Inclusive Education Q&A

1. What is inclusive education?
Inclusive education is schooling for the vast majority of children within a mainstream system, where all children - including those with disabilities - are given the opportunity and support to learn together in the same classroom.

2. Why does the world need inclusive education?
Because it is outrageous that more than 32 million children with disabilities in developing countries are out of school. That’s more than three times the entire population of Sweden!

Being out of education denies this group the ability to make friends, to learn how to read and write, and to master the skills that are crucial for future employment.

If we do not fight this injustice, we will remain light-years away from the Sustainable Development Goals target to ensure a quality education for all by 2030.
3. Why not go for ‘special’ or segregated schools instead?
Because inclusive education brings better social, academic, health and economic outcomes than segregated schools, which rarely prepare girls and boys with disabilities for the realities of the real world.

Inclusive education can have a positive influence on both children with and without disabilities.

Inclusive education promotes the appreciation of diversity in our societies and it also avoids the extreme pain caused by families being broken apart.

4. How can special education lead to families being broken apart?
There are many, many examples of this happening.

For example, our Inclusive Education Advisor, Nafisa Baboo, recalls how her father who is blind was separated from his mother and siblings at the age of just eight years old to attend a special school in Cape Town, 750 km away from their home. His brothers and sisters grew up together, learning and laughing their way through school in the security of the family unit - and sadly, without Nafisa’s father.

We want a world in which no child is needlessly denied an education, or is forced to split away from their family.

5. But isn’t inclusive education very expensive?
Contrary to what many believe, inclusive education is less costly than ‘special’ or ‘segregated’ education.

In Pakistan, for instance, UNESCO found that special schools were 15 times more expensive per pupil than mainstream schools which include children with disabilities.

Evidence from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal and the Philippines also suggests that the returns on investing in education for people with disabilities are two to three times higher than for those without disabilities.
6. **What are the other benefits of inclusive education?**

Inclusive education can remove learning barriers for many children and it can drastically reduce out of school populations. It can lead to economic growth and reduced unemployment. And by creating a culture of respect towards individual differences, it can also tackle discrimination in society.

7. **Why don’t more schools practise inclusive education?**

Some of the most common reasons for this include: negative perceptions of the learning potential of disabled children, poorly trained teachers, a lack of resources - including braille text books, and a lack of government capacity.
8. So how does Light for the World help achieve inclusive education?

First, we help to find those children with disabilities who are out of school. Then, we show their parents ways to support their children’s development and give them access to health and social services. Next, we help make sure the children are enrolled in school.

We check that the children are supported with the services and equipment they need – this includes, for example, wheelchairs and braille slates and styluses.

Making school buildings and infrastructure accessible is also important. So we ensure that the classrooms are physically available to all.

What’s more, we understand that teachers need – and want – to know how to deal with the individual needs of all children. So we help train teachers in inclusive pedagogical practices.

Finally, we advocate for long term change in policy and legal frameworks.
8. This all sounds very nice – but how do we know it can work on a larger scale?
Our pilot project in Garango, Burkina Faso, achieved an increase in the number of children with disabilities attending school from 4% in 2009 to more than 60% just five years later.

The pilot showed that even in challenging environments with extremely limited resources, children with disabilities can take part in a quality education system which helps everyone achieve their full potential.

In 2016, we helped more than 9,000 children with disabilities to attend school in Burkina Faso and other countries.

9. Does Light for the World do advocacy work around inclusive education?
Yes we advocate for inclusive education on both a national and an international level.

We are currently leading the #CostingEquity campaign with the International Disability and Development Consortium to ensure more and better financing of disability inclusive education. The campaign started with the launch of the landmark research report on the financial case for governments and donors to support disability inclusive education.

10. How can I help?
There are many ways people and organisations can help.

Big donors and other NGOs can help by boosting their aid for education and making disability-responsiveness a necessary condition for all funding and future projects. But individuals can help too!

You can spread the message that inclusive education works... and that millions of children with disabilities, who are currently out of school, deserve a quality education which will help them, and their societies, achieve their full potential.
This is inclusive education: Assana, a girl with a physical disability, has the same opportunity to learn as her peers.

Sample Tweets

In #inclusive schools children with and without disabilities learn with and from each other which has positive influence for all children.

32 million of children with disabilities are currently out of school and deserve a quality education! Let's take action!

@lftwworldwide’s project in Garango has shown, how inclusive education works - 60% of children w/disabilities attend school today.

#InclusiveEducation brings better social, academic, economic outcomes and costs less than “special” schools. Spread the word that IE works!

Support the #CostingEquity campaign to ensure better financing of disability inclusive education! bit.ly/2o3k6u1 @lftwworldwide

No more segregated schools! We want a world in which no child is denied an education, or is forced to split away from their family.