As Cardinal Roger Mahony vividly puts it, “any society, any nation, is judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members — the last, the least and the littlest”, we can become unified in creating a better world for all if we focus our attention in working for and with the marginalized.

One day, all persons with disabilities will be enrolled in a regular classroom. One day.

The idea of inclusion in schools has been a far distant dream.

As the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Integration propels the region, public and private sectors have roles to involve all members of the society in the budding development.

This booklet is a testament of MY IDEA and YSEALI’s commitment to make ASEAN an inclusive region.

To our partners, we are honored to take part in the promotion and practice of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

May this bring information and inspiration to the rest of the growing global community of leaders, volunteers and advocates so that one day, our dream of a better future is at hand.

As Cardinal Roger Mahony vividly puts it, “any society, any nation, is judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members — the last, the least and the littlest”, we can become unified in creating a better world for all if we focus our attention in working for and with the marginalized.
Delegates of SPECTRUM, the first special and inclusive education student teachers’ convention, support MY IDEA in advocating for a world of inclusion.
In order to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2006 was enacted. Generally, nations are mandated to ensure and promote full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms of PWDs without discrimination. Inclusion through inclusive education has been the answer to the prevailing discrimination among persons with disabilities because through inclusion, all people are freely accommodated in any activity without hesitation especially in schools where students are welcomed by their neighborhood schools in age-appropriate regular classes.

In the Philippines, a survey by the National Statistics Office (NSO) in 2010 states that about 16 per thousand Filipinos have disability, about 18.90% are from ages 0–14. GPRehab, a non-government organization recognized for its work on inclusive education in the Philippines, says that in one province in the country, 2 out of 3 children with disabilities who are enrolled in primary schools drop out in the middle of the school year. The remaining one has less than 30% chance of progressing to the next level.

The Department of Education (DepEd) has a zero rejection policy, but 97% are not reached by public school system. Efforts from the public sector to reduce the incidence of drop-out and inaccessible education have been profound but need more improvement as shown in the rate of children and youth with disabilities who enroll in schools.
Apart from intrinsic factors and economic considerations, the huge difference in the number of children proceeding to higher level of studies are brought by the social environment where structures are not PWD friendly, access to free education is lacking, and teachers are not trained and equipped with appropriate learning skills to deliver instructions to PWDs. In a larger sense, the focus of enabling inclusion in schools is on teaching personnel who have the critical role in molding the young generation. It has been found in a study conducted by Kham V. Tran in Vietnam, that same as the Philippines, the curriculum of tertiary learning institutions for Teaching has no specific subject on inclusive education or teaching persons with disabilities needs except for SPED undergraduate program. Teachers without any background on special and inclusive education are acknowledged as the prominent limitation for PWD in schools. All programs in pedagogic system in most cases exclude training of student-teachers with the idea and skills of teaching in inclusive settings. Teachers are acknowledged for their important functions for social inclusion knowing that they have an essential image in the view of children. As we move forward in the 21st century, our education system is the catalyst that answers our growing global concerns. With the developments experienced by citizens of the world, children with disability also have the right to be included.

Sources:

Kham V Tran, February 2014 (Social Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Vietnam, University of South Australia)

Le Bach Duong, et al (People with Disabilities in Vietnam: Findings from Social Survey at Dong Nai, Quang Nam, Da Nang and Thai Binh, Institute for Social Development Studies)


Philippine Statistics Office, 2013 (Persons with Disability in the Philippines: Results form 2010 Census)


Carmelita N. Ercita (5th Annual Meeting of Washington Group on Disability Statistics, Philippines National Statistics Office)
When Andrea was 4 years old, she had a tumor that caused her to become blind. She was first enrolled at a Special Education class but it was too far from where she lived. Her parents needed to spend 100 pesos a day for her fare just so she could go to school. They tried their best to provide her the education she needed. She was able to get to Grade III in her special education class. But the time came when her parents couldn’t afford the fare anymore.

So they decided to enroll her in a public elementary school instead. At first, the principal wasn’t open to the idea and wouldn’t accept Andrea. But with the help of other organizations, Andrea was enrolled to a Grade IV class.

Before the start of classes, the teachers in the school underwent training on braille. They were also taught with different strategies of teaching blind children. Her parents even joined the trainings to help her learn. When school started, her parents noticed how Andrea was more included in school activities. From flag ceremonies to class activities, Andrea was not just included but most of all, beloved and accepted by the whole school community.

The teacher created a ‘buddy system’ wherein her classmates became Andrea’s guide for a day. Her buddy for the day was the one who assisted her in going to places like the bathroom, writing for her braille, and who aiding her in other class activities.

Andrea is now in Grade VI and her whole family is excited for her to graduate. They are extremely proud of her having excellent grades in school despite her disability. Her parents believe that it’s all because of the efforts of her teachers, the school and the whole community that their child is in school and learning.
In 2011-2013, a project was initiated to address the problem of inclusive education in the Philippines, specifically in the province of Negros Oriental called the Dumaguete Inclusion Caravan for Education (DICE). However, it lacked systematic support especially funding. Fortunately, last July 2014, the U.S. Government, through the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative, opened a Seed Grant Competition to deserving proposals made by a collaborative group of young leaders in ASEAN. Coming from diverse areas of nation-building, four young leaders who are advocates for inclusive development then pooled together to create a sustained and long-term change with the way the children with disabilities are accommodated in the education system and MY IDEA (Movement of the Youth for Inclusive Development through Education in ASEAN) was born. The alliance of MY IDEA is composed of young leaders from the Philippines and Vietnam: Kathleen Dawn Young Ricardo, a state alunna from the Southeast Asian Young Leaders Program, Eduard Joseph Narciso, recipient of the Study of the United States Institute for Student Leaders, Rolando Jr Villamero, Chairperson of the UN Secretary General’s Global Education First Initiative Youth Advocacy Group (GEFI-YAG) and Quy Nguyen, a Global Youth Ambassador of a World at School.

MY IDEA’s main goal is to enable student teachers in the ASEAN region specifically in the Philippines and Vietnam to become advocates for inclusive education. It also aims to: (1) raise awareness for inclusive education in all of ASEAN; (2) equip the student teachers with essential tools and methods of teaching in preparation for working in the future on inclusive education; (3) create a modifiable module for the workshop that can be adapted in other ASEAN countries depending on their needs; (4) formulate call to action to hold the government accountable for the rights to education of children with disabilities. As a long-term goal, MY IDEA aims to inculcate special education units in the curriculum of non-special education majors in educational institutions through the help of the government and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines.
In February 2015, the MY IDEA team started conducting a Training Needs Assessment. Five universities in Negros Oriental took part in this assessment which consisted of surveys and focused group discussion. This was aimed to provide us the information we needed to create a module that was fitting to the needs of student teacher. It allowed us to get a clearer picture of the perceptions of educators about inclusive education; the basics and the specific knowledge and skills they needed to learn.

Finally, in April, we invited the different schools, organizations, media and public sector for a panel discussion and the official launch of the project. It signified the beginning of our partnerships with the different sectors holding huge roles for the success of our project. A month later, we started all the preparations needed for the Inclusion Caravan, focusing on the integral part of the training which were the facilitators. Coming from different organizations — SPED Youth Advocates of Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) and the Ten Outstanding Persons with Disabilities of Negros Oriental Alumni Community (TOPDAC), we pooled together a diverse and inclusive group of facilitators. We trained 20 volunteer-facilitators who journeyed with us in advocating for inclusive education in the province.
From June to October 2015, the first phase of the project, the Inclusion Caravan, went across the province of Negros Oriental – visited 9 colleges and universities and conducted 13 workshop sessions to more than 1000 student teachers.
MY IDEA continued the commitment to advance and promote inclusive education in ASEAN through the efforts in Vietnam. Having the same goal with SPECTRUM, the team in Vietnam conducted a one day workshop in Hanoi gathering 30 student teachers to participate. Patterned from the module of SPECTRUM, MY IDEA in Hanoi partnered with the Hanoi University of Education and Unbounded Space Project in advocating for Inclusive Education.

The workshop utilized participatory and interactive methods and activities to encourage active involvement and learning. All of the activities included the facilitation and direct involvement of youth with disabilities and were designed to be educational and entertaining. There were also presentations from persons with disabilities to raise the challenges and obstacles they faced in schools, but more importantly, the positive experiences they have had.

MY IDEA through its network in the Philippines and Vietnam continues to create initiatives to push the movement for inclusive education forward within the region.
As a culmination of the whole MY IDEA project, the First Special and Inclusive Education Student Teachers’ Convention, known as SPECTRUM, was held in Dumaguete City for 35 chosen student teachers across Negros Oriental. Like a spectrum, inclusive education can be analyzed critically in varying ranges and dimensions. Like a spectrum, a student teacher can identify countless areas where learning can be simplified. With SPECTRUM, we recognize all areas of education, all kinds of people, all preferences and all stakeholders of the community as partners to one particular goal: to include everyone in a regular classroom. SPECTRUM is an event aimed to become the bulwark of inspiration for student teachers to become strong advocates of inclusive education. It was a 3-day convention about special and inclusive education broadened through the aid of guided lectures, dialogues, immersion and evaluation processes. This paradigm-shifting event was aimed to create a continuum that will start with the formulation of a call to action document that would impel government leaders and stakeholders in education to pursue the inculcation of special education subjects in collegiate curriculum and provide better access to public education. This momentum was envisioned to culminate when every child with a disability in the community is enrolled in an inclusive school environment where teachers are equipped with resources and skills whom are not prejudicial about anyone’s ability and disability.
Many persons with disabilities (PWDs) from developing countries are deprived of different academic opportunities and platforms for learning. The academe fell short to provide schemes that will sufficiently cater their individual needs. Teachers who handle education classes lack the appropriate skills in facilitating the transition of persons with disabilities from special education classes to regular ones. Teachers, being one of the most important elements in the teaching process, must be trained aligned to what is expected of them in the real field. The curriculum must be concordant in training student teachers to become competent inclusive educators.

The following are concrete recommendations formulated by student teachers of Negros Oriental on how to promote inclusive education:

1. Acknowledge the failures of the past
   - Identify and assess the lapses of the present education curriculum in relation to inclusive education
   - Define the mismatch of today’s curriculum and the skills expected from teachers toward inclusive education
   - Present a thorough and comprehensive scrutinization of the curriculum used in teacher education

2. Understand the mismatch and revisit the current curriculum
   - Devise a strategy to address the findings
   - Form a specially equipped committee that will spearhead the curriculum revision
   - Integrate relevant inclusive education topics regarding learning, behavioral and physical disabilities in education psychology course
   - Include six (6) units of special education in the curriculum: three (3) units on the strategies and theories, and three (3) units on assessment and evaluation for inclusive education

3. Revise the teacher education curriculum
   - Communicate the revised curriculum to academic institutions offering BSED and BEED programs
   - Explain the necessity and the need to adopt the revised curriculum
   - Create a memorandum to implement the changed curriculum
   - The solution is clear—a revision of the curriculum can mean a revision of a child’s life.
   - Let’s start the revision now!

4. Bridge the gaps
   - Let’s start the revision now!
Future educators of Negros Oriental present their call to action with the unified conviction to become advocates of inclusion.
Launched in 2013, the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) is U.S. President Barack Obama’s signature program to strengthen leadership development and networking in Southeast Asia. Through a variety of programs and engagements, including U.S. educational and cultural exchanges, regional exchanges, and seed funding, YSEALI seeks to build the leadership capabilities of youth in the region, strengthen ties between the United States and Southeast Asia, and nurture an ASEAN community. YSEALI focuses on critical topics identified by youth in the region: civic engagement, environment and natural resources management, and entrepreneurship and economic development.

Approximately 65% of people in the ASEAN region are under the age of 35. YSEALI is an effort to harness the extraordinary potential of youth in the region to address critical challenges and expand opportunities.

The YSEALI community consists of bright young leaders, 18–35 years old, from Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Laos, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam who are making a difference in their communities, countries, and the region.

BECOME A MEMBER OF YSEALI!
Check their website for details: https://youngsoutheastasianleaders.state.gov/

“Young people like you have to be the ones who lead us forward.”
– U.S. President Barack Obama
Idealists

Kate is a 20-year-old young leader from Dumaguete City, Philippines, with a degree in Management Accounting. She is an alumna of the Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program in 2011, an exchange program for young leaders in ASEAN to the United States. Since then, she has been active in different youth-oriented community projects in the country and is passionate about advocating for the rights of PWDs and Inclusive Education.

Kathleen Dawn C. Young Ricardo

Rolando Jr. C. Villamero

Rolando is a young leader from Negros Oriental, Philippines who holds a Masters Degree in Special and Inclusive Education. Since 2008, he has been actively involved in the disability sector and founded The Outstanding Persons with Disabilities of Negros Oriental Alumni Community (TOPDAC), a community run by 35 Persons with Disabilities recognized for their personal excellence, commendable leadership, deep sense of social responsibility, and good moral values. He is the Philippine youth ambassador and chairperson of the UN Secretary General’s Global Education First Initiative Youth Advocacy Group (GEFI-YAG), Co-founder and Vice-president of GLOBI, and Fellow to the 2015-17 Jeanne Sauve Public Leadership Program in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Eduard Joseph V. Narciso

Before co-founding MY IDEA, Eduard has been active in prison ministry and care at the Negros Oriental Provincial Rehabilitation Center as assistant chair of the Finance Committee and member of the Post-release Care and Livelihood Committee of the Prison Fellowship International-Philippines. As an advocate for global solidarity, he became a Philippine-Tohoku Goodwill Ambassador in Tokyo, Japan. As a writer, Eduard is an alumnus of the US Department of State’s Study of the United State Institute for Student Leaders in New Media and Journalism at Ball State University, Indiana USA and was awarded with an achievement honor at Washington D.C., USA.

Quy Nguyen

Quy is a young professional from Hanoi, Vietnam and has been working 6 years in the development sector. She’s worked for 3 years in a local non-governmental organization (NGO) and 3 years as a staff member in an international NGO. Quy has extensive experience in coordinating with youth groups, working with disadvantaged youth and children, issues on water and sanitation, employment, and inclusive education programs. With a bachelor degree in business administration and as a master candidate in Globalization and Development, Quy’s education has contributed considerably to integrating business and development into a social enterprise.

Felix III D. Mosqueda

Felix is a registered nurse and is currently a public health worker at the Department of Education- Dumaguete City Division. He graduated at Negros Oriental State University with a bachelor’s degree in Nursing. He became the founding member of the Negros Oriental League of Student Nurses in 2010. He is the Provincial Chair of the Ten Outstanding Students of the Philippines Negros Oriental Chapter. He is presently in his academic pursuit to attain the degree in Master of Public Health. His notable passion for inclusive development is focused on public health which includes HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy awareness campaigns in marginalized areas of Dumaguete and Negros Oriental.

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