisibility and disempowerment. It is therefore not only relevant but urgent to keep talking

about inclusive education in conflict, to document what works and what fails, and to centre the agency and aspirations of children with disabilities in all efforts to build back better (IIEP-UNESCO, 2009, p. 2.4-2).

On top of this, a recurring theme in this thesis is the necessity of collaboration across sectors, communities and borders. Multi-stakeholder partnerships, including governments, civil society, families, and children themselves, are essential to overcoming the ecological and institutional barriers that hinder inclusive education in conflict. Structured collaborations, capacity-building, and community engagement have proven effective in promoting accessibility, retention, and holistic support for children with disabilities. Conflict, paradoxically, can also offer opportunities to challenge entrenched prejudices and to reimagine education systems that are more inclusive, resilient, and just. The imperative to "build back better" after crisis is not just a slogan but a call to action – one that places the inclusion of children with disabilities at the heart of educational reconstruction and peacebuilding (UNESCO, 2020, p. 15).

As this research draws to a close, it is impossible to ignore the emotional weight of the stories and statistics encountered. Behind every data point is a child – a child whose dreams, talents, and dignity are too often denied by systems that fail to see or support them. The testimonies of those who witness children who have found belonging, expression, and hope in inclusive, artistic classrooms are a testament to what is possible when education is truly for all. Inclusive education is more than a policy or a pedagogical approach: it is an act of justice, a declaration that every child matters, and a promise that no one will be left behind. The journey toward inclusive education for children with disabilities in conflict Is far from over. Progress is uneven, challenges are immense, and the stakes could not be higher. Yet, the evidence is clear, inclusive, natural, and artistic education empowers children with disabilities not only to survive, but to thrive, even in the most adverse circumstances. To realise this vision, the global community must commit to sustained investment, inclusive policy reform, capacity-building, and, above all, to listening to and learning from the children themselves. Only then we can fulfil the universal promise of education as a force for empowerment, healing, and peace.

However, the study has limitations. The qualitative nature and relatively small sample size limit the generalisability of findings. The reliance on remote interviews may have constrained depth in some contexts, and the diversity of conflict environments, while enriching, also complicates direct comparisons due to inaccessibility. Additionally, the study's focus on professionals' perspectives means that the voices of children with disabilities themselves, though acknowledged as vital, remain underrepresented, and language barriers and access issued may have further limited participant diversity. Building on this,

these limitations suggest caution in extrapolating conclusions universally and highlight the need for complementary research approaches.

Future research should prioritise participatory methodologies that centre the experiences and voices of children with disabilities, including and not limited to, in conflict zones, to deepen understanding of their needs and aspirations. Longitudinal studies could examine the sustained impact of inclusive education interventions, particularly those integrating arts and natural approaches. Moreover, comparative research across different types of conflict and cultural contexts would further elucidate how governance, community dynamics, and resource availability shape inclusive education outcomes. There is also the need to explore the role of policy implementation and monitoring mechanisms in bridging gaps between normative frameworks and on-the-ground realities. Finally, interdisciplinary studies incorporating psychosocial, educational, and human rights perspectives could advance holistic strategies for inclusive education in fragile settings.

Bibliography

Adam, S., & Koutsoklenis, A. (2023). Who needs the social model of disability?. *Frontiers in Sociology*, *8*, 1305301. https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2023.1305301

Alasuutari, H., Niaz, L., & D'Angelo, S. (2024). *Pathways to inclusion and equity: Disability inclusion in education* (World Bank Support Hub Inclusive Education Approach Paper). The World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099120224164032400/pdf/P1775501b437210b1192fa1a44228402297.pdf

Andersen, C. S. (2022). Recognition and capability — prerequisites for empowerment for children with disabilities? *Child Indicators Research*, *15*(2), 2–5.

Antoninis, M., April, D., Barakat, B., Bella, N., D'Addio, A. C., Eck, M., Endrizzi, F., Joshi, P., Kubacka, K., McWilliam, A., Murakami, Y., Smith, W., Stipanovic, L., Vidarte, R., & Zekrya, L. (2020). All means all: An introduction to the 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report on inclusion. *Prospects*, *49*(3-4), 103–109. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09505-x

Backup Trust. (n.d.). *Inclusive education case study: Supporting a high-level tetraplegic student*. https://www.backuptrust.org.uk/support-for-you/children-young-people/the-back-up-education-inclusion-toolkit/inclusive-education-case-study

Bala, N., & Houston, C. (2015). *Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and children's participatory rights in Canada*. Department of Justice Canada.

Barnes, C., & Oliver, M. (2012). Implementing the social model of disability: Theory and research. In *Disability studies: A student's guide* (pp. 21–23). SAGE.

Burchardt, T. (2004). Capabilities and disability: The capabilities framework and the social model of disability. *Disability & Society*, *19*(7), 735–751.

Committee on the Rights of the Child & Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2022, March 18). *Joint statement on the rights of children with disabilities*. United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Craissati, D., Devi Banerjee, U., King, L., Lansdown, G., & Smith, A. (Eds.). (2007). *A Human Rights Based Approach to Education for All*. UNICEF. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001548/154861e.pdf

de Beco, G. (2014). The right to inclusive education according to Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Background, requirements and (remaining) questions. *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights*, *32*(3), 263–287.

Devandas, C., Barriga, O., & Quinn, G. (2017). *Disability among refugees and conflict-affected populations*. UNHCR.

Disabled Peoples' International (DPI). (2009). *DPI guide on CRPD Article 24 – Education* (pp. 1–3).

Donnelly, J. (2013). *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (pp. 15–30). Cornell University Press.

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. (2019). *Inclusive education in action case studies*. European Agency. https://www.european-agency.org/news/inclusive-education-action-case-studies-1

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. (n.d.). *Inclusive education in action case studies*. https://www.european-agency.org/news/inclusive-education-action-case-studies

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. (n.d.). *South African inclusive education policy case study*. https://www.european-agency.org/news/inclusive-education-action-case-studies-0

Geneva Academy. (2023). *Disability and armed conflict* (Academy Briefing No. 14). Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/Academy%20Briefing%2014-interactif.pdf

Greer, S., & Löfving, S. (2024). Evidence for the impact of the human rights-based approach in development cooperation: A systematic review. *Development in Practice*, *34*(2), 1–10.

Hartley, S., Ojwang, P., Baguwemu, A., Chavuta, A., & Murangira, S. (2020). Community-based rehabilitation for children with disabilities in conflict-affected settings: A systematic review. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, *42*(1), 12–15.

Human Rights Watch. (2024). At risk and overlooked: Children with disabilities and armed conflict. *International Review of the Red Cross*. http://international-review.icrc.org/articles/at-risk-and-overlooked-children-with-disabilities-and-armed-conflict-922

Humanity & Inclusion & Educate A Child. (2019). *Experiences implementing inclusive education in sub-Saharan Africa: A case study*. https://www.educationaboveall.org/sites/default/files/research/attachments/EAC%20Humanity%20%20Inclusion%20Case%20Study%20-FINAL.pdf

IDA's Compilation of CRPD Committee's Concluding Observations: Article 23 CRPD. (n.d.).

INEE. (2010). *Guidance Notes on Teaching and Learning*.

Kayess, R., & French, P. (2008). Out of darkness into light? Introduction the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *Human Rights Law Review*, *8*(1), 1–34.

Khadar, L. (2020). *Access to justice and the right to education for children with disabilities: Barriers in Europe*. DLA Piper Report, 9–16.

Kolar, M., Kocijancic, S., & Kovac, M. (2024). Arts education for children with disabilities: A systematic literature review. *CEPS Journal*, *14*(1), 1–16.

Krahn, G. L., Walker, D. K., & Correa-De-Araujo, R. (2015). Persons with disabilities as an unrecognized health disparity population. *American Journal of Public Health*, *105*(S2), S198–S206.

Krishnan, G., & Kumar Reddy, P. J. (2025). Adapting music in teaching-learning techniques for students with special needs in inclusive education. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, *13*(6), 5–12.

Krug, E. G., Dahlberg, L. L., Mercy, J. A., Zwi, A. B., & Lozano, R. (Eds.). (2002). *World report on violence and health*. World Health Organization.

Lundy, L. (2007). 'Voice is not enough: Conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *British Educational Research Journal*, *33*(6), 927–942.

Mactaggart, I., Kuper, H., Murthy, G. V. S., Oye, J., Polack, S., & Limburg, H. (2016). Measuring disability in population-based surveys: The interrelationship between clinical impairments and reported functional limitations in Cameroon and India. *PLoS ONE*, *11*(10), e0164470.

Mahomed, F., Bhabha, J., Stein, M. A., & Pūras, D. (2020). Establishing Good Practice for Human Rights-Based Approaches to Mental Health Care and Psychosocial Support in Kenya. *Health and Human Rights*, *22*(2), 139–153.

Mazurek, K., & Winzer, M. (2022). Retelling inclusive schooling: The UN's CRPD Committee in selected countries. *International Dialogues on Education*, *8*(1/2), 84–94.

MIDDLETON, J., & PULFORD, M. (1994). Towards Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Prevention of War. *Medicine and War*, *10*(4), 294–305.

Newman, G. (2020). *Nature-based learning for students with disabilities* (Master's thesis, St. Cloud State University). Culminating Projects in Special Education, 93.

New South Wales Department of Education. (2020). *Inclusive education case studies discussion guide*. https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/education-data-and-research/cese/publications/practical-guides-for-educators/inclusive-education-case-studies-discussion-guide

New South Wales Department of Education. (2020). *Inclusive education in NSW schools case studies*. https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/education-data-and-research/cese/publications/case-studies/inclusive-education-in-nsw-schools-case-studies

OECD. (2023). *Equity and inclusion in education: Supporting disadvantaged students and schools* (pp. 45–47). OECD Publishing.

OHCHR. (2016). *General comment No. 4 on Article 24 – the right to inclusive education* (paras. 26–27). United Nations.

Oliver, M. (1996). *Understanding Disability: From theory to practice*. Macmillan Press.

O'Neill, M. (2024). The Committee on the Rights of the Child and Article 12: Applying the Lundy model to treaty body recommendations. *Leiden Journal of International Law*, *37*(1), 161–165.

Petersen, A. (2010). The inadequacies in individualized education planning: A qualitative study. *Journal of Special Education*, *44*(8), 494–508.

Sabatello, M. (2014). A Clash of Conventions? Participation, Power and the Rights of Disabled Children. *Disability & Society*, *29*(5), 723–737.

Santa Barbara, J. (2006). Impact of war on children and imperative to end war. *Croatian Medical Journal*, *47*(6), 891–894.

Santos, C. D. C., Carvalho, B. G. E., & Lobato, B. C. (2020). Inclusion of students with special educational needs at the state music conservatory: Teachers' perspective. *Education and Research*, *46*, Article e215166.

Stahmer, A. C., & Pellecchia, M. (2021). Child case studies: Leading the way to inclusion. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, *110*, Article 103866. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0742051X21003437

Theirworld. (n.d.). *Children with disabilities*. Retrieved from https://theirworld.org/resources/children-with-disabilities/

UNESCO. (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality, Salamanca, Spain, 7-10 June 1994. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

UNESCO. (2000). *The Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments*. World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000. https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/WEF_Dakar_Framework_for_Action_2000_EN.pdf

UNESCO & European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. (n.d.). *Case studies | Inclusive education in action*. https://www.inclusive-education-in-action.org/case-studies

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (n.d.). *IP49: Education and Disability*. Retrieved from https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/ip49-education-disability-2018-en.pdf

UNICEF. (n.d.). *Children Under Attack*. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/children-under-attack

UNICEF. (n.d.). *Disability: Armed Conflict*. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/disabilities/emergencies/armed-

conflict#:~:text=Many%20are%20further%20abused%20%E2%80%93%20subjected,to%20carry%20out%20suicide%20attacks.

UNICEF. (n.d.). *Six Grave Violations*. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/children-under-attack/six-grave-violations-against-children

UNICEF. (2013). *Using the human rights framework to promote the rights of children with disabilities* (pp. 4–5). UNICEF.

UNICEF. (2019). *UNICEF education strategy 2019-2030*. https://www.unicef.org/media/59856/file/UNICEF-education-strategy-2019-2030.pdf

UNICEF. (2021). *Seen counted, included. Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities*. https://data.unicef.org/resources/children-with-disabilities-report-2021/

UNICEF. (2023). *Education for children with disabilities: Data and insights* (pp. 3–8).

UNICEF. (2023). *Global report on children with developmental disabilities: From the margins to the mainstream*.

United Nations. (2018, June 13). *Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/865-S/2018/465)*.

United Nations. (2023). *Towards greater inclusion: Children with disabilities and armed conflict*. United Nations. https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Towards-Greater-Inclusion-high-res-no-bleed.pdf

United Nations. (n.d.). *Factsheet on persons with disabilities*. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/factsheet-on-persons-with-disabilities.html

United Nations Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme (HNAP) Syria. (n.d.). *Disability in Syria: Investigation on the Intersectional Impacts of Gender, Age and a Decade of Conflict on Persons with Disabilities* (p. 4). www.hi-deutschland-projekte.de/lnob/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/09/Disability-in-Syria-Investigation-on-the-Intersectional-Impacts-of-Gender-Age-and-a-Decade-of-Conflict-on-Persons-with-Disabilities.pdf

Upchurch, M. (2024). Art integrated learning environments for students with disabilities. *The Classic Journal*.

Williams, S. (2015). Rethinking disability: The social model of disability and chronic disease. *Chronic Illness*, *11*(1), 22–31.

Wong, K. K. (2016). Inclusive education in an international school: A case study from Hong Kong. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 20*(9), 987-1005. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1094933.pdf

World Bank. (2022, April 14). *Disability Inclusion*. Retrieved from www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability.

World Bank. (n.d.). *Education in fragile, conflict, violence contexts*. Retrieved from https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/education-in-fragile-conflict-violence-contexts

World Health Organization & The World Bank. (2011). *World report on disability*. World Health Organization.

APPENDIX A — Transcripts of Case Studies

Case Study 1: ALDEPA – Cameroon

The meeting commenced with the facilitator (P1) outlining the language protocol, assisted by a translator (P2), to ensure comprehension among participants. Inclusion was broadly defined by participants (P3, P4) as the full participation of all individuals regardless of their characteristics within organisational activities. Emphasis was placed on integrating inclusive education principles into daily practices, particularly for children with disabilities (P5).

Participants highlighted the arts as a fundamental human right essential for children's development (P6). Challenges such as gender discrimination in artistic and sporting activities were noted, particularly within the African context (P5). The group stressed the importance of valuing children's natural talents and raising community awareness to foster free self-expression beyond traditional social constraints.

Efforts by governments and organisations to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream schools were discussed, including specialised teacher training and the creation of adapted learning environments (P6). The importance of involving persons with disabilities in decision-making and community activities was underscored to promote inclusion and combat discrimination.

The impact of ongoing conflict in Cameroon on school accessibility and resources was a critical concern. Participants (P6, P4) emphasized the necessity of collaboration between authorities and civil society to construct adapted schools, provide equipment, and implement supportive policies.

Successful inclusion requires the involvement of parents, communities, and authorities (P4). Recommendations included contacting disability officers and relevant networks to enhance research and advocacy efforts (P2).

Case Study 2: Instituto Ser Porque Você É – Brazil

P2, an experienced educator, discussed their work at an institute focusing on neurodiversity and inclusion. Inclusion was defined as recognizing individual difficulties and creating opportunities for development. Curriculum adaptation and fostering coexistence between neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals were central themes.

Arts such as music, theatre, and dance were identified as vital tools for expression and empowerment of neurodivergent students. Both participants agreed on the human rights dimension of arts integration.

Differences between public and private schools were noted, with public institutions often lacking resources and relying on social educators for support, while private schools had greater capacity. Advocacy by families and neurodivergent associations was critical in advancing inclusive education, supported by legal frameworks.

Participants emphasized assessing students based on individual potential and autonomy rather than standardized grades. Setting realistic expectations and providing family support were highlighted as essential.

P2 shared experiences from their award-winning book on inclusion, symbolized by the honour of carrying the Paralympic torch, illustrating the personal and social significance of inclusive education work

Case Study 3: ShareMusic & Performing Arts– Sweden

P2 described a nationwide project employing electronic and digital instruments to include children with disabilities in music creation. Workshops are tailored to diverse age groups and educational settings, including special schools.

The workshops utilize digital tools such as tablets and theremins, beginning with an app fostering calm and participation. The pedagogical model encourages creativity without the constraints of traditional musical notation, promoting inclusivity.

Music education is framed as vital for children with disabilities, with ongoing efforts to support teachers through workshops and digital resources to overcome interest and resource barriers.

The project reflects broader trends of incorporating electronic instruments into classical music, exemplified by innovative ensembles and contemporary composers.

While parents and communities have some influence on education policies, key international conventions and local regulations guide inclusiveness. Technology facilitates communication and creative expression for individuals with limited mobility.

Music therapy success stories demonstrate transformative effects for children with disabilities. The project fosters teacher empowerment and plans to develop pedagogical materials and visual content, adhering to privacy regulations.

Case Study 4: Soul X-Pressions – Uganda

P2 introduced themselves as an artist and executive director of a youth development organization based in Uganda.

P2 discussed their organization's work creating safe spaces for vulnerable children in underserved communities to develop confidence and competencies. P1, a graduate student researching human rights and democratization, shared their academic focus on inclusiveness in education, particularly for children with disabilities. Both expressed concern about the lack of meaningful change despite ongoing efforts and a desire for tangible impact.

P2 explained that their organization defines inclusion through a community empowerment model adapted from a global youth empowerment framework. This model creates safe spaces for individuals to discover and develop unique talents without labelling participants. Community agreements are collectively created and agreed upon, emphasizing strong individuals contributing to strong communities, with a focus on avoiding gender-based divisions and providing welcoming environments for all.

P1 expressed admiration for the organization's work and emphasized the importance of inclusive education and amplifying children's voices. P2 described a facilitation model centred on mutual learning and empowerment, where arts-based activities break down communication barriers by allowing participants to express themselves creatively and vulnerably. Examples were shared illustrating how art has helped children open and receive support in difficult situations.

The participants discussed art's role in education, emphasizing it as a fundamental right rather than optional enrichment. P2 shared insights from African cultural practices, noting art's historical integration in community life and the damage caused by its separation from formal education. They debated risks of inclusive nature schools becoming segregated, with P2 advocating for collaboration and integration across educational approaches to prepare youth for community involvement.

P1 discussed the influence of stakeholders on inclusive education policies, highlighting a disconnect between leadership and local communities. P2 noted that current governance structures are often foreign and disconnected from community needs, leading to challenges in policy implementation. Resource scarcity in some communities was also identified as a barrier to addressing educational challenges.

The participants discussed the impact of natural education programs on children. P2 observed significant increases in self-belief and self-esteem among participants, enabling them to see themselves as capable and valuable community contributors. They emphasized shifting mindsets from powerlessness to

ownership of community issues. P2 described their evaluation method as ongoing observation of engagement and critical thinking rather than reliance on formal reports or tests.

P1 and P2 discussed challenges and impacts of inclusive education, focusing on its transformative effects on individuals and communities. P2 shared experiences of resistance from educators, parents, and government officials due to cultural differences and traditional power dynamics, underscoring the need for training and understanding. They agreed that parents play the most significant role in modelling inclusive behaviour, with local leaders and officials playing secondary roles. The conversation concluded with P1 asking about inclusive education's role in mitigating trauma for children, which P2 had not yet addressed.

P2 described the therapeutic power of art in conflict-affected zones, explaining how activities such as gardening and sensory experiences help children release trauma through physical expression and creativity. Personal experiences were shared about using art to uncover and process hidden emotions. Regarding resource challenges, P2 explained that their organization is developing self-sustaining revenue streams, including farming initiatives, to create consistent spaces for youth programming rather than relying solely on external donors.

P1 and P2 discussed the importance of empowering individuals to define and set their own human rights, questioning the effectiveness of current international institutions. P2 expressed concerns that such institutions have disempowered local communities and suggested dismantling existing structures to build more effective ones. P1 shared research on inclusive education and the challenges of studying in Europe from a cross-cultural perspective, emphasizing the need to consider diverse cultural and historical contexts. They agreed to maintain contact and for P1 to provide P2 with resources from their master's research.