



Nodira, age 18, UZBEKISTAN. © UNICEF video

# Children With Disabilities: Nodira's Story

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Unit Overview</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
<b>Common Core State Standards</b> . . . . .	<b>8</b>
<b>National Content Standards</b> . . . . .	<b>9</b>
<b>Lesson 1: UNICEF and Disabilities</b> . . . . .	<b>11</b>
<b>Lesson 2: Learn and Take Action</b> . . . . .	<b>16</b>
<b>Glossary</b> . . . . .	<b>22</b>
<b>Handout 1: Nodira’s Story</b> . . . . .	<b>23</b>
<b>Handout 2: UNICEF and Disabilities</b> . . . . .	<b>24</b>
<b>Handout 3: Preventing Disabilities in Children</b> . . . . .	<b>25</b>
<b>Handout 4a–d: Case Studies: UNICEF and Children with Disabilities</b> . . . . .	<b>28</b>
<b>Handout 5: UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Articles Specifically Relevant to Children</b> . . . . .	<b>32</b>
<b>Handout 6: Excerpt from Interview With Alexandra Yuster</b> . . . . .	<b>34</b>
<b>Handout 7: Links Between Disability and the Millennium Development Goals</b> . . . . .	<b>35</b>

TeachUNICEF was created by the U.S. Fund for UNICEF’s Education Department. © 2008, 2013

Unless stated otherwise, the source for all charts, figures, maps, and statistics used in this unit is: United Nations Children’s Fund, (UNICEF), New York. Additional sources are noted when they are required. Website addresses (URLs) are provided throughout this unit for reference and additional research. The authors have made every effort to ensure these sites and information are up-to-date at the time of publication, but availability in the future cannot be guaranteed.

# UNIT OVERVIEW

## Children With Disabilities: Nodira's Story

A High School Educator's Guide (Grades 9–12)

### Rationale for Teaching This Unit

*Children With Disabilities: Nodira's Story* will help teachers to engage students by

- Promoting student reflection and critical thinking about being global citizens.
- Encouraging understanding about the ways in which children, specifically children with disabilities, are excluded from education and essential services around the world.
- Introducing UNICEF programs that address the root causes of the exclusion of children.
- Drawing parallels between the experience of children in the United States and of children elsewhere around the world.

## Unit Overview

---

*Children With Disabilities: Nodira's Story* is a unit of two lessons designed

1. To raise awareness of the challenges facing children with disabilities worldwide.
2. To increase students' understanding of the challenges children with disabilities face.
3. To explore how various organizations and individuals are working to support children with disabilities.
4. To show students how they can support people with disabilities.

### Enduring Understanding

Children with disabilities have the same rights as all other children, but they are too often excluded from the same opportunities to thrive that other children have. As global citizens, we must recognize the rights of children with disabilities and allow them to take their rightful place as equal participants in society.

### Essential Questions

1. How is disability compounded by exclusion?
2. What is the relationship between disability and poverty?
3. What are the benefits and limitations of inclusive education?
4. How can I express my global citizenship and promote rights and inclusion of children with disabilities in my daily life?

**Lesson 1:** Students will reflect on the meaning of the term “disability.” By reading and watching print and video stories, students will learn about the daily life of Nodira, an 18-year-old living with spina bifida in Uzbekistan. Students will brainstorm and discuss strategies that could support children living with disabilities. Students will then compare their strategies with a list of UNICEF activities being implemented for children with disabilities.

**Lesson 2:** Students will learn about specific UNICEF country programs supporting individuals with disabilities and will consider the links between poverty and disability. Through reflection in an interview with a UNICEF staff member about inclusive education, they will consider how greater acceptance of different abilities can benefit all children. Students will conclude by discussing how to include advocacy for children with disabilities as part of their lives as global citizens.

## Background Information

---

Children who live with disabilities are among the most excluded of the world’s children. While there are no reliable data on the number of children living with disabilities globally, some estimates put their number at 150 million.<sup>1</sup> This is likely to be an underestimate, though, due to widespread under-recognition and under-reporting of disabilities.

The kinds of disabilities that children face include

- Physical disabilities—which may affect mobility and motor skills.
- Sensory disabilities—such as blindness or deafness.
- Intellectual disabilities—such as learning disabilities and developmental delays.
- Mental health disabilities—which affect children’s psychological and social functioning.

Disabilities may be congenital (i.e., present since birth) or may be acquired. Poor maternal health care and malnutrition often contribute to congenital disabilities. The factors leading to acquired disabilities are many, from inadequate sanitation resulting in diseases such as polio, to unavailability of immunizations against diseases, to diets deficient in vitamins and minerals (iodine, iron, vitamin A, zinc, and others) known to guard against disabilities. Children who live in situations of armed conflict may acquire disabilities from injuries, including those inflicted by landmines. Children involved in hazardous forms of child labor may become disabled by accidents, carrying heavy loads over long periods of time, chemical exposure, or other unsafe working conditions.

Most children living with disabilities in developing countries have no access to rehabilitative health care or education. They are often separated from their families and communities and placed in institutions. Institutionalized children may suffer from a lack of adult attention and affection. They grow up without knowing what family life is like. They are often at higher risk for abuse and violence from caretakers and other children. Unfortunately many institutions have low or no standards of safety, hygiene, nutrition, health care, and education. Children who have spent long periods of time in institutional or residential care may have difficulty adjusting to life outside the institutions, and poor education and lack of physical and emotional care may negatively affect their social and economic opportunities later in life.

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), *The State of the World’s Children 2006* (New York: UNICEF, 2006), 27, accessed May 6, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/pdfs/sowc06\\_fullreport.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/pdfs/sowc06_fullreport.pdf).

Whether in institutions or in their communities, children with disabilities often face discrimination and marginalization that affect their self-esteem, limit their chances to interact with others, and interfere with their educational opportunities. Negative attitudes toward children with disabilities increase their risk of abuse and exploitation.

## Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>2</sup>

In 2002, delegates at the United Nations began negotiations on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st century. It follows decades of work by the UN to change viewing persons with disabilities as objects of goodwill (e.g., charity, medical treatment, social protection) to seeing them as societal equals, capable of advancing their human rights and being active members of society. The Convention was adopted by the UN on December 13, 2006, and went into force on May 3, 2008.

The Convention protects human rights and advances social development for persons with disabilities in a number of ways:

- It adopts a broad categorization of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that they all must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- It establishes how all categories of rights apply to them.
- It identifies areas where adaptations have to be made for them to effectively exercise their rights.
- It identifies areas where their rights have been violated, and where protection of rights must be reinforced.

The complete text of the Convention can be found at [un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf](http://un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf).

As of May 7, 2013, the Convention had been signed by 155 parties and ratified by 130. Though the United States is a signatory party, it has not ratified the Convention. The Senate voted 61 to 38 in favor on December 4, 2012, but with 66 “yes” votes needed to pass (two-thirds of the Senate in attendance), the measure failed. Supporters argued that the Convention was inspired by and conforms to the Americans with Disabilities Act and that rejection would weaken U.S. leadership on the rights of persons with disabilities wherever they are.<sup>3</sup> However, some people saw no evidence that other countries would be influenced by U.S. leadership, and they argued that it would not advance the rights of U.S. citizens.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, countries continue to ratify the Convention—Albania, Barbados, and Iraq all did so after the U.S. rejection—and the Senate may take up the measure again.

2 Adapted from United Nations Enable, “Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,” United Nations, accessed May 7, 2013, <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=14&pid=150>.

3 Human Rights Watch, “US: Senate Misses Opportunity on Disability Convention,” *The Huffington Post*, December 5, 2012, accessed May 7, 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/human-rights-watch/us-senate-misses-opportun\\_b\\_2244885.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/human-rights-watch/us-senate-misses-opportun_b_2244885.html).

4 Betsy Woodruff, “U.N. Treaty on the Rights of the Disabled,” *National Review Online*, December 3, 2012, accessed May 7, 2013, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/334605/un-treaty-rights-disabled-betsy-woodruff>.

## State of the World's Children 2013<sup>5</sup>

---

In May 2013, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) released its annual report, *State of the World's Children*. The focus was on children with disabilities in all situations—their homes, schools, and health care centers; in emergencies and conflict—and the ways in which these situations vary around the world. The report argues that if current conditions continue that deny these children their full potential, the lost opportunities for the individuals and their societies will be immense.

The central message of the report revolves around rights. Children with disabilities have the same rights as all other children, including the right to be recognized and provided with the same opportunities to flourish. Unfortunately, they are too frequently excluded from societies, statistics, and policies, and this makes them invisible. These children are more than capable of overcoming barriers to their inclusion, but inclusion requires a change in perception about their rights and a move from *apart to a part*. A just society needs to include everyone, and universal human rights can be realized only when societies are inclusive. Only then can children with disabilities take their rightful place as equal participants in society and fully enrich the life of their communities.

*The State of the World's Children 2013* makes the following recommendations:

- Ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Fight discrimination.
- Dismantle barriers to inclusion.
- End institutionalization.
- Support families.
- Move beyond minimum standards.
- Involve children with disabilities in decision making.

UNICEF hopes that this report will foster greater attention on these children's global needs and remarkable potential. The report and a wealth of accompanying resources (images, videos, stories, and more) can be found at [unicef.org/sowc2013](http://unicef.org/sowc2013).

## UNICEF and Disabilities

---

UNICEF works to meet the basic needs and rights of children with all types of disabilities. It encourages countries to adopt policies that keep children with disabilities in their families whenever possible, and seeks to support parents in meeting the needs of their children in the home. UNICEF promotes inclusive education that allows children with disabilities to attend school with their peers without disabilities, which creates greater opportunities for them to learn and fulfill their intellectual and social potential without being marginalized.

---

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Launch of *State of the World's Children 2013: Children with Disabilities*," UNICEF, accessed May 6, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/disabilities/files/SOWC\\_one-pagerF.doc](http://www.unicef.org/disabilities/files/SOWC_one-pagerF.doc).

UNICEF supports early detection of disabilities and child-focused health services in local communities. It also works to counteract misinformation and stigma associated with disabilities, and to promote attitudes of acceptance and nondiscrimination. Young people's own participation and leadership in fighting discrimination is an essential part of UNICEF's approach.

UNICEF activities to prevent disabilities include

- Health care and nutrition for pregnant women and young children
- Safe water and sanitation
- Landmine awareness education
- Combating hazardous child labor

## A Case Study

This lesson plan focuses on Nodira, an 18-year-old young woman living with spina bifida in Uzbekistan. Formerly a part of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan became independent in 1991 and is still a country in transition. While it is currently experiencing economic growth, unemployment is common, and around the time Nodira's story was recorded, about one-quarter of the population lived below the poverty line.<sup>6</sup>

UNICEF faces a number of challenges in Uzbekistan. Infant mortality is high, and more than half of the women of childbearing age are anemic. Many children experience stunted growth due to poor nutrition. Vitamin A deficiency (which can lead to blindness) and iodine deficiency (which can impair cognitive development) are widespread. At the time Nodira's story was recorded, government spending for public health was 17 dollars per person per year.<sup>7</sup>

While over 99 percent of the population is literate, most children with disabilities like Nodira are educated separately from children without disabilities. This reflects the widespread practice under the communist government of the former Soviet Union in which the state takes on the role of caretaker, and the children with disabilities become dependents of the state.

### What is spina bifida?

When a human embryo develops, a narrow sheath—called the neural tube—closes to form the brain and spinal cord. This process is usually complete by the 28th day of pregnancy. If problems occur during this process, the development of the neural tube may be incomplete.

The result can be spina bifida, which can cause partial or complete paralysis. While the exact cause is a mystery, genetic, nutritional, and environmental factors may be involved. If mothers get adequate folic acid (also called folate, a common B vitamin) during pregnancy, the chances of their children being born with spina bifida are decreased.

6 Government of Uzbekistan and United Nations Office in Uzbekistan, *Millennium Development Goals Report: Uzbekistan 2006* (Tashkent: United Nations Office in Uzbekistan, 2006), accessed May 3, 2013, <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/MDG%20Country%20Reports/Uzbekistan/Uzbekistan%20MDG%20April%202006.pdf>.

7 Calculated from data in World DataBank, accessed May 3, 2013, <http://databank.worldbank.org/>.

This led to the creation of residential schools where children with disabilities often end up spending their entire lives. Separated from their families and growing up in institutions, these children receive an education of inferior quality, and have few opportunities to interact with children from local schools. Currently,

18 percent of children with disabilities in Uzbekistan are living in institutions. By comparison, only about 5 percent of children with disabilities in the United States live in institutions.

**For more information on UNICEF’s work in Uzbekistan, visit [unicef.org/infobycountry/uzbekistan\\_background.html](http://unicef.org/infobycountry/uzbekistan_background.html) or [unicef.org/uzbekistan/](http://unicef.org/uzbekistan/).**

UNICEF is working actively with the government of Uzbekistan to improve the quality of elementary school education for all children. A Coordination Council on Child Protection has been established and is working to deinstitutionalize children with disabilities and to improve conditions for them. In September 2005 the Ministry of Public Education issued a landmark decree to introduce inclusive education into Uzbekistan’s public school system. Since then there has been a significant increase in the number of disabled children admitted into mainstream schools as a result of teacher training and broader advocacy among parents and communities. After the passing of the Law on the Guarantees of the Rights of the Child, the Ministry of Public Education introduced a new article on inclusive education to the country’s Education Law in 2008.<sup>8</sup> In support of this push, UNICEF worked with the Asian Development Bank on a \$1.5 million grant for a pilot program of inclusive and integrated education for children with special needs. The pilot was a success, and as a result the Ministry of Public Education agreed to develop a strategy for development of inclusive education in basic education schools.

UNICEF is also working to improve prenatal health care and nutrition for women and children. Projects to supplement their diets with folic acid, iron, vitamin A, and iodine are underway.

## Set the Tone

Throughout this lesson plan, the term “children with disabilities” is used, rather than “disabled children” or “handicapped children.” This is to convey the message that they are children first and that they should not be defined by their disability.

Remember that your students will have varying degrees of comfort with this issue. You may have someone with disabilities in your class, or your students may have someone with disabilities in their families. You may, however, have students who are unfamiliar and even uncomfortable with this topic area.

Unfortunately, the use of derogatory terms for people with disabilities is common in many schools. Set a tone from the beginning of the lesson that discourages such terms and encourages students to use language such as “person with a physical disability” or “person with a developmental disability.” “Nondisabled” may be used for the rest of the population, but “people without disabilities” is preferable. “Normal,” “able-bodied,” or “healthy” are discouraged.

A useful guide to appropriate language, including definitions of “intellectual disability” and other terms used in this unit, can be found on the Life Span Institute’s website at: [www2.ku.edu/~lsi/news/featured/guidelines.shtml](http://www2.ku.edu/~lsi/news/featured/guidelines.shtml). If you have other concerns about teaching this topic, you may want to consult a specialist on disabilities or inclusion.

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF Uzbekistan, “Children With Disabilities Factsheet” (Tashkent: UNICEF Uzbekistan), accessed May 23, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/Disabilities\\_May\\_gk.doc](http://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/Disabilities_May_gk.doc).

## Evaluation/Assessment

---

When planning how to measure student achievement for this unit, you may wish to consider the following desired outcomes:

- Participate in class discussions and small group work.
- Consider possible priority interventions for people with disabilities.
- Describe the links between disability and poverty.
- Identify key points when reading a text.
- Calculate and interpret statistics.
- Organize and communicate effectively in a “take action” plan on promoting rights and inclusion of children with disabilities.

## Common Core State Standards<sup>9</sup>

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading	Lesson	
	1	2
1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.	✓	✓
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.	✓	✓
4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.	✓	✓
7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.	✓	✓
College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing		
4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience	✓	
7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.	✓	✓
College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening		
1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	✓	✓
2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.	✓	✓
4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	✓	✓
College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language		
6. Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.	✓	✓
Standards for Mathematical Practice		
1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.	✓	

<sup>9</sup> © Copyright 2010. National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers. All rights reserved.

## National Content Standards

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies <sup>10</sup>	Lesson	
	1	2
3. <b>PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS:</b> Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.	✓	✓
9. <b>GLOBAL CONNECTIONS:</b> Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.	✓	✓
10. <b>CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES:</b> Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.		✓
Standards for the English Language Arts <sup>11</sup>		
1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.	✓	✓
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.	✓	✓
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.	✓	✓
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.	✓	✓
National Geography Standards <sup>12</sup>		
Essential Element I. THE WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS: The geographically informed person knows and understands...		
1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.	✓	

10 National Council for the Social Studies, *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment* (Silver Spring, Maryland: NCSS, 1994), 14–23.

11 National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association, *Standards for the English Language Arts* (Urbana, IL, and Newark, DE: National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association, 1996), 25. For a full list of standards, see <http://www.ncte.org/standards>.

12 National Geography Standards, Geography Education Standards Project, *Geography for Life: The National Geography Standards* (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Committee on Research and Exploration, 1994), 34–35.

Principles and Standards for School Mathematics <sup>13</sup>	Lesson	
	1	2
Number and Operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compute fluently and make reasonable estimates.</li> </ul>	✓	
Connections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize and apply mathematics in contexts outside of mathematics.</li> </ul>	✓	✓

<sup>13</sup> National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics* (Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2000), 32.

# LESSON ONE

## Children With Disabilities: Nodira's Story

A High School Educator's Guide (Grades 9–12)

# UNICEF AND DISABILITIES

TOTAL TIME: TWO 45-MINUTE PERIODS

## Objectives

---

Students will

- Define “disability.”
- Discern the needs and obstacles of a child with disabilities in a lower–middle-income country and compare them to the needs and obstacles of such children in the United States.
- Explain the work of UNICEF to promote the needs and rights of children with disabilities and prevent the occurrence of disabilities.

## Session Plan

---

### PART ONE:

- Opening Activity: 15 minutes
- Making Connections: View It: 20 minutes
- Reflect: 10 minutes

### PART TWO:

- Learn About UNICEF's Work: 35 minutes
- Reflect: 10 minutes

## Vocabulary

---

The following words and terms may not be familiar to students. Use this list as a resource for students to expand their working vocabulary as they encounter these words and terms in the lesson.

- Asylum
- Convention
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Fetus
- Impair
- Institution
- Intellectual disability
- Poliomyelitis (*long form for polio*)
- Spina bifida
- Stigma

## Materials Needed

- Pencils/pens
- Computer with Internet access
- Screen and LCD projector or interactive whiteboard
- Copies of “Nodira’s Story” (Handout 1)
- Index cards (or slips of paper)
- Copies of “UNICEF and Disabilities” (Handout 2)
- Copies of “Preventing Disabilities in Children” (Handout 3)
- World map

You can find the “Nodira’s Story” video online at <http://teachunicef.org/explore/media/watch/nodiras-story-children-disabilities>.

## Directions

### PART ONE

#### Opening Activity

1. Explain to the class that this lesson will focus on the needs and rights of people with disabilities.

2. Read the following:

##### **A Definition of Disability**

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.<sup>14</sup>

Encourage students to use language that is accurate and not derogatory, and to bear in mind that there may be students with disabilities in the group.

Ensure that students understand any words that are not clear to them (by giving them definitions, allowing them time to look up words, etc.).

3. Have students work in small groups to brainstorm possible “barriers” that they think people with disabilities might face.
4. Ask the class to imagine the barriers that someone with disabilities might face in countries not as developed as the United States, without an advanced physical infrastructure (e.g., little or no running water, dirt roads, and little or no public transportation) or much societal acceptance of disabilities (e.g., discrimination, weak legal protections).

Ask the class as a whole:

- Are the barriers you thought of mostly physical?
- What are other kinds of barriers that people with disabilities might face?

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Enable, “Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol,” United Nations, accessed May 3, 2013, <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>.

## Making Connections: View It

1. Tell the class that they will be learning about the life of Nodira, a girl with spina bifida who lives in Uzbekistan. Explain that spina bifida is a congenital disability (i.e., disability since birth) that can cause partial or complete paralysis. While the exact cause is unknown, it is thought that genetic, nutritional, and environmental factors may be involved. If, however, a mother gets adequate folic acid (also called folate, a common B vitamin) during pregnancy, the chances of her child being born with spina bifida are significantly decreased.

Ask the class to locate Uzbekistan on a map.

**Uzbekistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia, formerly part of the Soviet Union. It shares borders with Kazakhstan to the west and to the north, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the east, and Afghanistan and Turkmenistan to the south. The only official language, Uzbek, is a Turkic language, but Russian continues to be widely used.**

2. Show the video, “Nodira’s Story.” Discuss with the class, as a whole, the following questions:
  - From watching and listening to Nodira, how would you describe her strengths and abilities?
  - Why is getting an education so important to Nodira?
  - What impact has Nodira’s disability had on her chance to get an education?

## Reflect

Have students set up a modified RAN (Reading and Analyzing Nonfiction)<sup>15</sup> strategy chart as follows:

Topic: Children With Disabilities				
<b>Prior Knowledge and Feeling</b> What I think I know, and what I feel	<b>Confirmed</b> What I could prove	<b>Misconceptions</b> What I couldn’t prove	<b>Wonderings</b> What I still want to know	<b>Source</b>

Have them work on the first column. Depending on their previous experience with related issues in and out of school, there could be a whole range of feelings on disabilities, including discomfort. Give students space to express their feelings, being mindful of the potential sensitivities in the class about disabilities. Close the lesson by validating all feelings expressed and previewing the further exploration of disability awareness that will come during Part Two of the lesson.

<sup>15</sup> Tony Stead, *Reality Checks: Teaching Reading Comprehension With Nonfiction* (Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005).

## PART TWO

### Learn About UNICEF's Work

1. Have the class read "Nodira's Story" (Handout 1) and answer the two questions on the sheet. Facilitate a discussion on some or all of the following:

From Handout 1:

- Does Nodira have any goals that are similar to your own? What are they?
- Do you think young people with disabilities in the United States face challenges similar to those faced by Nodira?

Extension questions:

- To what extent do you think discrimination against students with disabilities exists in your school?
- What forms does it take?
- Why do you think some students have negative attitudes toward students with disabilities?
- What can you do, as an individual, to counter negative attitudes against children with disabilities?

2. Explain to the class what UNICEF and the U.S. Fund for UNICEF do:

*The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) works in more than 190 countries and territories to save and improve children's lives, providing health care and immunizations, clean water and sanitation, nutrition, education, emergency relief, and more. The U.S. Fund for UNICEF supports UNICEF's work through fundraising, advocacy, and education in the United States. Together, we are working toward the day when zero children die from preventable causes and every child has a safe and healthy childhood.*

3. Divide the class into groups of four or five students. Provide the following instructions:

- Imagine that you work for UNICEF and that it is your job to create programs or activities that would support children like Nodira.
- Have students write each idea for such programs or activities on an index card or strip of paper.
- After 5–10 minutes, ask each group to rank their responses in order of priority (most important to least important) and to read their responses to the class.

4. Give the groups copies of "UNICEF and Disabilities" (Handout 2). After they read the handout, ask the class:

- How would you describe UNICEF priorities in working with children with disabilities?
- How do these priorities compare with the ones that your group came up with?

## Reflect

Review Nodira's needs and how UNICEF works to address needs of children like her. Mention how many of these needs fall under the banner of inclusion: inclusion in the country's health care priorities, equitable treatment by the education system, and being valued by society at large. Then have students take out their RAN strategy charts and generate questions about children with disabilities they want to explore in the "Wonderings" column. Encourage students to collaborate with each other on this. Facilitate as appropriate. Sample some questions to share with the class to close the session.

## Homework

Distribute copies of "Preventing Disabilities in Children" (Handout 3), which provides UNICEF statistics on rates of polio immunization and salt iodization in select countries, in 1997 and 2011. Have students calculate the rate of change during this time period and answer the questions at the end of the handout.

## Extension Activities

---

The following assignments can be given as part of an overall class-based research assignment. Or, they can be done by individuals as either extra credit or makeup work.

- Research to find out how children with disabilities were treated in the United States a hundred years ago. How widespread was the practice of institutionalizing children with disabilities in the U.S.? What are some of the current challenges?
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is an international treaty that defines the rights of children and serves as the basis for UNICEF's work with governments. Research to learn more about the CRC.
  - Article 23 of the CRC refers specifically to children with disabilities. Look for other articles in the CRC that relate to the needs of children with disabilities. You can find the full text of the CRC at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx> or a short version at [http://teachunicef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Summary\\_of\\_the\\_CRC.pdf](http://teachunicef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Summary_of_the_CRC.pdf).
  - To learn more about how you can become involved in promoting the CRC, visit <http://childrightscampaign.org/>.

# LESSON TWO

## Children With Disabilities: Nodira's Story

A High School Educator's Guide (Grades 9–12)

## LEARN AND TAKE ACTION

TOTAL TIME: TWO 45-MINUTE PERIODS

### Objective

---

Students will:

- Describe how UNICEF works on disability issues in different contexts.
- Investigate the relationship between poverty and disability.
- Explain how inclusive education can benefit all students.

### Session Plan

---

#### PART ONE:

- Opening Activity: 30 minutes
- Connect Disabilities With Poverty: 10 minutes
- Review and Reflect: 5 minutes

#### PART TWO:

- Explore Inclusion: 20 minutes
- Discuss and Reflect: 25 minutes

### Vocabulary

---

The following words and terms may not be familiar to students. Use this list as a resource for students to expand their working vocabulary as they encounter these words and terms in the lesson.

- Compulsory
- Millennium Development Goals
- Inclusive education
- Vocational

### Materials Needed

---

- Pencils/pens
- Computer with Internet access and speakers

- Copies of “Case Studies: UNICEF and Children With Disabilities” (Handout 4a–d)
- Copies of “UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Articles Specifically Relevant to Children” (Handout 5)
- Copies of “Excerpt From Interview With Alexandra Yuster” (Handout 6)
- “Links Between Disability and the Millennium Development Goals” (Optional Handout 7)
- Drawing paper

## Directions

### PART ONE

#### Opening Activity

1. Review the homework from Lesson 1 and discuss any questions raised. Students may ask why the statistics show a reversal of progress for polio immunization in Iraq. One way to respond is that despite the best efforts of many organizations, factors such as lack of funding, rapid population growth, natural disasters, or armed conflict make getting vaccines to certain places difficult or impossible. The statistics indicate that armed conflict in Iraq has negatively affected children’s health and nutrition in recent years.

Students may also ask why immunization rates are not higher in the U.S. This is another opportunity to remind students that not just one reason explains the results, but that there can be many possible explanations. For example, children in some families who lack health insurance or access to medical care may not receive immunizations; other children may not be vaccinated because their parents believe erroneously that the diseases that are the targets of childhood immunizations (such as polio) have already been eliminated. Some parents also oppose vaccines based on their beliefs—religious, cultural, or other.

2. Divide the class into four groups. Give each group one page of “Case Studies: UNICEF and Children With Disabilities” (Handout 4), which describes UNICEF programs in various countries. Assign one case study to each group. Ask each group to read about their assigned program and to report on what country they read about and on what they learned about disabilities there.
3. Ask the class as a whole:
  - How do the UNICEF programs differ between the countries?
  - Why do UNICEF programs for children with disabilities vary in different countries?

**Encourage students to make a distinction between UNICEF programs that address the needs and rights of children with disabilities, and those that focus on prevention of disabilities. Refer to “UNICEF and Disabilities” (Handout 2) from Lesson 1 if necessary.**

## Connect Disabilities With Poverty

1. Refer to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) online and then explain to the class:

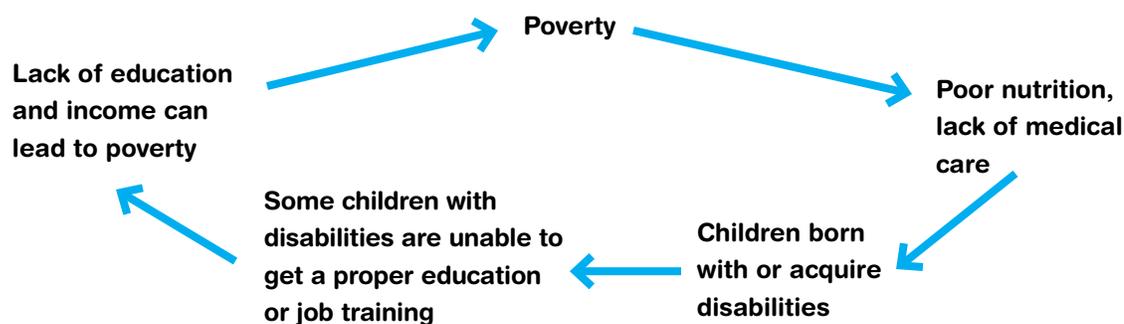
- In 2000, the UN Member States agreed on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for reducing poverty, improving health, education, the environment, and other important global concerns.
- The first MDG is “Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.”
- According to UNICEF, studies across countries show a strong link between poverty and disability.<sup>16</sup>

To read about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) online, check out: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> or access the MDG resource at <http://teachunicef.org/explore/topic/millennium-development-goals>.

2. (if time permits) Based on what they have learned in this lesson, ask the class as a whole:

- How do you think poverty could contribute to the occurrence of disabilities?
- How do disabilities contribute to poverty?

3. Have students draw the relationship in a “poverty cycle” diagram:



4. Discuss with the class as a whole the following question:

How can promoting the rights of children with disabilities contribute to meeting Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1?

*Possible answer: Children with disabilities are often denied an adequate education, stigmatized by society, abused, and raised in an environment that does not allow them to meet their full potential. When the rights of children with disabilities are promoted, they can grow up with proper education, medical care, family support, and legal protections. They are thus more likely to get a well-paying job and make informed choices that can keep or lift them out of poverty, which can help the world meet MDG 1.*

OPTIONAL: Have students read and discuss “Links Between Disability and the Millennium Development Goals” (Handout 7).

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), *The State of the World’s Children 2013* (New York: UNICEF, 2013), 29, accessed May 30, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/sowc2013/files/SWCR2013\\_ENG\\_Lo\\_res\\_24\\_Apr\\_2013.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc2013/files/SWCR2013_ENG_Lo_res_24_Apr_2013.pdf).

## Review and Reflect

Review examples of UNICEF’s work toward inclusion of children with disabilities around the world, and suggest connections with the efforts to achieve MDG 1. Have students take out their RAN strategy charts and add new knowledge (in the “Confirmed” and “Misconceptions” columns) and questions (in the “Wonderings” column). Close by previewing the focus on inclusive education in the next part of the lesson.

## Homework

Assign students to read “UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Articles Specifically Relevant to Children” (Handout 5).

## PART TWO

### Explore Inclusion

1. Distribute student copies of “Excerpt From Interview With Alexandra Yuster” (Handout 6) and have students read it. Point out the last two paragraphs of the interview, where she discusses the benefits of inclusive education for all children, not only those with disabilities.
2. Explain to your class that “inclusive education” can be defined as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners in a way that
  - Welcomes diversity.
  - Benefits all learners, not only children with disabilities.
  - Provides equal access to education or makes certain provisions for the learning of certain categories of children without excluding them.<sup>17</sup>
3. Play the following audio interview with Alexandra Yuster, available at [http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/audio/alex\\_yuster.mp3](http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/audio/alex_yuster.mp3). After students have listened to the audio, ask the class as a whole:
  - Do you agree that inclusive education can benefit all children? Why, or why not?
  - What is your school doing to help break down barriers between students with and without disabilities?
  - What can you do to create greater acceptance between students with different abilities?

**In this interview, she mentions the fact that children with disabilities are at risk for sexual abuse. Before using the audio file, listen to the interview and decide if this is appropriate for your class. Reference to sexual abuse has been deleted from Handout 5.**

<sup>17</sup> Adapted from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All* (Paris: UNESCO, 2005), 13, 15, accessed May 21, 2013, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001402/140224e.pdf>.

### Discuss and Reflect

1. Have students take out their RAN strategy charts and add new knowledge (in the “Confirmed” and “Misconceptions” columns) and questions (in the “Wonderings” column).
2. Sample some contributions from students’ RAN strategy charts. Facilitate discussion, focusing as much as possible on the first three of the Essential Questions at the start of the unit:
  1. How is disability compounded by exclusion?
  2. What is the relationship between disability and poverty?
  3. What are the benefits and limitations of inclusive education?
3. Review with students their homework reading, “UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Articles Specifically Relevant to Children” (Handout 5). Ask students what role human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, can play in promoting greater equality for people with disabilities in the United States and in the world. Facilitate discussion and lead students to the conclusion that no international efforts will be effective unless global citizens like them take action. If you like, you can share the U.S. Fund for UNICEF definition of “global citizen:” Someone who understands interconnectedness, respects and values diversity, has the ability to challenge injustice, and takes action in meaningful ways.
4. Facilitate discussion on the final Essential Question, “How can I express my global citizenship and promote rights and inclusion of children with disabilities in my daily life?” Encourage further reflection on students’ RAN strategy charts, or have students write a short reflection about what they have learned.

## Extension Activities

---

- Have students design a flyer or brochure on disability awareness. Instruct them to provide information on the following:
  - How do children acquire or develop different types of disabilities?
  - What are the dangers when children with disabilities are denied their rights and excluded from society?
  - How is the problem of disabilities being addressed by UNICEF and others?
  - What can individuals do to support the rights of children with disabilities, in the United States and around the world?
- Have students organize and execute a “take action” plan to act locally to support the rights of children with disabilities domestically and internationally. For ideas, consult the TeachUNICEF Global Citizenship resources at <http://teachunicef.org/explore/topic/global-citizenship> and the UNICEF publication *It's About Ability* at [http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Its\\_About\\_Ability\\_Learning\\_Guide\\_EN.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Its_About_Ability_Learning_Guide_EN.pdf).
- Have students interview administrators and special education teachers in your school to find out more about the legal requirements for making U.S. schools accessible to students with disabilities. Assign them to find answers to these questions:
  - What is the school doing to meet these requirements
  - Are there needs of students with disabilities that are not addressed by U.S. legislation? If so, what are they, and what can be done about them?
- Invite a disability rights activist or someone who works with people with disabilities in the community to talk about his or her work.
- In December 2012, the U.S. Senate voted 61–32 on ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, failing to amass the necessary two-thirds majority for ratification. Have students hold their own debate on the reasons for and against the U.S. ratifying this treaty.

## Glossary

---

All definitions from Merriam-Webster online at <http://www.merriam-webster.com>, unless otherwise noted. Used with permission. Use your professional judgment before sharing definitions with students verbatim.

**Asylum:** An institution for the care of the destitute or sick and especially the insane.

**Compulsory:** Mandatory, enforced.

**Convention:** A treaty or agreement by a group of countries to develop and follow the same laws.<sup>18</sup>

**Fetus:** An unborn or unhatched vertebrate especially after attaining the basic structural plan of its kind; *specifically*: a developing human from usually two months after conception to birth.

**Impair:** To damage or make worse by or as if by diminishing in some material respect.

**Millennium Development Goals:** Year 2000 blueprint by world leaders for measurable improvements in the most critical areas of human development by the year 2015. (© U.S. Fund for UNICEF, 2011)

**Stigma:** A mark of shame or discredit: stain.

**Vocational:** Of, relating to, or undergoing training in a skill or trade to be pursued as a career.

---

<sup>18</sup> Victor Santiago Pineda, *It's About Ability: An Explanation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (New York: United Nations Children's Fund, 2008), 21, accessed May 8, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Its\\_About\\_Ability\\_final\\_.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Its_About_Ability_final_.pdf).

## Nodira's Story<sup>19</sup>

---

Nodira, which means “unique” in Uzbek, is one of five children in a poor family. Every morning, after reciting her prayers, Nodira feeds the hens and goats from her wheelchair. The rest of her day is spent knitting for other people and helping her mother with the household chores.

Nodira is 18 years old and lives in the Tashkent region of Uzbekistan. She was born with spina bifida, a congenital disability (i.e., disability since birth) that occurs when the spinal column doesn't close completely during fetal development. As a result, Nodira is paralyzed from the waist down. Her life is confined to a wheelchair, and her world is restricted to her house and its immediate surroundings. And yet, Nodira's dreams know no such boundaries. Her hopes for the future include attending university, riding in her father's car, and being able to walk like other children. But, for now, her dreams are extremely limited by the reality of living with a disability.

Despite the many difficulties and frustrations that plague Nodira's life, she is fortunate to be living with her family. The stigma attached to children living with disabilities, combined with the lack of wheelchair access in schools and the economic difficulties faced by many Uzbek families following the collapse of the Soviet Union, have led many parents to place their children with disabilities in special asylums, or institutions. Children in institutions receive less attention and affection than they would in a family, and many do not receive the health care and education they need. Children who have spent their lives in an institution are seldom prepared for life outside of an institution. They often don't have the job skills or social skills needed to cope when they leave the institution.

Nodira has never been to school because it is too far from her home and it is not accessible for her wheelchair. A local teacher used to come to tutor her at home and, as a result, she was able to finish third grade. It is unlikely that she will be able to finish her primary education, much less attend university. While missing out on an education is a great disappointment to Nodira, her greatest wish—finding a true friend—can still come true.

“What I want more than anything is a friend who also has a disability,” she says. “Somebody to talk to that will not feel sorry for me or make fun of me, somebody who will understand what my life is like.”

1. Does Nodira have any goals that are similar to your own? What are they?
2. Do you think young people with disabilities in the United States face challenges similar to those faced by Nodira?

---

19 Adapted from United Nations Children's Fund, “Nodira, Age 18, Uzbekistan,” *The State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible*, accessed May 8, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/profiles/full\\_child7.php](http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/profiles/full_child7.php).

## UNICEF and Disabilities

---

UNICEF advocates for the realization of all children's rights, for children both with and without disabilities, to help meet their basic needs and expand opportunities for them to reach their potential. The three main goals in UNICEF's work in disabilities are

- 1) Mainstreaming children with disabilities in all programs
- 2) Championing the rights of persons with disabilities
- 3) Promoting inclusion<sup>20</sup>

To these ends, UNICEF carries out activities such as

- Working to keep children out of institutions and with their families, wherever possible.
- Developing support systems for families to enable them to care for a child with disabilities in the home. This can include building ramps, providing wheelchairs and other supplies, and teaching parents to provide for a child's special needs.
- Promoting inclusive education that enables children with disabilities to learn in schools with their peers without disabilities. This allows children with disabilities to get a better quality education and to develop friendships.
- Encouraging governments to pass laws that eliminate discrimination against children with disabilities and allow their voices to be heard in creating policies.
- Promoting community-based health care and other services for children with disabilities and their families. When these services aren't available, children with disabilities are more likely to be sent away to an institution.
- Creating information and raising awareness of the rights of children with disabilities, particularly the right to nondiscrimination.

UNICEF also carries out programs to prevent childhood disabilities. These include

- Nutrition programs for pregnant women and children that prevent disabilities caused by malnutrition. For example, vitamin A supplements for children can help prevent blindness.
- Ensuring access to safe water and sanitation, which can help prevent the spread of disease.
- Immunization campaigns against diseases such as polio, once a major cause of childhood disability in many countries.
- Landmine awareness education, which can help prevent disabling injuries from landmines in conflict zones.
- Combating hazardous child labor, which can cause injuries that result in lifelong disabilities.

---

<sup>20</sup> Cara E. Yar Khan, "U.S. Fund Staff Disability Orientation," (presentation, U.S. Fund for UNICEF, New York, May 20, 2013).

## Preventing Disabilities in Children

### Directions

Read below about how some disabilities in children can be prevented. Then work with the charts titled “Preventing Childhood Disabilities” and answer the questions that follow.

Some disabilities that affect children can be prevented. For example:

**Polio:** Polio is a disease that weakens the muscles and can cause paralysis. It is caused by a virus and can be prevented by giving a vaccine (either by injection or by mouth). UNICEF is active in a global campaign to wipe out polio, in partnership with Rotary International’s PolioPlus program, which has raised more than \$1 billion since 1985.<sup>21</sup>

**Blindness:** Some forms of blindness are caused by a lack of vitamin A. Giving children vitamin A supplements can help prevent blindness. UNICEF provides vitamin A capsules to children whose diets may lack this nutrient.

**Intellectual disability:** Intellectual disability can be caused by a number of factors, but some forms of intellectual disability are caused by a lack of the nutrient iodine, or iodine deficiency disorder (IDD). Adding iodine to salt can help prevent IDD. UNICEF works to eliminate IDD in partnership with Kiwanis International, which has raised and leveraged more than \$100 million since 1994.<sup>22</sup>

You can use statistics to calculate the rate at which interventions to prevent these disabilities have been implemented. Calculate the rates here for interventions against polio and iodine deficiency disorder. Use the sample statistics on polio in Rwanda to practice the calculation.

Country	Column A: % of 1-year-olds immunized against polio in 1997	Column B: % of 1-year-olds immunized against polio in 2011	Column C: % change from 1997 to 2011	Column D: Rate of change from 1997 to 2011
Rwanda	77	93	16	20.78%

- First, calculate the change in the percentage of immunized children in Rwanda from 1997 to 2011. You can do this by subtracting the number in Column A from the number in Column B. Write the result in Column C.
  - The change in the percentage of children immunized from 1997 to 2011 in Rwanda is 16 ( $93 - 77 = 16$ ).

21 “PolioPlus Program,” Rotary International, accessed May 9, 2013, <http://www.rotary.org/en/serviceandfellowship/polio/rotarywork/pages/ridefault.aspx>.

22 “The Eliminate Project,” Kiwanis International, accessed May 10, 2013, <http://sites.kiwanis.org/Kiwanis/en/discover/Our-work/eliminating-maternal-neonatal-tetanus.aspx>.

- Next, calculate the rate of change in immunization from 1997 to 2011 for Rwanda. You can do this by dividing the number in Column C by the number in Column A. Multiply this result by 100. Write this number in Column D.
- The rate of change during this 14 year period was 20.78% (16 divided by 77 = 0.2078. Multiplying this result by 100 gives a rate of change of 20.78% over 14 years.) Now try calculating the rates of change in polio immunization in these countries:

Reducing Childhood Disabilities: Polio Immunization				
Country	Column A: % of 1-year-olds immunized against polio in 1997	Column B: % of 1-year-olds immunized against polio in 2011	Column C: % change from 1997 to 2011	Column D: Rate of change from 1997 to 2011
Afghanistan	45	66		
Colombia	85	85		
Iraq	92	78		
Nigeria	25	73		
United States	84	94		
Uzbekistan	97	99		

Next, calculate the rates of change in consumption of iodized salt:

Reducing Childhood Disabilities: Salt Iodization				
Country	Column A: % of households consuming iodized salt in 1997	Column B: % of households consuming iodized salt in 2011	Column C: % change from 1997 to 2011	Column D: Rate of change from 1997 to 2011
Afghanistan	No data	28		
Colombia	92	92		
Iraq	10	28		
Nigeria	98	97		
United States	No data	No data		
Uzbekistan	0	53		

Based on your calculations, answer these questions:

1. Was there anything that surprised you about these statistics?

---

---

2. What questions do these statistics raise?

---

---

3. What might be reasons that some countries have experienced a negative rate of change, rather than a positive one, between 1997 and 2011?

---

---

4. Consider the following statement: "Since Nigeria's polio immunization rate increased every year since 1997, it stands to reason that the country will achieve complete immunization in about another eight years." Is that a correct interpretation of the data? Why, or why not?

---

---

---

5. How would you describe the progress being made in these approaches to preventing childhood disabilities? Explain your answer, and be specific.

---

---

---

Sources of statistics: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *The State of the World's Children 1999* (New York: UNICEF, 1999), 98-105, accessed May 3, 2013, <http://www.unicef.org/sowc99/sowc99e.pdf>; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *The State of the World's Children 2013* (New York: UNICEF, 2013), 104-111, accessed May 30, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/sowc2013/files/SWCR2013\\_ENG\\_Lo\\_res\\_24\\_Apr\\_2013.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc2013/files/SWCR2013_ENG_Lo_res_24_Apr_2013.pdf). (Note: Reports reflect data from two years prior.)

## Case Studies: UNICEF and Children With Disabilities

---

### Case Study #1: Ethiopia<sup>23</sup>

UNICEF estimates that 98 percent of children with disabilities in the East African country of Ethiopia have no access to school or vocational training. UNICEF Ethiopia and the Mobility Without Barriers Foundation have set up a joint project for children and youth with impaired mobility that takes a unique approach to the issue of access. The ability to travel is essential if young people with limited mobility—due to accidents, amputations from landmines, or polio, for example—are to have a better quality of life. Typical wheelchairs are difficult to use on the rough roads and uneven terrain found in much of Ethiopia. A new type of mobility cycle has been developed that can handle these conditions. Young people with disabilities, and their parents, are involved in manufacturing and repairing the mobility cycles. This much-needed income relieves financial pressures on the families of children with disabilities, for whom poverty is another barrier to getting education and training. And as young people with disabilities are more able to participate in the life of their communities, negative attitudes about disabilities will eventually begin to change.

UNICEF is also involved in a number of activities to prevent disabilities. It works to vaccinate children against measles, which can cause brain damage and blindness, and polio, which can cause physical disabilities. Programs to provide vitamin A help to reduce the risk of blindness. Adding iodine to salt is helping to reduce preventable forms of intellectual disability. Mine Risk Education programs aim to enable children to avoid contact with landmines, which can disable and kill children.

---

23 © UNICEF

## Case Studies: UNICEF and Children With Disabilities

---

### Case Study #2: Georgia<sup>24</sup>

In the former Soviet republic of Georgia, there were few alternatives to institutionalization for children with disabilities until recently. Children with disabilities were segregated from the rest of society, with few opportunities to develop their full potential.

A UNICEF-supported project called “Inclusive Education” is changing this. The project integrates children with disabilities into preschools and elementary schools in Georgia, where they can learn alongside their peers without disabilities.

In the morning, children with disabilities meet in small groups with special education teachers. An expert group has prepared a manual for teachers working with children from the first to third grades, focusing on methods to teach mathematics and language to children with disabilities. Specialists in occupational therapy, physical therapy, language therapy, and psychology work with children on a one-to-one basis. Children are also helped to develop basic life skills such as dressing themselves.

In the afternoons, they join children without disabilities in classrooms where they are able to learn and socialize. Children without disabilities are helped to overcome their stereotypes about children with disabilities by working and playing together.

The schools also provide workshops and educational materials for parents of children with disabilities to help them understand and care for their children.

In a sign that attitudes toward children with disabilities are changing in Georgia, an education law in Georgia was implemented in 2005 to state that children with disabilities are entitled to an education that is compulsory and free, and that schools cannot discriminate on the basis of disability. UNICEF is supporting the government of Georgia with technical assistance as it changes education policy to respect the rights of children with disabilities.

Read more about the work of UNICEF Georgia on behalf of children with disabilities at [unicef.org/ceecis/reallives\\_3238.html](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/reallives_3238.html) and [unicef.org/infobycountry/georgia\\_1817.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/georgia_1817.html).

---

<sup>24</sup> Adapted from John Mackedon, “Georgia: Integrating Children With Disabilities into Society,” UNICEF Central and Eastern Europe / Commonwealth of Independent States, accessed May 9, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/reallives\\_3238.html](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/reallives_3238.html).

## Case Studies: UNICEF and Children With Disabilities

### Case Study #3: Sri Lanka<sup>25</sup>

One afternoon in the Indian Ocean island country of Sri Lanka, 14-year-old Varatharaj Thinesh was digging idly in the dirt with a bottle when his hand scraped the rubber corner of an anti-personnel landmine. Fortunate not to be killed or maimed, he stayed calm and called on adults to alert the police and have it safely removed.

Today, Thinesh is a child educator in a Mine Risk Education program funded by UNICEF. The program, which operates in the Jaffna and Vanni districts, uses a range of imaginative methods to reach young people with messages about how to keep themselves safe from landmines.

For example, a board game has been developed to teach about the dangers of landmines. In a role-playing exercise, children play the role of a landmine, and other children have to demonstrate how to avoid it. Children are taught songs that carry safety messages, and posters are placed in school hallways that illustrate the dangers of landmines. Billboards, lectures, and house-to-house visits help to educate parents about the risks as well.

An evaluation of the program shows that it resulted in increased awareness of mine risks, knowledge of warning signs for landmines, and understanding of how to avoid danger. The evaluation also found that local communities had sympathetic and positive attitudes toward people who experienced disabling injuries caused by landmines. This is in part due to the fact that the program recruits landmine survivors as educators, who can talk personally about their experiences.

UNICEF is continuing support for this program, which is contributing to a reduction in deaths and disabling injuries from landmines.

Read more about UNICEF Sri Lanka's work on Mine Risk Education at [unicef.org/srilanka/reallives\\_1712.htm](http://unicef.org/srilanka/reallives_1712.htm) and [unicef.org/srilanka/media\\_1719.htm](http://unicef.org/srilanka/media_1719.htm).

---

<sup>25</sup> Adapted from Jens Laerke Batticaloa, "Saving Children From Mines," UNICEF Sri Lanka, accessed May 9, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/srilanka/reallives\\_1712.htm](http://www.unicef.org/srilanka/reallives_1712.htm).

## Case Studies: UNICEF and Children With Disabilities

---

### Case Study #4: Macedonia<sup>26</sup>

Every child has the right to grow up in a nurturing family. Yet many children with disabilities in Macedonia, in southeastern Europe, are placed in institutions that are often understaffed and lacking in resources. Without adequate care that promotes their fullest possible development, many of these children live out their lives in diapers, bottle-fed, and physically confined to their beds. They have no contact with their families and communities or opportunities to socialize with other children.

UNICEF Macedonia is supporting a project to eliminate the need for children's institutions by finding them alternative care options. Wherever possible, children are returned to their biological families, and the families are given assistance to help them cope with the child's special needs. Where no biological family members can care for the child, foster families are being found who can care for children in a home environment. The foster families receive special training and support to be able to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

One foster mother describes her child's progress: "When he first came to the family, he wasn't able to walk, he wasn't able to eat, and he wasn't able to go to the bathroom by himself. Little by little, I taught him how to eat. He can now go to the bathroom by himself at night and he's just greatly improved overall."

UNICEF is also identifying and renovating buildings that can be used as day care centers. It is training staff to make individual education plans for each child, and to locate resources—such as physical therapy and psychological services—that the children need. The centers provide both specialized education and support for foster families who take on the challenges of raising a child with disabilities.

Read more about UNICEF's work on children and disabilities in Macedonia at [unicef.org/infobycountry/TFYRMacedonia\\_28532.html](http://unicef.org/infobycountry/TFYRMacedonia_28532.html).

---

<sup>26</sup> Adapted from Thomas Nybo, "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Helping Children With Disabilities Find Homes," UNICEF, accessed May 9, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/TFYRMacedonia\\_28532.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/TFYRMacedonia_28532.html).

## UN Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities: Articles Specifically Relevant to Children

---

On December 13, 2006, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Convention became open for signature and ratification on March 30, 2007, and it entered into force on May 3, 2008.

UNICEF, in coordination with the International Disability Caucus, advocated effectively for specific attention to children with disabilities in the Convention in order to reinforce and complement the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This goal was met.

The particular vulnerabilities faced by children with disabilities by virtue of their age are referred to throughout the treaty, and one article is dedicated specifically to children. Several other articles address the rights of children with disability, e.g., participation, information, right to a healthy family life, and right to freedom from violence.

The Articles specifically relevant to children include:<sup>27</sup>

**Preamble:** Recognition of the full human rights of children with disabilities.

**Article 3, General Principles:** A main principle is respect for the evolving capacity of children with disabilities and their right to preserve their identity (being respected for your abilities and being proud of who you are).

**Article 4, General Obligations:** If there are laws or practices that prevent children with disabilities from doing the same things as other children, they must be changed. Your government should consult with organizations of children with disabilities as it changes such laws and policies.

**Article 7, Children With Disabilities:** Governments agree to take every possible action so that children with disabilities can enjoy all human rights and freedoms equally with other children. They also agree to make sure that children with disabilities can express their views freely on all things that affect them. What is best for each child should always be considered first.

**Article 8, Awareness-raising:** Governments should educate everyone about the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and their achievements and skills. They agree to combat stereotypes, prejudice, and activities—including those based on sex and age—that might harm people with disabilities.

---

<sup>27</sup> Adapted from Victor Santiago Pineda, *It's About Ability: An Explanation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (New York: United Nations Children's Fund, 2008), 21, accessed May 8, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Its\\_About\\_Ability\\_final\\_.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Its_About_Ability_final_.pdf).

**Article 13, Access to Justice:** If you are harmed by a crime, have seen others harmed, or are accused of doing something wrong, you have the right to be treated fairly when your case is being investigated and dealt with, including through the provision of age-appropriate accommodations. You must be given help to express yourself in all legal processes.

**Article 16, Freedom From Exploitation, Violence, and Abuse:** Children with disabilities should be protected from violence and abuse. They should not be mistreated or harmed in their home or outside. If you have faced violence or maltreatment, you have the right to get help to stop the abuse and recover.

**Article 18, Liberty of Movement:** Every child has the right to a legally registered name, a nationality, and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents. And people cannot be stopped from entering or leaving a country because they have disabilities.

**Article 23, Respect for the Home and the Family:** People have the right to live with their families. If you have a disability, your government should support your family with disability-related expenses, information, and services. You should not be separated from your parents because you have a disability. If you cannot live with your immediate family, the government should help provide care within the wider family or community. Young people with disabilities have the same rights as other young people to reproductive health information and the same rights as others to marry and start a family.

**Article 24, Education:** People have the right to go to school. If you have a disability, you cannot be excluded from education because of it. You should not be educated in segregated schools. You have the right to the same education and curriculum as other children, and your government must give you the help you need to make this happen.

**Article 30, Participation in Cultural Life, Recreation, Leisure, and Sport:** People with disabilities have the same right as others to participate in and enjoy the arts, sports, games, films, and other fun activities. Governments must ensure that children with disabilities in particular have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation, leisure, and sporting activities.

## Excerpt from Interview With Alexandra Yuster<sup>28</sup>

---

(Alexandra Yuster is UNICEF Senior Adviser on Child Protection.)

Children with disabilities face a whole range of obstacles that societies have set up for them. First of all, most services don't take into account what their needs might be, so they're less likely to be able to access education or to have health care which meets their needs.

We know that children with disabilities are in fact at greater risk, we know that they are more likely to be institutionalized, to be separated from their families, and they are more vulnerable to abuse. Even their parents or others who are caring for them may feel a certain sense of frustration that may lead to abuse.

One of the most important things that UNICEF is working on is trying to promote an inclusive approach to education—trying to make sure that children with disabilities are included in the school environment and that school environments are adapted to make sure that they are included. Some children with disabilities will require some additional special education—like children who are blind will need to learn to read Braille, children who are deaf will need to learn sign language—but that's no reason why they need to be entirely segregated from other children.

It is important to note that this is important not only for the children with disabilities, it's important for all the children. Because if we're going to fight this kind of exclusion that exists in our society, whether against people with disabilities or people of a different race or a different ethnic background, then children need to come into contact with and understand the abilities and the contributions of all children from whatever different situation they come.

If we ensure that children are included in school and help other children to accept that kind of diversity, then we are doing ourselves a great favor by building more accepting and, in the end, more peaceful societies.

---

<sup>28</sup> Adapted from Alexandra Yuster, "Audio Interview: UNICEF Senior Advisor on Child Protection Alexandra Yuster," UNICEF, accessed May 6, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/audio/alex\\_yuster.mp3](http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/audio/alex_yuster.mp3).

## Links Between Disability and the Millennium Development Goals<sup>29</sup>

“Unless disabled people are brought into the development mainstream, it will be impossible to cut poverty in half by 2015 or to give every girl and boy the chance to achieve a primary education by the same date—goals agreed to by more than 180 world leaders at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000.”<sup>30</sup>

(Former World Bank President James Wolfensohn, December 3, 2002)

<p><b>MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</b></p>	<p>Disability and poverty are mutually reinforcing; people with disabilities and their families represent a substantial proportion of the poor, especially the extremely poor. The World Bank estimates that people with disabilities account for as many as one in five of the world’s poorest people.</p>
<p><b>MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education</b></p>	<p>According to the UN agency UNESCO, 98 percent of children with disabilities in developing countries are not in school. It will be impossible to achieve this goal unless they are explicitly brought into the equation.</p>
<p><b>MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women</b></p>	<p>Women and girls with disabilities face a complex experience of discrimination and disadvantage. The target of eliminating gender inequality in all levels of education by 2015 will not be reached without considering disability.</p>
<p><b>MDG 4: Reduce child mortality</b></p>	<p>In the developing world, mortality for children with disabilities under five can be as high as 80 percent. Early detection and follow-up of childhood disability has to become a routine part of under-five primary health care if this goal is to be achieved.</p>
<p><b>MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases</b></p>	<p>An international survey commissioned by the World Bank concluded that HIV/AIDS is a significant and almost wholly unrecognized problem among disabled populations worldwide. Young people with disabilities were found to be excluded from prevention and care services.</p>

29 Adapted with permission from Charlotte Axelsson, *A Guidance Paper for an Inclusive Local Development Policy* (Lyon, France: Handicap International, Swedish Organisations of Persons With Disabilities International Aid Association, and HSO (the Swedish Disability Federation), 2008), 22-23, accessed May 9, 2013, <http://www.make-development-inclusive.org/tools/en/inclusivedevelopmentweben.pdf>.

30 James D. Wolfensohn, “Poor, Disabled and Shut Out,” *Washington Post*, December 3, 2002. Accessed May 6, 2013, at <http://bvs.per.paho.org/texcom/cd048370/disabled.pdf>.

