

Making School More Inclusive, Accessible, and Sustainable for Learners with Disabilities Post COVID-19

Thursday, 2nd December, 13:00 – 15:00 (Bangkok Time) via Zoom



International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2021 Regional Webinar

Making School More Inclusive, Accessible, and Sustainable for Learners with Disabilities Post COVID-19

Speakers Biographies

Kyungah Kristy Bang, Programme Officer, UNESCO Bangkok
Moderator



Kyungah Kristy Bang is a programme officer responsible for UNESCO Bangkok's regional programmes on early childhood care and education and inclusive education including children with disabilities and mother tongue-based multilingual education. She is also the coordinator of the Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group (MLE WG). She holds a M.Sc. from the National University of Singapore.

Nir Shrestha, UNICEF disability youth advocate, Nepal
Welcome remarks



Nir Shrestha is an inclusive development enthusiast, and a youth and disability rights campaigner. He is a UNICEF Youth Advocate for Disability Inclusion. He has been engaged in the Blind Youth Association Nepal, Kathmandu Valley Chapter as the vice president. He has been working in the disability rights sector and in youth leadership since 2016.

He worked as the organizing team member in international conferences such as the Asian Youth Assembly, 2018, and the Global Youth Leadership Summit, 2019. Nir worked as the youth champion in various organizations including Association of Youth Organizations, Nepal (AYON) and Visible Impact. He worked as a volunteer in the campaign run by UNV Nepal and UNDP Nepal. Nir has also been working as the Programme Associate in Diverse Patterns Pvt. Ltd., a consulting company run with the slogan "Achieve more with Diversity and Inclusion."

Mita Gupta, Disability Inclusive Education Focal Point, UNICEF ROSA
Introduction of Mapping



Mita Gupta currently holds the position of Early Childhood Development Specialist and Disability Inclusive Education focal point at the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia. She has worked in the fields of education (including on early childhood education, disability inclusive education, gender and education, and reaching out-of-school children), early childhood development, and gender and development for over 20 years. She has worked at UNICEF and UNESCO in the Asia-Pacific region and at UNICEF Headquarters; before joining the UN, she worked in a gender and development NGO, AWID, in Washington, DC, and in a state adult literacy programme in Oregon in the United States. She holds a Master's degree in Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Peter Grimes, Director of Beyond Education Consultancy
Presentation of study findings



Dr. Peter Grimes is a highly regarded international academic and education expert with over 34 years' experience of supporting equity in education, inclusive education, child protection and development, early childhood education and intervention, policy and program development and management, managing a wide range of programs, projects and complex teams all around the world. He is adjunct professor in a number of universities in England, Australia, Vietnam and The Philippines and author of various development education publications and reports.

He is also the Executive Director of Beyond Education Consultancy, a non-profit organization based in the Philippines working on improving basic education to ensure all children have access to and participate in a high quality, equitable education. Among many disability-inclusive research and projects, Beyond Education's portfolio includes the recently published regional mapping of inclusive education in East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia regions, ongoing support to education reforms in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, evaluation of inclusive education in Bhutan, development of teacher development packages for Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao and Timor-Leste, and a policy paper reviewing the progress in inclusive education and early intervention in Asia and the Pacific region.

Tolhas Damanik, CEO of Wahana Inklusif Indonesia and Disability Inclusion Advisor for the IFES-ASEAN project, Indonesia
Panel moderator



Mr. Tolhas Damanik pursued his bachelor's degree in education from Jakarta State University, and his master's degree in education from Ohio University, USA. Tolhas has 16 years' professional experience advocating for and providing technical advice for the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, particularly related to education, employment, political participation, human rights, and social protection. Tolhas worked for several disability inclusive projects with several international organizations in Indonesia such as Helen Keller International (HKI), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES), and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale (GIZ). He is currently serving as Disability Inclusion

Advisor for the IFES-ASEAN project. He is also a Founder and Executive Director of Wahana Inklusif Indonesia Foundation. In 2013, Tolhas received the Inclusive Education Award from the Indonesian Ministry of National Education for his dedicated work on supporting the development of the inclusive education system in Indonesia.

Dr. Salmah Jopri, Special Education Division, Ministry of Education, Malaysia
Panelist 1



Dr. Salmah binti Jopri is an education enthusiast, equipped with 30 years of experience in the field. Ventured in the education landscape in 1991, she has served as a secondary school teacher for 6 years, before being promoted as a lecturer in Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic in 1999. Her professional experiences in teaching and management fields have brought her to the Technical Education Department from 2000 until 2005. She has joined the Special Education Division in June 2005 until April 2019.

In April 2019, she has been appointed as the Director of Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, Regional Centre for Special Educational Needs (SEAMEO SEN). Within 1 and a half year in her tenure, Ms. Salmah has spearheaded various collaborative programs and activities with prominent education stakeholders in the Southeast Asia region, in promoting and enhancing the quality of Special Education Needs Practices for Person with Disabilities (PwD) and its communities.

Promoted as the Director of Special Education Division, Ministry of Education Malaysia in September 2020, Ms. Salmah continues to paved her journey in ensuring the rights to education for Special Educational Needs children will further flourish, through dedicated national roll-out plans in place. In this role, she provides strategic direction, advocating leadership, and as an exemplary champion in strengthening the Special Education positive growth.

Anjee Agarwal, Founder and Executive Director, Samarthyam, India
Panelist 2



Anjee Agarwal is Accessibility, Mobility and WASH specialist, researcher and author. She co-founded Samarthyam, National Centre for Accessible Environments in 1993. She is Member CSO-Standing Committee, NITI Aayog, Government of India which is responsible for implementation of Sustainable Development Goals.

Promoting Sustainable and livable societies is her mission and she is passionate about people-friendly spaces where mobility is without barriers. She works on “Education for All”, access audited more than 500 schools and authored Accessibility Code for Educational Institutions for UNICEF and Ministry of Education, India. She has facilitated capacity building training for the state education officers, teachers and special educators to bring about inclusion across differences and diversities. Her pioneering efforts in the past 28 years have resulted in launching of flagship “Accessible India Campaign” by Prime Minister’s office and Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India to make India accessible. Anjee has authored several universal accessibility manuals, guidelines and codes for Bureau of Indian Standards and Indian Roads Congress.

As a woman with disability herself, she believes in active advocacy and has brought policy level changes to make Incredible India = Inclusive India. She undertakes Accessibility, WalkAbility and Road Safety Audits in built and outdoor environments, transportation infrastructure with gender and disability inclusive agenda. She has organized several mass awareness campaigns in India on social issues, viz. Mobility for All, Make The Right Real, Right to Walk; Right to Sanitation; Inclusive Education; Violence Against Women and Empowerment of Women with Disabilities, etc.

Prashanti Pradhan, Co-founder and Chairperson, Phensem Parents Support Group,
Bhutan
Panelist 3



Prashanti Pradhan is the Chairperson to Board of Trustees and Co-Founder, Phensem Parent Support Group Bhutan. Phensem PSGB was informally co-founded by 3 mothers in July 2017 and was formally recognized as a Civil Society Organisation of Bhutan in July 2020 which is the first Naz of its kind in Bhutan. She has been actively supported the organisation Phensem and supported parent groups in Bhutan since 2013. She is also a Parent representative to the Board of Trustees, Ability Bhutan Society, Bhutan.

Ika Putri Mahardhika, Program Officer and Consultant at Wahana Inklusif Indonesia
Panelist 4



Ika Prtri Mahadhika graduated from Islamic State University (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta in Social Sciences. She took her role at Helen Keller International since 2019 and oversighted several projects on Inclusive Education, such as School-based Campaign on inclusive Education, Inclusive Sport Festival in 4 Districts Across Indonesia, Inclusive Education Parallel Online Training for Teachers, school Principals, and school Supervisors in 4 Districts across Indonesia.

Currently she is working at Wahana Inklusif Indonesia as Program Officer and Consultant.

Jim Ackers, Regional Education Adviser at UNICEF South Asia
Closing remarks



Jim Ackers is the Regional Education Adviser at UNICEF South Asia and is therefore a co-chair of Education 2030+ with UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific and UNESCO Bangkok. He is very familiar with the excellent work of the Disability Inclusive TWG.

From 2017-2019 Jim was Head of Training and Education Programmes at UNESCO IIEP where he led the development of a training programme for Ministry officials and development partner staff on mainstreaming disability inclusive education into Education Sector Plans. He has worked for UNICEF for 13 years and as Regional Education Adviser, for Eastern and Southern Africa (2009-2014); East Asia and the Pacific (2014-2017) and South Asia (from 2019); also serving as the Disability Focal Point in each of these Regional Offices.

Jim has also taught at the University of London Institute of Education and Newcastle University in the UK and worked for the UK government in Africa. He has taught in primary and secondary schools and adult and education. Jim's many interests in education are education policy and planning. He has supported the design of national teacher training and quality assurance systems. He is passionate about the need for cross-sectoral approaches to areas like ECD; disabilities and school health.

Jim has written several articles in leading refereed journals and designed studies and strategies for various areas of education. He holds a PhD in Education Policy from the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK, a Masters in Applied Linguistics, a Post Graduate Certificate in Education and a BScEcon from the London School of Economics.

Sawang Srisom, Technical Consultant, Leonard Cheshire
Closing remarks



Working in the disability sector for over 18 years, Sawang Srisom has been a strong advocate for the rights of people with disabilities. He is currently the technical consultant for Leonard Cheshire, Thailand and worked with the organisation in various capacities.

Sawang has worked with several international organisations in the Asia Pacific region in the past and ardently promoted the rights of people with disabilities in various aspects of socio-economic development. As a passionate trainer, he regularly conducts 'Disability Equality Trainings' at several regional and international platforms.

Besides his work as a technical expert on disability inclusion in areas of disability inclusive data, employment and education, Sawang also leads a group, 'Transportation for All (T4A)', which advocates for universal accessibility in public transport for people with disabilities and all users requiring better access. He has been an integral part of this growing movement that aims to mobilise efforts to improve accessibility in the Bangkok Mass Transit System - the first sky train in Bangkok - and other modes of public transport.