Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies

Egypt's Model Policy for Accessible Education

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The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs
Promoting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Digital Age

Egypt's Model Policy for Accessible Education

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Implementation of Accessible Information and Communications Technology in Education

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Foreword

With almost 12 million persons with disabilities ("PWDs") in Egypt, the exclusion of this segment of the society does not support the social and economic development the country desires. Although Egypt ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008, it did not put it into action until 2012, when the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) held its first conference on Information and Communications Technology for Persons with Disabilities (ICT4PWDs).

This conference was a milestone in the path toward the inclusion and empowerment of PWDs, as it urged the Egyptian Government to direct more attention to the issue. Shortly after the conference, MCIT launched its strategy for ICT4PWDs, with the goal of utilizing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to reaching an inclusive, participatory and empowering society. Later, in 2012, the National Council for Disability Affairs was established as the main coordinating body for all issues related to PWDs.

With fewer than 2 percent of children with disabilities in school, the ICT4PWDs strategy is revolving around capacity-building as a tool that promotes greater independence of PWDs. The "One Thousand Schools for PWDs" initiative announced by MCIT aims to equip all inclusion and special schools with the appropriate ICT equipment, programs, and tools to enhance the education process for PWDs. The training for employment programs provided by MCIT emphasizes that employment should be based on the capabilities, skills and productivity of PWDs, not on charity or on mere compliance with the law.

Providing appropriate and accessible ICT tools customized to Arabic-speaking PWDs is another important pillar of the ICT4PWDs strategy. This will empower not only Egyptians with disabilities, but also more than 55 million PWDs in the Middle East. The engagement and participation of PWDs in articulating the ICT4PWDs strategy, and the continuous consultation with the PWDs' communication committee, ensure that all the projects meet the real needs of PWDs.

Since one of MCIT's strategies is to cooperate and learn from successful initiatives, it was a good opportunity for the Ministry and G3ict to work together and explore best practices from around the world to better serve PWDs and provide them with better educational opportunities.

Our hope is for Egypt to develop a policy for ICT accessibility in education to benefit Egyptians with disabilities, one that may serve as a model of implementation for other countries.

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Introduction

"ICTs can be a valuable tool for learners with disabilities who are vulnerable to the digital divide and exclusion from educational opportunities. Inclusive ICTs can improve their quality of life by increasing participation and reducing social exclusion. This is internationally recognized, as are some of the barriers created by inaccessible information." World Summit on the Information Society WSIS +10, Paris, 2013[1]

Global competition for innovation, talent, and an educated workforce is intense among countries that believe these efforts are essential drivers of economic and technological leadership. Globalization has made technological advancements, a qualified, educated talent pool, and retaining that talent a critical differentiator for countries. While the world continues to experience major growth with information, communications and technology, these advances often, unfortunately, do not benefit the more than one billion persons with disabilities (PWDs) worldwide.

They are left on the wrong side of a digital divide, a gap that negatively impacts economic and social development and denies a large segment of the population equal access to opportunities. Many countries are making efforts to bridge the divide by promoting solutions for PWDs. This trend is all the more important as more than 150 countries have now ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which requires its States Parties to implement ICT accessibility and assistive technologies and to carry out inclusive education policies and programs.

Accessible Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are indeed key enablers of education, innovation and new employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. But accessible ICTs also provide tangible benefits to everyone, expanding usage and building and strengthening digital ecosystems. As a result, their availability and adoption have become critical to every region in the world to ensure full digital inclusion of users of all abilities and mobilize countries' untapped human capital.

[1] World Summit on the Information Society WSIS +10 review final statement, Paris, 2013 http://tinyurl.com/a5kcpkf

There are many ICT accessibility barriers in education, including inaccessible curricula for students who are blind, deaf, hard of hearing, or who have learning disabilities or mobility impairments. Other examples include lectures and videos that are not captioned, visuals that are not described, and information presented on a whiteboard that cannot be read.

Assistive technologies can address some of these access issues. Screen readers can help students who are blind access the curriculum. Captioned videos allow students who are deaf to access the content.

Screen magnifiers enlarge the contents of the screen allowing students with low vision to read printed information and see images and other information clearly. Speech recognition, including for speech-impaired persons, can break down barriers in unprecedented ways. These tools also can empower students to self-accommodate. Self-accommodation can allow students to understand which accessibility features to use when accessing digital interfaces, including activating captions, using a screen reader, adjusting an operating system settings, or plugging in a switch in a computer or mobile device.

In August 2014, G3ict presented a seminar on “Inclusive ICTs for Education” in Cairo, Egypt, for educators and officers of the Egyptian Ministry of Education. The seminar was hosted by the Arab Republic of Egypt’s Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT). It was funded by in part by the Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA).

The seminar focused on the following objectives:

- Raise awareness about the benefits of Inclusive ICTs for education.
- Promote Inclusive ICT solutions that can be implemented today in education.
- Review the Model Policy for Inclusive ICTs in Education for Persons with Disabilities

http://g3ict.org/resource_center/publications_and_reports/p/productCategory_whitepapers/subCat_10/id_322

The seminar was an opportunity for key stakeholders to review and discuss how to leverage the Internet and modern ICTs to improve the lives of PWDs. In particular, the seminar was an opportunity to assess the potential of the Internet to integrate those with disabilities into modern life. Forward-looking governments like Egypt are recognizing this gap and the necessity to eliminate the exclusion of PWDs from online access to information, from both an economic and equal opportunity perspective.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006 and entered into force in May 2008, requires signatories to ensure PWDs the full enjoyment of human rights and equality under the law. Egypt was one of the early adopters of the CRPD, signing the Convention on April 4, 2007, and ratifying it on April 14, 2008. [2]

Accessibility is a key guiding principle of the CRPD: By signing the Convention, States Parties pledge to "enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life" by, among other things, promoting "access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet."[3]

The emphasis on accessibility represents a deliberate shift in the conceptualization of disability in international human rights law, from a model of exception to a model of inclusion that focuses on the state's responsibility to make society accessible to all persons on an equal and non-separate basis.

Today, many countries are taking concrete steps to attain the goal of web accessibility. A common trend is for nations to support and adopt the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and Techniques (WCAG), originally developed in 1999, updated in 2008 and recently adopted as an ISO standard.[4]

The guidelines provide a ready reference of accessibility principles for websites, web software and website tools, as well as an easy means of assessing the accessibility of websites. These have been incorporated, either verbatim or in essence, within the policy frameworks of many countries.

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[2] UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 24 January 2007, A/RES/61/106, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/45f973632.html

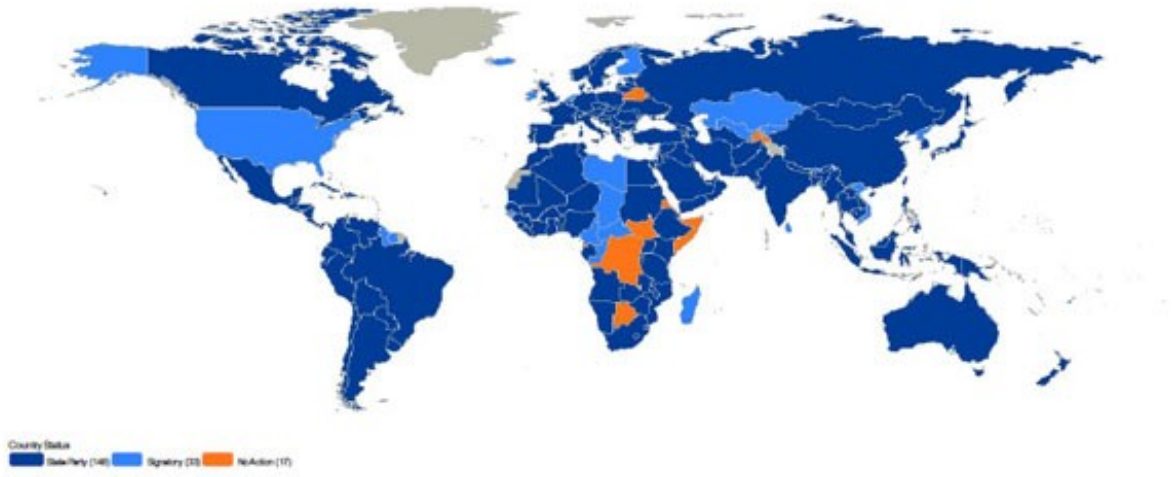
[3] The UN Disability Convention: Historic Process, Strong Prospects, and Why the U.S. Should Ratify," Human Rights Brief, Vol.14, No.2, 2007, available at Social Science Research Network http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=997141#

[4] www.w3c.org

Human Rights: Global Impact of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

- Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly December 13, 2006, as the 8th Human Rights Treaty
- 159 countries have signed it and 153 have ratified it as of April 2015
- Defines far-reaching accessibility obligations for all areas of ICTs impacting 159 States Parties

Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
August 2014[5]



CRPD August 2014

[5] http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/CRPDIndex.aspx

Model Policy for Inclusive ICTs in Education for Persons with Disabilities

"UNESCO's Model Policy for Inclusive ICTs in Education for Persons with Disabilities recognizes the unique settings in which national policies could be developed, implemented and monitored. Therefore, it assists countries to formulate inclusive education frameworks that are adapted to each country's specific circumstances, in order to develop actions that are suitable and effective for each Member State and its citizens. It represents a groundbreaking initiative for UNESCO and its Member States, signifying a significant step forward in the global effort to provide information and knowledge for all."

— Atef Helmy
Minister of Communications and Information Technology
Arab Republic of Egypt

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies (G3ict) joined forces to develop and publish the Model Policy for Inclusive ICTs in Education for Persons with Disabilities.

The main objective of the joint initiative was to develop a model policy document for use as a template to assist UNESCO Member States in promoting the effective use of inclusive ICTs in education for learners with disabilities. It must be emphasized that the policy objectives and actions outlined in this document are equally applicable to any groups of learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from any sector of education (i.e., those who may be identified as having learning difficulties and/or experiencing different forms of social disadvantage).

The focus of the model policy is on the use of ICTs to support the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in education. The model policy specifically addresses:

- Article 9: *Accessibility*

- Article 21: *Freedom of Expression and Opinion, and Access to Information*
- Article 24: *Inclusive Education*

The intention of the model policy document is to assist Member States in the process of developing policy in order to achieve the wider goal of inclusive education across all educational sectors and settings.

Therefore, the model policy document can be seen as:

- A blueprint for short-, mid- and long-term action
- A possible audit tool for Member States to identify their current progress in relation to key objectives and actions

As such, the model policy may serve as a resource for developing the contents of new national policy documents or complementing existing ones. In addition, individual sections or annexes could be used as resources for auditing or implementing existing policies. The model policy may also be used as a platform to raise awareness and engage in nation-level dialogue with multiple stakeholders.

Within the work, the term *policy* is understood to refer to rules, regulations and standards established by local, regional, national and international government or other recognized authorities. Policies govern or regulate systems that direct services, programs and other infrastructural activities in different sectors of a society. [6]

The model policy is intended for those decision-makers responsible for policy formulation and implementation within national governmental bodies and institutions, including ministries of education, communication and information technology, social affairs, business and industry, innovation and research.

Policy Objectives

Inclusion and participation in all aspects of society is a fundamental human right. Inclusive education is seen as a process that addresses the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increased participation in learning, cultures and communities.

[6] World Health Organization, 2001; International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, Geneva, WHO.

"Access to inclusive education is a right for PWDs, and signatories who have ratified it are mandated to provide an inclusive system at all levels of education." United Nations [7]

The long-term vision behind the Inclusive ICTs in Education policy is that inclusive ICTs are used effectively in education to enable all learners – in particular those with disabilities – to learn according to their individual learning preferences and to promote the long-term inclusion into wider society of learners with disabilities, particularly through enhancing their social inclusion and employment opportunities.

Three Levels

The goal of the policy is to provide access to an appropriate learning environment that is supported by inclusive ICTs for learners with disabilities. The expected long-term outcome of the policy is that learners with disabilities are able to effectively use inclusive ICTs according to their own learning preferences.

This requires widespread capacity-building to ensure the development of a systemic approach to the use of inclusive ICTs in education.

A number of Policy Objectives are crucial to achieving this goal. The Policy Objectives are linked to three different levels of the education system that impact the educational experiences of learners with disabilities:

Learner Level

Inclusive ICTs are used as a tool for supporting learners with disabilities to participate in inclusive education and personalized learning opportunities.

This means that: learners are taught to self-assess and manage their own ICT accessibility and assistive technology preferences as early as possible. They then develop this skill, with support, during their lifelong learning experiences. The ICT needs of learners who require additional support are identified in partnership with their parents, families and advocates who can help learners communicate their preferences.

[7] http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml

Organization Level

All educational organizations and all professionals working within and around these organizations are effectively supported to use inclusive ICTs to widen participation and increase learning opportunities for learners with disabilities.

System Level

All stakeholders in the ICT sector and inclusive education agree that inclusive ICTs can be used to widen participation and increase educational opportunities for learners with disabilities:

- An effective inclusive ICT infrastructure – incorporating needs assessments, procurement, installation, maintenance, training and support – that promotes innovation in inclusive education practice at organizational levels is developed and maintained in the long term within all educational settings.
- Ongoing active dialogue and consultation is maintained with main stakeholders: learners with disabilities, their parents, families and advocates, as well as representatives from civil society, community-based rehabilitation service providers and the professionals working in the inclusive ICTs eco-system.
- There is support for research and development initiatives that take "user-involved" as well as "user-centered" approaches and lead to new inclusive ICT tools that are applicable to learners with disabilities.
- Effective data collection for benchmarking short-, mid- and long-term policy monitoring and evaluation is carried out.

All of these Policy Objectives must be achieved for the successful implementation of the Inclusive ICTs in Education Policy. The overall effectiveness of the implementation of this policy will be judged against the achievement of these Policy Objectives.

The interconnections between the different Policy Objectives are not hierarchical or linear. The Policy Objectives are interrelated and mutually supportive and these interconnections must be clear if the ultimate policy goal of providing appropriate learning environments that are supported by inclusive ICTs for learners with disabilities is to be achieved.[8]

[8] http://g3ict.org/resource_center/publications_and_reports/p/productCategory_whitepapers/subCat_10/id_322

Egypt's Journey to Build an Inclusive ICT Policy

Egypt has been committed to full access for many years. Egypt's economy is still suffering from a severe downturn, and the government faces numerous challenges as to how to restore growth, market and investor confidence. Political and institutional uncertainty, a perception of rising insecurity and sporadic unrest continue to negatively affect economic growth.

The effect on the community of persons with disabilities has been staggering. It is estimated that persons with disabilities represent approximately 10 percent of the Egyptian population, or about 8.5 million Egyptians.

Education and Employment

Despite these problems, Egypt has created a program to train and employ PWDs. (The program did not initially include employment outcomes, but it was so successful that 70 percent of the participants were subsequently employed.)

The Egyptian government disability policies have two main goals: (1) Support full participation of PWDs in society as equal citizens and (2) ensure PWDs have equal opportunities to be self-sufficient.

MCIT developed programs to empower PWDs and support their education and employment. MCIT also provided PWDs with the tools to allow them to be part of the wider community, such as physical accessibility of buildings and technological accessibility of governmental entities.

As an Egyptian governmental authority, MCIT's mandate is to support PWDs as part of the community, not only to employ them at MCIT.

The ICT4PWDs strategy, developed by MCIT, has the following strategic objectives:

- Support access to information and knowledge; and enhance personal communication
- Provide better services and enhance services accessibility

- Promote equality in educational opportunities
- Provide better employment opportunities
- Build the knowledge infrastructure for PWDs
- Promote ICT research, development and innovation to serve PWDs
- Promote international cooperation

Several projects are implemented or ongoing:

- Development of an accessible portal to the Ministry (www.tamkeen.gov.eg)
- Promoting inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools and higher education institutions:
    - 35 inclusion schools, 26 schools for the blind (all government schools), and 23 centers for PWDs at all public universities were supplied with the required technology (e.g., PCs, data show, Braille printers) and programs (e.g., text-to-speech software).
    - Currently MCIT is equipping another 300 inclusion schools, 199 schools for the hearing-impaired and 500 schools for students with cognitive impairments.
- The International Computer Driving License (ICDL) grant for PWDs:
    - 86 persons with different types of disabilities graduated from this program. Another 211 are taking their exams.
- The training for employment project was launched as a public-private partnership to train PWDs on specific jobs required by ICT companies:
    - The best trainees will be employed by ICT companies participating in the program. Their salaries will be partially subsidized through the first year of employment to allow the companies to assess the trainees' capacities and skills.
    - To date, 53 persons with visual impairments were trained on telemarketing and 15 of the students were hired.
- Innovation competition for Software and Mobile Applications for PWDs:
    - Several idea-generation sessions and informative sessions to support developers and companies in developing their ideas were conducted.
    - PWDs were engaged in all phases of the competition, from the idea-generation session to identify the themes of the competition to the final selection of the projects to be funded.
    - After the submitted projects were selected based on their technical merit, they were assessed by PWDs for usability.

    - There was an open channel between PWDs and the developers to redirect and test different phases of the product to be developed. Fifty projects were submitted, of which six were selected for funding.
- The Ministry formed a PWDs Committee of 15 persons with disabilities representing different geographical regions and different types of disability in order to identify the real need of the community and to consult them in the projects to be implemented.

MCIT has a small team dedicated to digital inclusion. The nine-person team is engaged in interviewing PWDs to join different programs, especially the training for employment one; it also advises companies interested in hiring PWDs on such issues as "respectful" disability language, required software to allow PWDs to perform their tasks, etc.

Building trust between the Government and the disability community is a must, according to MCIT's guideline to *"never give promises that you are not sure they will be fulfilled"* and always keep PWDs informed with the real situation and the challenges facing the projects and the efforts made to overcome them.

Participation of PWDs and continuous communication with the community of PWDs are the keys to success of the ongoing projects.

Egypt found that many of the employers showed high interest and willingness to support PWDs, but when it came to implementation, the situation was different.

Efforts were aligned with the Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and non-government organizations (NGOs) concerned with PWDs and the community as a whole. MCIT also supports the National Council for Disability Affairs, which was recently established to adopt the required infrastructure, and is developing a database for PWDs. In addition, MCIT has relations with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and G3ict.

MCIT Model Policy for Employment

The MCIT model is built on several pillars:

1. Provide skill-specific training to meet certain job qualifications.
2. Base such programs on public-private partnerships.
3. Support the salaries of PWDs for a certain period of time to encourage companies to experience the productivity of PWDs.

4. Provide companies with the required assistive technology to support the hired PWDs performing their jobs.

Helpful Example for other Countries

Thanks to these forward-looking MCIT programs, and their successful implementation, Egypt may serve as a useful example for other countries to initiate programs to include PWDs in the workforce. No matter how developed a country is, PWDs are part of the community and their needs have to be considered equal to those of any other segment of the society. It is also very important to understand that PWDs should not be seen as a burden to the government; on the contrary, if they are given the opportunities and the right tools and assistance, they are a resource.

The reason this innovative practice is worth sharing with other countries is because MCIT was successful in creating sustainable programs that focused on helping PWDs to prepare, train and enter the workforce. These efforts have also been directly tied to Egypt's ICT 2020 Strategy.

Egypt's ICT 2020 Strategy

The world is witnessing a revolution in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), the scope of which stretches far beyond the sector itself. No country seeking real, sustainable development and progress can hope to achieve these aims without a strong ICT sector in place to drive the necessary change.

MCIT was established in 1999 to develop the national ICT sector.

MCIT mission is to enable the development of a knowledge-based society and a strong digital economy, one reliant on equitable and affordable access to knowledge, digital rights, and a competitive, innovative national ICT industry.

The strategy focuses on three key objectives: the transformation of Egypt into a digital society, the development of the ICT industry and the establishment of Egypt as a global digital hub.

To achieve these objectives, MCIT has paid close attention to:

- Basic infrastructure

- Information infrastructure and digital content
- Electronics design and manufacturing
- Community development
- ICT industry programs and initiatives
- Cyber security and e-Signature
- Legislative and policies framework

In formulating this strategy, the primary considerations were the political and economic changes taking place in Egypt, the development of the communications sector, both regionally and internationally, and Egypt's national development priorities, in addition to the achievements and challenges of the sector over the last decade.

Highlights of the MCIT journey, so far, include the release of the National Communications Plan in 2000, the Strategy for Building the Information Society (2003), the IT Industry National Development Strategy (2006) and the National Strategy for Communications and Information Technology (2007). The 2020 Strategy supports the development of the communications sector both regionally and internationally. [9]

[9] http://www.mcit.gov.eg/

Inclusive ICTs for Education

MCIT hosted the seminar on “Inclusive ICTs for Education” in Cairo, Egypt, by G3ict for the Ministry of Education. Debra Ruh, a consultant for G3ict, moderated the seminar.

The program objectives were to:

- Raise awareness about the benefits of Inclusive ICTs for education.
- Promote Inclusive ICTs solutions that can be implemented today in education.
- Review the G3ict-UNESCO model policy framework and discuss possible implementation in Egypt.
- Document next steps suggested by participants in a post-meeting white paper.

More than 60 participants were invited to the training; most of the attendees represented the Egyptian Ministry of Education. The organizers invited Microsoft to present a private sector perspective and their accessibility solutions and products. Microsoft Egypt AppFactory Hub Lead Ahmed Abd ElMageed presented the company’s “Approach to Accessible Education”.

The presentation reviewed Microsoft’s global journey to include accessibility in their education solutions and provided some demos. ElMageed was joined by Omar Hamdy, representing Microsoft Corporate Social Responsibility.

Ahmed Abd ElMageed, Microsoft Egypt AppFactory Hub Lead, presenting accessibility solutions.

Mohamed ElHenawy and Dr. Adel M. Khalifa of the Exceptional Training Center provided information about their programs and efforts to include PWDs in Egypt.

Next Steps

After reviewing the Model Policy for ICT Accessibility in Education and discussing each step, the training participants brainstormed ideas on how to implement it. Participant suggestions were broken into the three levels of Policy Actions previously defined:

1. Learner Level
2. Organization Level
3. System Level

Learner Level

A. Participation of stakeholders
   a. Continue to identify barriers for PWDs and other stakeholders in the use of inclusive and accessible ICTs – gender, social or geographic isolation and/or socioeconomic factors – within local level situations and their potential impact on learners with disabilities.
   b. Create and support programs for Organizations of Persons with Disabilities to help them educate and train PWDs and other stakeholders.
   c. Create programs that empower PWDs and other stakeholders to understand the perspective of educators and employers.

Teacher training on autism in Egypt.

B. Training
   a. Provide teachers in all education sectors with initial and ongoing training that adequately prepares and supports them to work in inclusive education settings.
   b. Provide training for teachers and other educational professionals in maximizing the use of accessibility features in mainstream ICTs.

c. Provide training for teachers and other educational professionals in identifying learners' ICT preferences and supporting learners' ability to self-assess and self-accommodate their ICT access preferences.
d. Provide training in the use of inclusive ICTs for parents, families, caregivers or representatives of learners with disabilities that parallels the training given to education professionals.
e. Provide training to PWDs and their families about effective ways to advocate.

C. Procedures
a. Develop structured ICT needs assessment procedures in all educational sectors that have a role in identifying individual learners' functional needs for particular inclusive ICTs.
b. Develop action plans to help identify gaps and address the identified barriers to the use of Inclusive ICTs in education.
c. Improve current education assessments by including assistive technology and accessible ICT that allows learners to communicate their needs and demonstrate their achievements.
d. Support teachers in all educational contexts to take personalized learning approaches supported by the use of inclusive ICTs.
e. Ensure access to curriculum materials that are based on and encourage the use of personalized learning approaches and learners' self-accommodation in using inclusive ICTs.
f. Integrate the use of inclusive ICTs for learners into individual education plans or similar individualized education planning documents.
g. In collaboration with educational organizations across all sectors, collect agreed-upon quantitative and qualitative data on learners' participation in and achievements and outcomes from inclusive education.
h. Establish widespread access to inclusive learning tools, content, and support for learners, their families and representatives in all formal and informal learning situations.

D. Monitoring
a. Build a communication and inclusion strategy for PWDs to identify their needs and help set the strategy and priorities.
b. Build agreement with all stakeholders on the priority actions to be taken and the timeframes for implementing, evaluating and reviewing actions.

Organization Level

A. Governance
    a. Identify main ministry that will manage these efforts. Will MCIT or the Ministry of Education lead the efforts or will it be a shared responsibility with clear expectations and definitions?
    b. Establish multi-stakeholder governing bodies to oversee the implementation of the policy objective and all related policy actions.

B. Participation of stakeholders
    a. Hold stakeholder meetings for educators and provide training on inclusion, disability inclusion, Assistive Technology, accommodations, technology, and curriculum development.
    b. Invite NGOs and parent groups to some of the educational training and planning sessions.
    c. Invite PWDs to the educational training and planning sessions.
    d. Continue to invite primary, secondary and higher education stakeholders to future meetings, including administration, teachers, transition specialists, accommodation experts, occupational therapists, physical therapists and speech therapists.
    e. Involve all professionals working in educational settings in identifying priorities for capacity-building, including agreeing upon professional standards, training priorities and effective support mechanisms.
    f. Invite all relevant government agencies to the conversations.

C. Standards
    a. Identify minimum standards for the provision of ICT accessibility tools across all educational sectors to cover Universal Design approaches, interoperability guidelines, accessibility standards and procurement guidelines.
    b. Cross-reference national minimum standards with those outlined in international legislation, as well as those used in other country contexts.
    c. Define resource requirements, sources, possibilities and constraints. Identify civil society strengths and resources to be capitalized upon.
    d. Cross-reference all inclusive ICTs in education policy actions and initiatives to wider, mainstream ICTs in education policies, such as the development of high-speed broadband connections in all education settings.
    e. Promote Universal Design principles in the education supplier ecosystem.

D. Resource and procurement
    a. Ensure human resources policies at the organizational level take into account the general needs of staff with disabilities, as well as any specific requirements for inclusive ICTs.
    b. Establish a procurement framework agreement at the national level that is guided by Universal Design principles.
    c. Identify a responsible lead body for procurement that has the necessary technical and knowledge capacity to enforce the framework agreement.

E. Training
    a. Encourage PWDs to get engaged in training, employment and other programs by awarding them with high-profile personnel and presenting success stories.
    b. Develop education programs to encourage the whole community to support PWDs.
    c. Expand on current programs that help educators, employers and entrepreneurs to create an inclusive and diverse set of viable education and employment options, such as internships, volunteer opportunities, self-employment, community service, public and private sector roles with domestic/international scope, to create the most opportunities for people with disabilities and their families.
    d. Implement a coherent program of training in using inclusive ICTs for all educational professionals that covers initial education as well as continuing professional development program.
    e. Create and ensure coherent links in all training program between specific training in the use of inclusive ICTs and general training in inclusive education.
    f. Provide training for professional trainers in the use of ICTs generally and inclusive ICTs specifically.
    g. Provide educational leaders with training and support in enacting a vision for and the use of inclusive ICTs in inclusive education.

F. Monitoring
    a. Build a communication and inclusion strategy for PWDs to identify their needs and help set the strategy and priorities.
    b. Establish a national resource database of inclusive ICT procurement possibilities (products, accredited vendors, etc.).
    c. Build agreement with all stakeholders on the priority actions to be taken and the timeframes for implementing, evaluating and reviewing actions.

d. Establish links between the training of teachers and the training of librarians; media and information personnel; IT providers; IT professionals; web designers and administrators and assistive technology support personnel, to ensure a shared approach that uses the same terminology and basic concepts.
e. Ensure that service providers responsible for delivering educational and/or ICT-related services are aware of their responsibilities and act in compliance with the Inclusive ICTs in Education policy.
f. Develop stakeholder-led initiatives to support the sharing of assistive technology resources across different end-user groups.
g. Develop stakeholder-led initiatives to support the increased accessibility of community-based, informal learning opportunities, including increased access to public learning resources and distance-learning opportunities
h. Establish links between the training of all educational professionals and the training of ICT accessibility specialists to ensure a shared approach that uses the same terminology and concepts.
i. Establish interdisciplinary support structures for all professionals working in educational settings to use inclusive ICTs in their work.

System Level

A. Standards
    a. Ensure all ICT development is being built and maintained in an accessible manner.
    b. Ensure that the agreed-upon Policy Objectives relating to the use of inclusive ICTs in education are reflected in other policy directives (for general education, inclusive education and the use of ICT in education) and that the policy content is cross-referenced with all other relevant policies in order to ensure coherent policy implementation.

B. Determine Gaps
    a. Evaluate current systems to determine accessibility gaps and plans to mitigate problems.
    b. Undertake regional and local level audits to identify priority areas for capacity-building in relation to the training of all educational professionals.

C. Systems and Infrastructure
    a. Build the infrastructure to allow for all future projects to be implemented in an accessible fashion.
    b. Create internal policies and processes that support accessible systems and infrastructure.

D. Training
    a. Train technology team on ICT accessibility.
    b. Mobilize opinion on the right to inclusive ICTs in education for all learners, as well as the added value of ICT accessibility for the wider population.
    c. Develop widespread awareness-raising campaigns that have the explicit aim of developing positive attitudes toward PWDs.
    d. Raise awareness of the wider societal benefits of inclusive ICTs, including better facilities for all learners, not just those with disabilities – and the social return on investment in terms of improved outcomes within the educational system.

E. Resource and procurement
    a. Ensure all systems procured through the Ministries and school systems include procurement language to purchase accessible systems.
    b. Provide accessibility procurement training.

F. Monitoring
    a. Build systems that track metrics and measurements.
    b. Create test plans and testing cases to track results.
    c. Use testing tool to track progress.
    d. Build a communication and inclusion strategy for PWDs to identify their needs and help set the strategy and priorities.
    e. Establish a national resource database of inclusive ICT procurement options (products, accredited vendors etc.).
    f. Build agreement with all stakeholders on the priority actions to be taken and identifying timeframes for implementing, evaluating and reviewing actions.

Conclusion

This G3ict seminar brought together many stakeholders allowing them to brainstorm ideas for creating a policy for ICT Accessibility in Education in Egypt. The participants were all eager to move the discussions forward and to support the Egyptian government with these efforts.

Egypt has the opportunity to be one of the first countries to implement the Model Policy for ICT Accessibility in Education. These goals can be achieved under the leadership of the MCIT and the Ministry of Education.

External partners, like G3ict and UNESCO, can support these efforts to ensure full access to education for PWDs. The efforts will also help Egypt implement many aspects of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

About the Organizations

Arab Republic of Egypt's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology

Egypt is actively engaged in efforts to develop regional and international agendas and strategies in the field of information and communications technology. The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) plays an instrumental role in this regard through its support of and participation in various multi-stakeholder partnerships, forums and working groups, as well as through a large number of bilateral initiatives with countries around the world. [10]

G3ict

G3ict – the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies – is an advocacy initiative launched in December 2006 in cooperation with the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) at the United Nations, the Information Technology industry, and the Organizations of Persons with Disabilities. Its mission is to facilitate and support the implementation of the dispositions of the CRPD promoting digital accessibility and Assistive Technologies. [11]

UNESCO

UNESCO is the United Nations specialized agency for education, science, culture, communication and information. UNESCO works toward creating the conditions for peace and dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, based upon respect for commonly shared human values. The access to information and knowledge for marginalized social groups, including persons with disabilities, is fully incorporated in UNESCO's strategic documents. UNESCO believes that the promotion and recognition of universal human rights and providing access to information and knowledge, particularly through innovative use of media and ICT, are conducive to ensure that every citizen, including PWDs, could better contribute to social and economic development. [12]

[10] http://www.mcit.gov.eg
[11] http://www.g3ict.org
[12] http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/access-to-knowledge/access-for-people-with-disabilities

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education is an independent organization that acts as a platform for collaboration among its 28 member countries in the areas of special needs and inclusive education. Its aim is to improve educational policy and practice for learners with disabilities and special educational needs. Agency work focuses on country priorities that are in line with European Union strategic objectives, as identified in the Education and Training 2020 strategy, and in accordance with international agreements, such as the CRPD and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. [13]

[13] http://www.european-agency.org» www.european-agency.org

G3ict – Global Initiative for Inclusive Technologies
www.g3ict.org