



SUCCESSFUL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRACTICES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF UZBEKISTAN

Dilshod Kenzhaev
Tatyana Chabrova
Feruzakhon Kodirova
Shaista Akhmedova
Lyudmila Gorenkova
Alexandra Yadgarova

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ABOUT THIS CASE STUDY

This case study is a product of a KIX EMAP Rapid Customised Country Support (RCCS) activity. The KIX EMAP RCCS is a demand-driven activity that follows up on regional capacity strengthening and peer-learning exchange activities to ensure that countries have the opportunity to uptake the learnings at the national level. This particular RCCS focused on promoting the exchange of good practices for inclusive education among five participating countries—Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Moldova, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. This case study is authored by the members of the Uzbekistan team participating in the RCCS activity. It provides an assessment of the state of inclusive education in the country. This case study is accompanied by three databases compiling information about inclusive education-related **legislations, teaching and learning materials**, and **organisations** contributing to the advancement and delivery of inclusive education in Uzbekistan.



KIX EMAP Rapid Customised Country Support Case Study, March 2026

The KIX EMAP Hub is supported by



Network for international policies and cooperation in education and training

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KIX EMAP Hub / NORRAG

20, Rue Rothschild
P.O. Box 1672 1211 Geneva 1
Switzerland

norrage.kix@graduateinstitute.ch

This case study is a product of the KIX EMAP Rapid Customised Country Support with external contributions. This work was supported by the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX), a joint endeavour with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of the KIX EMAP Hub, NORRAG, GPE, IDRC, its Board of Governors, or the governments they represent. The KIX EMAP Hub / NORRAG does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this work.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

Dilshod Kenzhaev, PhD (History), served as Deputy Minister of Preschool and School Education from 2023 to 2024, where he was actively involved in youth policy and spiritual development initiatives in Uzbekistan. He is the author and supervising editor of the textbooks “Upbringing” (Grades 1–11) and “History of Uzbekistan” (Grades 7–10).

Tatiana Chabrova, PhD (Education), 2005 Nobel Laureate, Country Coordinator from Uzbekistan in the International Alliance for Inclusive Education in Central Asia. Tatiana has managed international projects supported by UN, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, Save the Children (UK), Peace Corps (USA), USAID Euroasia, ADB, Embassies of USA, Switzerland, Germany, etc. Since 1990 to date, she has authored numerous textbooks, methodological guides and programmes. Tatiana has received several awards in national contests of textbooks and didactic games. She wrote the “Amazing Story”, a play that has been on the children’s theatre stage for 20 years. She has a number of publications on inclusion, one of the most recent being “Inclusive Theatre”.

Feruzakhon Kodirova, D. Sc. (Education), Chair of Special Education at Chirchik Pedagogical University. Dr. Kodirova is experienced in teacher professional development and worked as a technical expert in an ADB-funded project of the Ministry of Education in 2009–2010. Feruza is the author of the textbook “Inclusive Education: Theory and Practice”.

Shaista Akhmedova, methodologist at the Inclusive Education Department of the National Centre for Vocational Guidance and Psychological and Pedagogical Diagnostics under the Ministry of Preschool and School Education (MoPSE) of Uzbekistan. Ms. Akhmedova previously worked as the Head of the Special and Inclusive Education Department of the MoPSE’s National Centre for Education. Shaista has worked on inclusive education projects supported by UNICEF and USAID and worked as Director of the Specialised Boarding School No. 101 for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Children in Tashkent.

Ludmila Gorenkova, Coordinator of the Republican Rapid Response Service. Ludmila has worked for UNDP and the UN. In 2014, she participated in the UN Regional Consultation on Disaster Risk Reduction in Central Asia. She has developed her own programme on earthquake and fire evacuation and response for specialised boarding schools for children with visual, hearing and mobility impairments. Ludmila regularly conducts trainings for teachers and educators in specialised educational institutions for children with disabilities, works with children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and provides psychological counselling to their parents.

Alexandra Yadgarova, representative of the Public Organisation “International Alliance for Inclusive Education in Central Asia” from Uzbekistan. Author of textbooks and instructional materials for university students and preschool children. Organiser of international children’s exhibitions.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
EMAP	Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and the Pacific
GPE KIX	Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
MoPSE	Ministry of Preschool and School Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan
NCSAC	National Centre for Social Adaptation of Children
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RCCS	Rapid Customised Country Support
SEN	Special Educational Needs
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors of this report, researchers and scholars from Uzbekistan, highly appreciate the collaboration of several countries, which enabled the Uzbek team to learn from the inclusive education experiences of Georgia, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Our international reports provide insights from governmental and non-governmental organisations that are involved in implementing inclusive education in their respective countries.

Team Uzbekistan would like to thank the organisers of this project for the opportunity to learn from the experiences of other countries and receive consultations from international KIX EMAP experts: Julia Levin, Veronika Mosolova, Jekaterina Dunajeva and José Luís Canêlhas. Their advice was crucial in preparing the national report on inclusive education in Uzbekistan.

Within the framework of the project, the authors gained extensive knowledge about inclusive education and could conduct a national study on inclusive education and access of children with special needs to school education in Uzbekistan. Today, inclusive education is incorporated in the educational policy of our country under the leadership of the President.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the KIX EMAP Rapid Customised Country Support (RCCS) supported by the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX) Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Pacific (EMAP) Hub, and implemented in partnership with Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Tajikistan, the Uzbek team analysed and assessed the implementation of inclusive education in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan has made significant progress in implementing inclusive education in recent years, drawing on the ideas of Oriental philosophers. The integration of children with disabilities has become a key priority of national education policy, which is aimed at creating equal conditions for all learners. Recently adopted legislation, including the laws 'On the Guarantees of the Rights of the Child' and 'On Education', outlines the goals and objectives of inclusive education, thereby reaffirming the government's commitment to creating an inclusive educational environment.

Uzbekistan continues to improve its inclusive education legislation. The National Concept of Inclusive Education for 2020–2025 and new draft laws provide a framework for the continued implementation of an inclusive approach. Strategic plans are in place to promote the rights of children with disabilities and ensure that all learners have equal access to quality education.

Public perception of inclusive practices is gradually changing as the country moves towards a more inclusive educational culture. Fears and concerns relating to inclusion, held by teachers and parents, are being addressed through training, international projects, and outreach activities. Successful cases of the integration of children with special educational needs (SEN) into mainstream classes demonstrate that inclusion promotes the social integration of these children and has a positive influence on all education stakeholders.

Successful implementation of inclusive education requires appropriate legislation, as well as the active participation of teachers, parents, and the wider community. Uzbekistan is striving to ensure equal opportunities for all children through inclusive education. This requires continuous teacher training and professional development, as well as the creation of an enabling learning environment for children with SEN.

1

OBJECTIVES OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE

The effective integration of people with special medical, psychological, educational and material needs is one of the main indicators of a developed state. Global education policies focus on giving children with special educational needs (SEN) access to quality inclusive education. This is the most humane form of schooling in the modern world. Therefore, it is important to explore international experience and rely on the best inclusive education practices when organising continuous learning for children with disabilities in Uzbekistan.

This report was produced in the context of the Rapid Customised Country Support (RCCS) “Europe and Central Asia Inter-Country Exchange on Inclusive Education for children with disabilities”, held in partnership with Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Tajikistan, and with support from the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX) Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Pacific (EMAP) Hub. Its main objective was to explore the consortium’s experience of implementing inclusive education policies,

focusing particularly on legislative and regulatory aspects, teaching and training materials, and overall implementation. As part of the initiative, the Uzbek team could research inclusive practices in their own country and share their experiences with other partner countries. These exchanges contribute to the development of a unified approach to inclusive education across the region.

This report is based on materials provided by the following organisations: the Ministry of Preschool and School Education of Uzbekistan (MoPSE); the National Centre for Vocational Guidance and Psychological and Pedagogical Diagnostics (hereinafter the National Centre for Vocational Guidance); Chirchik State Pedagogical University; the National Centre for Social Adaptation of Children (NCSAC); and the National Centre for Inclusive Education.

2

HISTORY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: COUNTRY BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction and Prospects of Inclusive Education

In cooperation with international organisations such as UNESCO, UNICEF and the European Union (EU), the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan is developing and implementing joint programmes to improve education and meet the needs of modern society.

The practical implementation of inclusive education in Uzbekistan began in 2005, and a great deal of preparatory work has been carried out since then to further improve inclusive education approaches. The joint UNICEF and MoPSE project, 'Child-Friendly School' (2005–2007), aimed to identify children with disabilities who were not in education. This research was conducted by leading special education specialists R. Shomakhmodova, U. Faizieva, L. Muminova, D. Nazarova and F. Kodirova. More recently, from 2014 to 2017, this work has been carried out by specialists from the National Center for Social Adaptation of Children (NCSAC).

A two-year, EU-funded project 'Inclusive Education for Children with SEN in Uzbekistan' was launched in 2014 and was implemented in the Tashkent, Samarkand, Namangan, Khorezm and Surkhandarya regions. The NCSAC was the project's main partner in the country. Significant results of the project have been ensured by close cooperation with the Ministry of Preschool and School Education (MoPSE), the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education, and the Ministry of Finance.

Notable achievements included the integration of 907 children with SEN into mainstream education in 27 pilot schools and 27 kindergartens, benefiting a total of 1,500 children. Additionally, 1,350 members of medical, psychological and pedagogical commissions, as well as teaching staff, were trained to provide inclusive educational services. Three training modules were developed and approved to train, develop and retrain teachers

in implementing inclusive practices within the Uzbekistan education system.

Five pilot Resource Centers were established, providing over 2,000 services to children with SEN and their families, as well as to experts involved in developing and implementing inclusive education services.

Over 150 articles were published and 11 television programmes and 24 radio programmes were broadcast to raise public awareness in Uzbekistan of the social and educational inclusion of children with SEN. The project's multilingual website (www.inclusive-education.uz) has been launched and is operating successfully, having received a total of 110,000 views. The project published eight newsletters and five brochures that explain the principles of inclusive education.

Another important aspect of the project, as explained by its Team Leader S. Alisauskiene, was the development of a methodology for the medical and pedagogical commission to assess a child's ability to study in a specialised or mainstream education institution.

One of the most remarkable achievements of the project was drafting the National Strategy for Inclusive Education, which enabled enhancing the knowledge and skills of kindergarten teachers, schoolteachers, principals, and parents of children with SEN, who play a crucial role in shaping their children as individuals. As part of the National Strategy, it was planned to improve the regulatory framework and practical delivery of inclusive education, and to provide scientific and methodological support for its implementation, among other measures.

According to project's Team Leader S. Alisauskiene, "Inclusive education is a living organism and a living process that requires a creative approach to learning from both teachers and parents. After all, every child requires an individual approach,

and every child has the right to an education and to have their abilities recognized by society”.

Under Presidential Decree No. UP-5712 of 29 April 2019 ‘On the approval of the concept for the development of the public education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030’,¹ the country approved the Inclusive Education Concept for 2020–2025. The aim of the Inclusive Education Concept is to develop inclusive education and improve the education system for children with SEN, as well as enhance the quality of inclusive education services.

The legislative framework for the implementation of inclusive education includes the Presidential Decree, dated 13 October 2020, ‘On Measures to Further Improve the Education of Children with Special Educational Needs’.

As part of the Inclusive Education Concept for 2020–2025, the first Inclusive Education Roadmap was developed for 2020–2021.

Target indicators for the development of education for children with SEN were defined for the period up to 2025, alongside a step-by-step implementation plan for inclusive education.

Starting from 2021, Inclusive Education Roadmaps are developed and approved annually by 1 December. These annual roadmaps are based on a close analysis of the previous roadmap’s outcomes and serve as the basis for a phased implementation plan setting out target indicators and main directions for the relevant period.

Plans are in place to monitor the implementation of the roadmaps and targets on an ongoing basis, with the results reviewed by the government once a year.

The Inclusive Education Concept should be implemented in two stages to achieve high-quality outcomes. This would allow for a thorough analysis of all associated results and lessons learned, enabling the next stage to be planned accordingly.

Inclusive Education Roadmap objectives for 2020–2022 include:²

- Improve the regulatory framework for inclusive education, one of the most important and mandatory components of its implementation.
- Provide training, retraining and professional development for teachers of inclusive education.
- Strengthen logistics and provide institutions implementing inclusive education with special equipment (lifts, ramps,

handrails, etc.), necessary textbooks, and methodological aids to ensure quality education for all students, including those with SEN.

- Provide the necessary equipment and resources for career guidance and training in various professions.
- Introduce modern ICT technologies and implement innovative projects in the field of inclusive education, with the aim of creating modern learning conditions and ensuring high-quality education.
- Create a positive social environment based on national values and the humane treatment of persons with disabilities by raising awareness on the rights of special needs children to access education and on the principles and content of inclusive education.
- Implement measures to prevent discrimination and contemptuous attitudes towards children with SEN.
- Pilot inclusive education at separate educational institutions.

Implementation of these objectives should also involve the media, as well as shooting and screening relevant films and videos.

Activities planned for the period of 2023–2025 include:

- Gradually roll out inclusive education to other mainstream secondary schools.
- Implement measures to ensure every child with SEN has access to inclusive education.
- Improve and develop inclusive teaching methods based on lessons learned from previous piloting and the step-by-step implementation of person-centered, person-specific inclusive education.
- Take measures aimed at spiritual and moral education, as well as the physical health and strength of students, in the process of inclusive education.
- As most children with SEN are currently enrolled in state-run specialised schools and boarding schools, the goal is to maximise the correction of deficiencies and ensure the necessary number of specialised schools for children with SEN, based on their physical and mental needs and the geographical location of the schools.

To achieve the planned targets and create inclusive classes as part of the pilot scheme, inclusive education was introduced in one mainstream school in each region and in Tashkent city in the 2021/22 academic year. Plans were also in place to open basic special needs classes (so-called ‘corrective’ classes) for children with SEN in one mainstream school in the Republic

1 Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2019, 29 April). No. UP-5712.

2 2020–2021 Roadmap for implementation of the 2020–2025 Inclusive Education Concept in Uzbekistan.

of Karakalpakstan, in one school per region, and in the city of Tashkent. These classes are intended for children with similar developmental issues, and the teaching methods employed are similar to those used in specialised and boarding schools. The only difference is that these classes allow children with SEN to learn alongside their peers in mainstream schools.

In order to create conditions for the subsequent employment of students with SEN, it is planned to establish specialised groups in one of the vocational schools in the Kashkadarya, Fergana and Khorezm regions for graduates of the ninth grade of specialised schools and children with SEN. The plan is to gradually roll out this programme to other regions of the country, taking into account the results of piloting the inclusive education system, opening basic remedial classes in mainstream primary schools and creating specialised groups.

From the 2021/22 academic year onwards, education for children with SEN in primary special needs/corrective classes has been based on special curricula adapted from the national curriculum.

The government's official introduction of inclusive education from the 2021/22 academic year has greatly boosted the development of inclusive education teacher training. To this end, seminars were held for all teachers in the country's inclusive schools.

In 2021, Decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan³ approved the *"Procedure for Organizing Inclusive Secondary Education"*, which defines the goals and objectives of inclusive education in the country.

Inclusive education has been implemented nationwide in the country since the 2021/2022 academic year. The following inclusive models are being introduced in the country:

- Integrated/inclusive classes.
- Special needs classes (so-called 'corrective' classes), or classes within mainstream schools that have children with similar medical diagnosis (Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan, 2021).

An Inclusive Education Lab was established at the MoPSE's National Centre for Vocational Guidance to coordinate the activities of inclusive education actors (Presidential Decree, 2020a). Also, professional development courses were opened with participation of foreign experts.

2.2 Public Awareness and Response

Initially, the idea of integrating children with disabilities into mainstream schools provoked a negative public response in Uzbekistan. Pilot projects implemented between 2005 and 2014 showed that the concept of inclusive education caused fears and concerns among teachers and school administrations. However, the situation began to change through the efforts of international organisations. A number of awareness campaigns, conferences and seminars were organised in Uzbekistan in the context of UNESCO's Mercy Project and UNICEF's Child Friendly School Project in 2005, as well as ADB's and the World Bank's projects in 2007–2009.

Thanks to these initiatives, the community learnt a lot about equal conditions for children with disabilities and equality in education for all children in the country. The changes in public perceptions and attitudes are well demonstrated by the feedback from high school students, who previously studied in segregated settings: *"We saw a completely different world, a new society"*, and the feedback from parents of healthy children, who have studied in inclusive classes for 2 or 3 years: *"The children have changed; their outlook on life has changed. They have become more considerate and respectful towards their classmates with disabilities"*.⁴

The attitudes of the community and teachers towards inclusive education changed positively in 2020–2022 after the adoption of laws and government resolutions, promotion of inclusive education through mass media, and provision of inclusive education training for teachers and school officials with participation of experts from countries, successfully implementing inclusive education practices. Seminars and trainings for parents and mahalla representatives were also helpful, as were the efforts of civil society organisations. Chirchik State Pedagogical University initiated the training of speech therapists with a minor in inclusive education and introduced the subject of inclusive education in all departments of the University.

The National Television and Radio Company of Uzbekistan conducted awareness-raising campaigns to prepare the public for the transition to inclusive education.

Since regaining its independence, Uzbekistan has made a significant progress in integrating the inclusive approach in education by adopting legal acts and regulations, establishing inclusive classes and implementing special education models to ensure equality and accessibility of education for all children.

3 Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2021, October 12). *Resolution On The Approval Of Regulatory Legal Acts Concerning The Education Of Children With Special Educational Needs; Regulation On The Organisation Of Inclusive Education In General Secondary Education (No. 638)*.

4 UNICEF's Child Friendly School Project, a survey of students integrated into mainstream schools (2006).

As mentioned above, despite initial controversies and concerns, inclusive education gradually gained public support thanks to international projects and educational initiatives. Feedbacks from students and parents, as well as active efforts by the state and civil society organisations to promote inclusive education have resulted in positive changes in the perception and implementation of this educational model in Uzbekistan.

3

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

Currently, there are children with SEN in all countries around the world and in all social groups of society. In Uzbekistan, this category of children is commonly referred to as “*children with special educational needs (children with SEN)*”.⁵

Over the past decade, there has been a significant change in Uzbek society’s attitude towards people with health problems, as well as in the way the capabilities of children with SEN are assessed, for both objective and subjective reasons. There has been a growing awareness that psychophysical disorders do not negate human nature, the ability to feel and experience, or the capacity to gain social experience and access quality education.

Uzbekistan has a strong focus on children deprived of parental care and children with disabilities, as well as on their education and development. The aim is to raise a generation that is healthy and harmoniously developed. Notably, Uzbekistan adopted the Law *On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child* in 2007, as well as a document that requires livelihoods to be designed in view of the needs of people with disabilities. The country adopted the Law ‘*On the Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities*’ in 2008 and the Law ‘*On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*’ in 2020.

The Government of Uzbekistan has initiated efforts to establish a social support mechanism for children with SEN and to develop the relevant legislative framework. Today, great attention is being paid to the active integration of children with SEN into society, as well as to the expansion of inclusive educational practices.

According to the Uzbek Constitution, “*Children with special educational needs shall be provided with inclusive education and upbringing in educational institutions*”.⁶

The goal of inclusive education is to create a barrier-free learning environment for students with SEN by using special tools and methods in schools, involving specialist teachers, providing high-quality general secondary education to promote their effective adaptation into society, and ensuring their full integration.

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan *On Education* adopted on September 23, 2020, No. ZRU-637, includes the following chapters: ‘Inclusive Education’ (Chapter 2, Article 20); ‘Social Protection of Students’ (Chapter 7, Article 52); ‘Education and Upbringing of Children (Persons) with Physical, Mental, Sensory or Mental Disorders’ (Chapter 7, Article 55); and ‘Education and Upbringing of Children (Persons) in Need of Social Rehabilitation’ (Chapter 7, Article 56).

According to this law, inclusive education aims to ensure equal access to mainstream educational institutions for all students, taking into account the diversity of educational programmes and individual abilities. It specifically targets children (persons) with physical, mental or sensory disorders or disabilities.⁷

The legislative framework for the implementation of inclusive education includes Presidential Decree No. PP-4860, dated 13 October 2020, which sets out measures to further improve the education and upbringing of children with SEN.

This Presidential decree set the scene for the following:

- Development of a roadmap for 2020–2021 based on the Inclusive Development Concept for 2020–2025.
- Setting target indicators for the development of education for children with SEN until 2025, with a step-by-step plan for the implementation of inclusive education.
- Step-by-step implementation of inclusive education based on separate roadmaps, which are approved

5 Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2020b, October 13). No. PP-4860.

6 Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Chapter IX, Article 50, effective from 1 May 2023.

7 Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Education,” adopted on September 23, 2020 (No. ZRU-637, Chapter 2, Article 20).

annually, from 2022 onwards. These roadmaps are based on the results achieved under the previous roadmap, target indicators and main priorities for the relevant period.

- Developing plans for the ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the roadmaps and targets, followed by an annual critical review of the monitoring results by the government.

In order to the high-quality implementation of inclusive education, the Concept will be implemented in two stages. This allows all achievements and lessons learned to be thoroughly studied and taken into consideration when planning the next stage.

It can therefore be concluded that the legislative framework created in Uzbekistan provides an effective basis for the further development of inclusive education in the country.

4

ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

4.1 Statistical Data Related to Educating Children with SEN

Today, there are more than one million people with disabilities living in Uzbekistan, including 173,439 children and young people under the age of 18. These people need to be integrated into society.

For years, children with SEN in Uzbekistan had to attend specialised or boarding schools, which negatively impacted the quality of their education. After leaving school, these children often struggle to fulfil their potential and integrate into society.

Separate education limits interaction between children with SEN and their healthy peers, leading to the formation of various stereotypes about people with SEN in society over many years.

In recent years, inclusive education has been widely adopted as a result of changes in education policy and the relevant legislative framework has been updated. The first inclusive schools have appeared in Uzbekistan, offering all students equal access to education. Currently, there are 715 inclusive schools in the country, educating 1,195 students with SEN. These schools improve the quality of education for children with SEN, helping them to realise their full potential and talents. The infrastructure of these educational institutions has also improved.

According to the Ministry of Preschool and School Education, as of 1 January 2024, 21,056 children were enrolled in specialised and boarding schools (90 specialist schools). Of these, 727 children attend three specialised boarding schools for children with musculoskeletal disorders, 4,873 children attend 19 specialised boarding schools for children with hearing impairments, and 14,955 children receive home schooling tailored to their needs.

4.2 Organisations Involved in Education of Children with Developmental Disorders

In Uzbekistan, children with developmental difficulties are educated exclusively in state-run, specialised schools or boarding schools located across the country. All children with disabilities receive full financial support from the state. Education is provided based on special national curricula and programmes, using textbooks developed according to the type of disability and approved by the MoPSE. In particular, there are the following types of schools for children with SEN:

- Nineteen specialised boarding schools for blind children.
- Twenty special boarding schools for children with hearing impairments (deaf or hard of hearing).
- Forty-five auxiliary and boarding schools for children with intellectual disabilities.
- Two schools for children with motor disabilities.
- Six boarding schools for school-age children with severe mental disabilities are operated by the Ministry of Social Welfare (Decree of the President of Uzbekistan, 2020b).

The National Agency for Social Protection was established under the President of Uzbekistan according to the Presidential Decree dated 1 June 2023⁸ that regulated the provision of social services and assistance to the population. The Agency's purpose is to fulfil the state's constitutional obligations to help people with disabilities find employment and access education, and to introduce an effective coordination system for measures implemented in this area.

8 Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. DP-82 (2023, June 1), "On a set of measures to provide high-quality social services and assistance to the population, as well as to establish a system for their effective control".

The main areas of targeted state protection of the population include:

- Introducing a professional social protection system based on a comprehensive approach.
- Ensuring the social inclusion of vulnerable population groups by improving the effectiveness and targeting of the social protection system.
- Providing social protection down to the mahalla (local) level, as well as offering tailored social services and assistance to citizens experiencing difficult social situations.
- Expanding the coverage of social protection mechanisms.
- Preventing high-risk families from experiencing difficult social situations by identifying and providing them with a range of social services.
- Creating favorable livelihoods for persons with disabilities.
- Coordinating the activities of multidisciplinary specialised preschools, schools, boarding schools and sanatorium-type boarding schools for children with SEN.

The National Agency for Social Protection under the President of Uzbekistan coordinates and monitors some areas of activity of the MoPSE, which include:

- Coordination of activities of specialised educational institutions.
- Implementation and development of inclusive education.

- Provision of educational and teaching materials for children with SEN.
- Provision of psychological and pedagogical support for students in mainstream secondary schools.
- Development of curricula and programmes for specialised schools.⁹
- Organisation of preschool and secondary school education for children from socially vulnerable families.

Presidential Resolution No. PP-128, dated 20 April 2023¹⁰ established the Republican Scientific and Methodological Centre for Educational Development, which includes a Specialised Pedagogy and Inclusive Education Department.

Throughout its period of independence, Uzbekistan has adopted various laws, decrees and resolutions, placing a particular focus on enhancing the lives of children with disabilities. Alongside state institutions, non-governmental organisations are actively involved in these efforts, providing support and rehabilitation for pre-school and school-age children with SEN and preparing them for inclusive education. These organisations include the Republican Centre for Social Adaptation of Children, the Centre for Inclusive Education, and Avlod Baraka, a local non-governmental organisation.

⁹ Annex No. 2 to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated June 1, 2023, No. DP-82.

¹⁰ Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 20 April 2023, No. PP-128, 'On measures to accelerate the comprehensive development of the education system by improving the quality of scientific, methodological and research activities'.

5

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The Laboratory of Inclusive Education of the National Centre for Vocational Guidance under the MoPSE annually supports conditions for inclusive education, develops and improves criteria for assessing its quality and effectiveness, and monitors compliance. Methodologies for inclusive education are constantly updated and new programmes and recommendations are developed for teachers and specialists. Development of technologies for psychological, educational and social support of all actors of inclusion is a special focus. The Laboratory organises activities for psychological support of inclusive students, conducts scientific research and introduces the best international practices. The database of inclusive schools is regularly updated. In addition, the Laboratory organises and conducts scientific conferences and seminars on inclusive education.

One of the priority areas for developing inclusive education is the training, retraining and professional development of teachers. It is important to improve the effectiveness and expand the coverage of professional development for teachers working in mainstream schools and preschools that implement inclusive education. One way to achieve this would be to organise distance learning courses. In this regard, cooperation with higher education institutions in the Russian Federation is noteworthy.

Since 2021, the MoPSE's National Centre of Vocational Guidance has been annually organising targeted, 72-hour professional development courses for school principals, primary school teachers and psychologists from mainstream schools implementing inclusive education. The number of teachers taking the courses increased from 118 in 2021 to 650 in 2022, 1,431 in 2023 and 3,017 in 2024. Delivered by national and international experts, these courses are organised in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the Moscow Institute of Correctional Pedagogy, M. Tank Belarusian State Pedagogical Institute, the Belarusian Institute of Inclusive Education and Surgut State University, and Novgorod State University.

Since the 2023/24 academic year, the National Centre of Vocational Guidance has established close ties with Yaroslav the Wise Novgorod State University. Experienced specialists and teachers from the university, including L. Aleksandrova and D. Gadzhibabaeva, delivered one of the professional development courses. This targeted course played an important role in the training and professional development of teachers for their future work with children with SEN in inclusive education. A total of 1,431 people attended the course.

From August 21 to September 15, 2023, Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University organised an 18-hour distance learning course on comprehensive education for children with SEN. The course was successfully completed by 253 teachers, who received certificates from Novgorod State University.

For the purpose of further improving the education of children with SEN and enhancing the quality of educational services provided in Uzbekistan, a 36-hour training programme and curriculum were developed in collaboration with the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia for an advanced training course. From 27 September to 14 December 2023, a total of 256 participants, including methodologists, school psychologists and teachers, took the course and were certified.

The advanced training course was delivered by Tatyana Solovyova, Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor and Director of the Russian Institute of Correctional Pedagogy in Moscow; Olga Vyalykh, Candidate of Psychological Sciences, Associate Professor in the Department of Defectology and Rehabilitation and Deputy Director of the Institute of Educational Defectology and Rehabilitation at Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia; and Svetlana Komarova, Lecturer at the Pskov Regional Pedagogical Institute and Speech Therapist at the Pskov City Centre for Psychological, Medical and Pedagogical Support.

The practical classes were conducted by A. Semyonova and N. Ivanova, teachers at Pushkin School No. 9; Svetlana Komarova,

senior lecturer at the Centre for Practical Psychology, Special Education and Healthcare at the Pskov Regional Institute for Teachers' Professional Development and a speech therapist at the Municipal Centre for Psychological, Pedagogical, Medical and Social Assistance in Pskov; Natalya Semyonova, primary school teacher, speech therapist and head of the Municipal Methodological Association of Primary School Teachers (highest category) at Municipal Public Secondary School No. 9, named after A.S. Pushkin, in Pskov; Natalya Lyubavina, director of Municipal Public Secondary School No. 6, named after A. Popov, in Velikie Luki (Pskov Region) and the winner of the All-Russian competition 'Best Inclusive School in Russia – 2022'.

In accordance with Presidential Decree No. UP-152, dated 30 September 2024, 'On Additional Measures to Further Improve the Quality and Effectiveness of Preschool Education', short-term professional development courses were organised for principals, psychologists, speech therapists and educators from public preschools, with the aim of developing their skills in working with children with SEN. To date, more than 1,500 teachers have improved their qualifications through these courses.

5.1 Children with SEN in Primary Schools

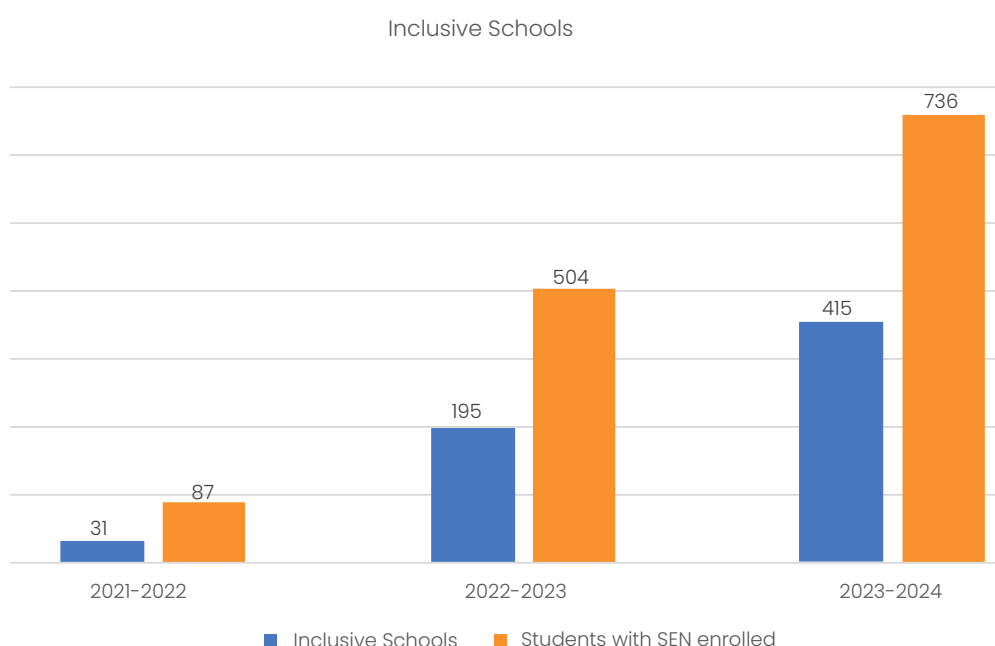
In October 2021 the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan approved the 'Regulatory Legal Acts Concerning the Education of Children with Special Educational Needs' and adopted a Regulation 'On The Organisation Of Inclusive Education In General Secondary Education';¹¹ which regulate conditions for inclusive education

of children with physical, sensory or intellectual disabilities in mainstream primary and secondary schools.

Inclusive classes may include children with SEN, such as visual or hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, autism spectrum disorders (ASD) or motor disabilities. There should be no more than three students with SEN in an inclusive class of 30 students. A special needs (corrective) class consists of 10–12 students with similar developmental problems. Both inclusive/integrated and special needs/corrective classes admit children with various disabilities, such as hearing impairments (up to 60 dB without additional disorders) and visual impairments (up to 0.1 without accompanying problems), as well as those with somatic diseases and delays in mental, physical and speech development. They also admit children with severe speech disorders (e.g. aphasic disorders, dyslalia); locomotor disorders (e.g. cerebral palsy, scoliosis, myopathy); children with autism spectrum disorders without significant behavioural or mental health issues; and children with epilepsy, provided they experience rare seizures (no more than once a month) (Cabinet of Ministers' Decision, 2021).

As shown in Figure 1 below, the number of inclusive schools in the country is increasing year on year, as is the number of integrated students with SEN. This positive trend shows that inclusive education is gradually becoming more accessible. Figure 2 illustrates two models of inclusive education – inclusive/integrated and special needs/corrective classes, and the categories of students with SEN enrolled.

Figure 1. Implementation of inclusive education in Uzbekistan and Coverage in 2021–2024



Source: Presidential Decree (2020b).

¹¹ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2021, October 12). On approval of regulatory legal acts concerning the education of children with special educational needs; Concept for the development of inclusive education in the public education system in 2020–2025 (Appendix No. 1 to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PP-4860, October 13, 2020).

Figure 2. Models of inclusive education

Models of Inclusive Education	
1. Inclusive classes. No more than three students with SEN studying to the mainstream national curriculum envisaged by standards 2. Special needs /corrective classes. Categories of students with SEN studying to specialised curricula adapted from the mainstream national curriculum	
1. Inclusive Classes	2. Special Needs /Corrective Classes
1. Children with hearing impairments 2. Children with visual impairments (blind) 3. Children with motor impairments 4. Children with autism spectrum disorders 5. Children with mild intellectual disabilities	1. Children with hearing impairments 2. Children with visual impairments 3. Children with motor impairments 4. Children with autism spectrum disorders 5. Children with mild intellectual disabilities

Source: Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2021).

5.2 Types and Methods of Inclusive Education

The methodological support for inclusive education is based on the national curriculum. Teaching materials and programmes adhere to general education standards. Methodological guides for teachers include lesson plans and recommendations

for personalised and specialised approaches. Schools are equipped with ramps, barrier-free corridors and special desks for children with mobility impairments, Braille inscriptions and rooms specially equipped for special education classes (Decree of the President of Uzbekistan, 2020a; Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan, 2021).

Figure 3. Inclusive schools conditions for hearing and speech correction for deaf students, teaching spatial orientation to blind children, and corrective work with children with ASD



Source: Centre for Inclusive Education.

Note: The photos illustrate activities carried out with children of different disabilities. From left to right: Boarding School No. 102 in Tashkent; the Centre for Inclusive Education; and the boarding school for blind children in Tashkent.

Adapted curricula are developed for all special classes in primary schools that have children with SEN. These curricula are based on those of specialist boarding schools for deaf, blind and intellectually disabled students. Specialised textbooks have been developed and published for all mainstream and

specialised (corrective) disciplines (see Figure 4 below). Additionally, special educational and methodological packages have been developed to address speech and articulation issues.

Figure 4. Adaptive textbooks for schools for primary special needs / corrective classes



Source: Centre for Inclusive Education. T.A. Fayziev.

Note: Textbooks “ALIFBE” and “NUTQ O'STIRISH” for schools for deaf children and for special classes in inclusive mainstream schools by U. Y. Fayzieva, “NISO-POLIGRAF” publishers, approved by the MoPSE in 2022. Textbook “TABIY FANLAR” for schools for deaf children and for special classes in inclusive mainstream schools by F. G. Kadyrova, “NISO-POLIGRAF” publishers, approved by the MoPSE in 2022. These textbooks are currently used for teaching deaf and hard of hearing children.

5.3 Methodological Approaches to Teaching Children with SEN and Disabilities

Implementing inclusive education in Uzbekistan requires the development of specialised curricula and textbooks for children with different types of disabilities. Educational materials for deaf and hearing-impaired children are based on the mainstream curriculum, incorporating elements of specialised correctional materials. These textbooks include resources to develop auditory perception, pronunciation, and speech. Braille and large-print books are published for blind and visually impaired children.

Special schools for children with intellectual disabilities use specialised curricula and simplified textbooks adapted to their abilities. They also offer programmes for speech correction, orientation and physical therapy. Children who are home-schooled due to long-term treatment also have access to appropriate curricula and adapted textbooks.

There are educational materials for parents such as “Your Children’s Rights Are Protected”, “Evaluation of Student’s Knowledge”, “Eshitamiz, kuramiz chiroyli gapiramiz” [“Seeing, Hearing, Speaking Nicely”]; also textbooks for students and special textbooks for individual learning in inclusive classes: “Alifbe” [ABC], “Matematika” [“Mathematics”], “Nutk ustirish” [“Language Skills”], “Talaffuz” [“Pronunciation Skills”], and others.

6

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES OF STUDENTS WITH SEN

The evaluation of the process of inclusive education in Uzbekistan is carried out by assessing the following:

- Curricula: the national curriculum, adapted curricula for special needs (corrective) classes.
- Approaches: individual, specialised (corrective), and rehabilitative.
- Methods used in special needs classes of primary schools.
- Methods used in inclusive classes of primary schools (subject teaching methods, author's methods, correction methods, rehabilitation, etc.).
- Types of interaction in the learning process.
- Logistics.
- Types and methods of support (educational psychology, medical and social assistance, etc.).

The necessary conditions for children with SEN are very specific and should be defined individually for each child. Inclusion in a mainstream educational environment enables children to develop the skills and social competencies necessary for assimilating into society. The educational impact should be balanced and take the child's abilities into account.

The quality of inclusive education is monitored according to "minimum but sufficient level of education" standards and requirements. These targets determine the effectiveness of inclusive education. Consequently, the National Centre for Vocational Guidance has developed evaluation criteria that address three main aspects: educational performance at each stage of education; the curriculum structure; and institutional conditions.

Performance evaluation at each stage of education is carried out using testing and evaluation materials developed by the National Centre of Vocational Guidance. Approaches include task splitting, step-by-step fulfilment, dosed assistance, and volume reduction. The following approaches are used to monitor inclusive education for children with disabilities.

- Adapted standard procedures for assessing the level of learning activities and educational outcomes;
- Biographical method reflecting the increase in the number and quality of social contacts;
- Expert method as an objective assessment by specialists of changes in learning and socialization;
- Psychodiagnostic method as an integral method to monitor the dynamics of development of intelligence and cognitive abilities, emotional and psychosomatic state, individual characteristics and interpersonal relations.

7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusion

The concept of inclusive education in Uzbekistan has evolved from medieval philosophical ideas to modern legislative initiatives. The first steps in this direction were taken during World War II with the establishment of special boarding schools, which laid the foundation for future initiatives. Since regaining independence, Uzbekistan has made significant progress in integrating an inclusive approach into education by adopting laws and regulations that promote equality and access to education for all children, including those with SEN.

Public attitudes and perceptions of inclusive education have also changed significantly. Initial fears and concerns held by teachers and school administrations regarding the inclusive approach have been addressed through awareness-raising initiatives, international projects, and active support from UNESCO and UNICEF. These positive changes in attitudes and perceptions have been confirmed by students and parents who have spoken about the improved quality of education and socialisation of children with SEN.

Uzbekistan has made significant legislative efforts to support inclusive education. The adoption of laws such as the laws *'On the Guarantees of the Rights of the Child'* (2007), *'On the Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities'* (2008) and *'On Education'* (2020), as well as the Inclusive Education Concept for 2020–2025, demonstrates the existence of long-term strategic plans. These measures aim to create an inclusive environment that ensures equal access to quality education and socialisation for all children.

Another important step towards inclusive education has been to overcome social and cultural barriers. The continuous improvement of legislation, public support, and educational practices demonstrates the country's commitment to developing an even more inclusive approach, ensuring equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their abilities.

7.2 Recommendations

Further implementation of inclusive education in Uzbekistan should be based on the results and experience gained so far. Some recommendations for improving the inclusive education process are discussed below:

- 1. Legislation:** Continue developing and implementing regulatory and legal acts aimed at protecting the rights of children with SEN and providing them with equal access to education.
- 2. Professional development:** Provide teachers with professional development to introduce them to modern teaching methods, as well as to the provision of psychological and pedagogical support for children with SEN.
- 3. Development of adapted programmes and school infrastructure:** Develop and introduce adapted curricula and materials for children with different developmental disorders. Ensure these comply with educational standards. Ensure the physical accessibility of schools for children with SEN.
- 4. Parental and community participation:** Develop outreach programmes to increase awareness of the importance and benefits of inclusive education and encourage parental and community participation.
- 5. Monitoring and evaluation:** Introduce the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of inclusive education through regular surveys and the analysis of feedback from students and parents.
- 6. Cooperation with international organisations:** Establish cooperation with international organisations to exchange experience and receive technical assistance in inclusive education.
- 7. Financing and resources:** Increase funding for inclusive education and provide all the necessary resources to support children with special SEN, including access to specialised services and medical care.

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20, Rue Rothschild | P.O. Box 1672
1211 Geneva 1, Switzerland
+41 (0) 22 908 45 47
norrag.kix@graduatenstitute.ch



@KIXEMAP



@KIXEMAP



@KIXEMAP



@KIXEMAP



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