



*Newsletter*

**JUNE 2021**

## **Developing Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities in Sri Lankan Universities (IncEdu)**

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## Developing Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities in Sri Lankan Universities

The IncEdu project addresses an important issue in higher education in Sri Lanka that has not received adequate attention. It intends to develop a system of support for equalising opportunities for students with disabilities in Sri Lankan Universities.

The main activities of the project during the period of 3 years (2020-2023), include, creating community awareness, develop competency of staff of the partner universities in Sri Lanka and to establish a model support centre with required equipment and assistive technology.

It is believed that promoting and developing access to inclusive education should be given priority in order to treat those students without discrimination and to protect their rights.

The project partnership consists of 4 well renowned European Universities and 4 universities from Sri Lanka;

- Masaryk University, Czech Republic
- University of Zagreb, Croatia
- Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania
- Uppsala University, Sweden
- University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
- University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka
- Eastern University, Sri Lanka
- Sri Lanka Technological Campus



**THE KEY AIM OF THE PROJECT IS TO DEVELOP A SYSTEM OF SUPPORT FOR EQUALISING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SWD'S IN SRI LANKAN UNIVERSITIES. THIS IS TO ENSURE THE RIGHTS OF SWDS TO ACCESS HIGHER EDUCATION, TO COMBAT DISCRIMINATION BY INSTILLING AWARENESS AND TO ESTABLISH A SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT NETWORK FOR SWD'S IN SRI LANKAN UNIVERSITIES.**

# Challenges of a Global Pandemic

## Message from the Project Coordinator



**Prof. Anoma Abhayaratne**  
Overall Project Coordinator

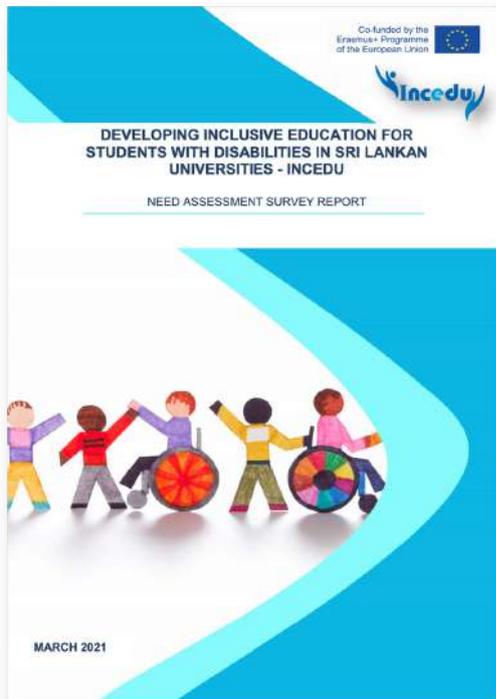
The IncEdu project completed the first half of its three year period. During the period, the first task of the project, the need assessment survey was completed and the report was launched. The report presents an analysis of the needs and requirements of the students with disabilities in partner Universities as well as problems and barriers faced by them. These findings will help the project in its activities leading to creating a conducive environment for them at the Universities.

The second task of the project, the establishment of a model centre at the University of Peradeniya is progressing but at a slower rate due to the pandemic. Designing, refurbishment and networking of the building of the model support centre are at near completion with co-funding from the UoP. With the support of Masaryk University, the required technology for the centre including hardware and software has been identified and the procurement of them is progressing.

Due to the pandemic related restrictions, some of the planned activities including training programmes that involve travelling had to be adjusted and aligned with a more realistic schedule with no major deviations in tasks or deliverables. Considering the prevailing pandemic situation, the funding agency has extended the period of the project by one year. So the project team is hopeful that the project will be able to complete all the activities planned and achieve its goal.

Despite the pandemic situation that made some of the project activities impossible, the IncEdu team is enthusiastic about the project activities and certain that the project will be successful in achieving its goals. And we look forward to the second half of the project where we can achieve more.

# Need Assessment Survey Report



An online survey was conducted among partner universities with the aim of actively supporting the concept of inclusion by creating a classroom environment for Sri Lankan University Students with Disabilities (SWDs).

The project team administered a structured questionnaire to identify the existing facilities for the SWDs, their needs, awareness among peers, university academic and non-academic staff, peers and parents of the SWDs of the needs of SWDs.

## Conclusions of the Survey

The majority of the SWDs are admitted to the disciplines of social sciences and humanities than the other disciplines. Therefore, there is a need to consider if there is the potential for other disciplines to admit SWDs as well.

- The academics in the sample came from 14 faculties, of which Veterinary Faculty did not have SWDs for teaching.
- SWDs are being taught by a highly qualified group of academics.
- Among the academics, less than half had taught SWDs in their classes at some point in time.
- The study sample did not include any SWD from other faculties, however, the academic staff information reveals that other faculties also accommodate SWDs.
- Sampled peers came from different faculties of the Universities. Except for SLTC majority of the peer students came from Arts faculties.
- The majority of the Peers did not know the existence of SWDs in classes.
- There was a higher willingness to extend their support to mobilize SWDs physically in the Universities.
- The majority of SWDs' category of disability was from blind and visually impaired and followed by physically disabled, hearing impaired/hard of hearing and mentally disabled. The mentally disabled was the rarest among them.
- A substantial proportion of the parents of SWDs were from low-income families and unemployed families.

## Recommendations concluded based on the Results of the Survey

- Importance of having awareness of the existence and needs of SWDs among all stakeholders.
- Increase the available facilities for SWDs.
- Conduct continuous professional training programmes on special education for staff and peers.
- Increase positive attitudes among others towards SWDs.
- SWDs should also be given special accommodation for their studies and assessment mechanisms as agreed by academics and pointed out by peers and parents as well.
- Academics and the administrative staff need guidance and training to adapt the syllabus and teaching material to accommodate SWDs' needs when curricula are designed, teaching materials prepared and training on special mechanisms and technology, and special tools. That could be adopted for teaching.
- Improving adequate physical resources such as facilities to improve the mobility of the physically disabled students, and special facilities for blind/visually impaired students and also for deaf/hard of hearing students available in all four universities.
- This should be developed while keeping abreast with modern technology.
- These improvements should include physical accessibility to all buildings, lecture halls, library, washrooms, and hostels.
- Materials such as textbooks, workbooks, assignments, examination materials, supplementary readings, online courses, online databases, audiovisual resources and alternate formats (such as E-text, braille, large print, pdf image, pdf text, audio – analogue, audio – digital, mp3, daisy books, tactile graphics, and descriptive video) should also be provided based on SWDs requirements to enhance their academic programmes.
- Research into the reasons for dissatisfaction prevailed among SWDs about their university experience.
- Provision of special rooms for SWD catering to their needs, improve English competency, provide modern equipment/technologies and proper guidance when admitted to Universities. There is a need to have trained academic staff and technical staff with special technical competencies to teach SWDs.

For the Complete Survey Report [CLICK HERE](#)

## Establishment of the Model Resource Centre for SWDs at University of Peradeniya



As a result of the IncEdu project, a Model Resource Centre is planned to be established at the University of Peradeniya. This unit would serve as a model for the Sri Lankan partner universities.

Designing, refurbishment and networking of the building of the model support centre are currently in progress. This unit is co-funded by the UoP and the IncEdu project. The required technology for the centre including hardware and software has been identified and the procurement of them is progressing.

## Erasmus Day at the Sri Lanka Technological Campus

Sri Lanka Technological Campus (SLTC) conducted the EU Erasmus Day on 15th October 2020 in order to educate the university community on the EU – Erasmus projects including IncEdu. At the event, a presentation on the IncEdu project was conducted by Dr. Nanda Gunawardhana.

Mr. Frank Hess, Head of Operation, Delegation of the European Union to Sri Lanka and the Maldives participated as the Chief Guest of the event.



# Webinar on Inclusive Assessment : Reflections on Designing Equitable Evaluation in a Higher Education Classroom

Sri Lanka Technological Campus (SLTC) along with the University of Peradeniya, University of Ruhuna and Eastern University of Sri Lanka; partners of the Erasmus + funded project 'Developing Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities in Sri Lankan Universities / IncEdu' hosted a special virtual session on Inclusive Assessment: Reflections on Designing Equitable Evaluation in the Higher Education Classroom on the 08th of July 2021 from 05.00 pm (Asia/Colombo) via zoom.

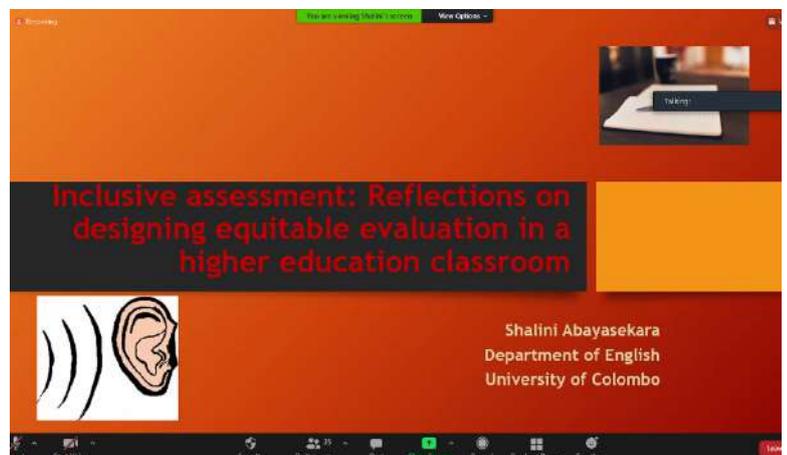
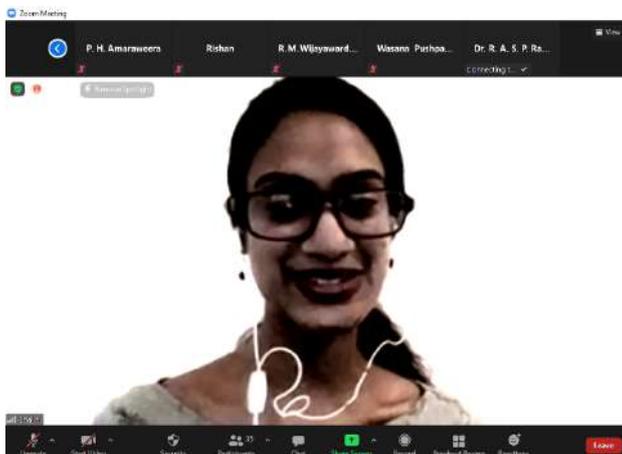
The session was conducted by Ms. Shalini Abayasekara; a Lecturer at the Department of English, University of Colombo. Her research is in disability studies, composition, and general pedagogy, and she is particularly interested in studying the intersections between language and mental (ill) health. She is currently the Department's Disability Officer. Ms. Shalini's presentation on the topic was thought-provoking and informative.



**Speaker: Shalini Abayasekara**

It was followed by a Q & A session that elaborated challenges faced by beneficiaries and stakeholders in Designing Equitable Evaluation in the Higher Education Classroom in Sri Lanka.

The session was attended by IncEdu Sri Lankan project partners, staff and students of Sri Lankan universities and especially a few undergraduates with disabilities from the University of Peradeniya.



## News & Events

### Project Committee Meetings

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, all the Project meetings were held virtually. Partners joined the virtual meetings from all over the world.

A workshop on Assistive Technology was conducted by Masaryk University on July 29, 2020.

### Workshop on Assistive Technology at Masaryk University

### Discussion on Assistive Technology & Information at University of Peradeniya

Discussions on assistive technology and information were held on During 4, 10 and 17 August 2020 at the University of Peradeniya.

A demonstration of equipment available at the Special Needs Resource Centre (SNRU) was conducted by Dr. Leena Seneheweera and the staff for the members of the IncEdu Project of the University of Peradeniya. Students of the Department of Fine Arts following Arts & Disability courses also took part in this event.

### Demonstration of Equipment Available at Special Needs Resource Centre at University of Peradeniya

### Visit to a Deaf and Blind School, Kandy Sri Lanka

Prof. Anoma Abhayarathne, Dr. Leena Seneheweera and Ms. Niroshi Senevirathne paid a visit to K/Senkadagala School of the Deaf & Blind, Dodamwala, Kandy.

## News & Events

Updates on the project presented at Social Sciences and Communication Department meeting, Transilvania University of Brasov. 27 members (teaching staff) of Social Science and Communication Department took part in the session.

**Project Presentation for the Academic Staff at Transilvania University of Brasov**

**Project presentation for Study Counsellors & Career Office at Uppsala University**

The IncEdu Project team of Uppsala University conducted a Project briefing presentation for the Study Counsellors and Career Office, Uppsala University, on the 24th of March 2020.

A project presentation was conducted for the Unit for Global Partnerships at Uppsala University was conducted on the 14th of February 2021.

**Project presentation for the Unit for Global Partnerships at Uppsala University**

**Uppsala University featured the IncEdu Project on their official website**

Uppsala University featured the IncEdu Project on their official website under the International Collaboration Projects in both English and Swedish languages. Read more about IncEdu on [Uppsala University official website](#).

A project presentation was conducted for the students of Communication and Public Relations, B.A. program of study, 2nd year at the Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania.

**Project presentation for students at Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania**



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## PARTNERS



Universitatea  
Transilvania  
din Braşov



UPPSALA  
UNIVERSITET



University of Zagreb

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