



Special consultative status to the ECOSOC since August 2020

Recommendations for Universal Periodic Review 4th cycle - Israel

Music and Inclusion

Submitted by:

IMAGINE - empowerment through music

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Introduction:

1. Founded in 2014, IMAGINE creates and develops ways to empower each and every person through music, regardless of their challenges, using positive and inspiring experiences.

IMAGINE promotes innovation, diversity and inclusion through music and believes that music changes lives for the better in many aspects (social, emotional, physiological and cognitive).

IMAGINE has over 7,000 participants in its programs in 27 cities across Israel, in schools, hospitals and afternoon programs. It works in close collaboration with the Ministries of Education and Welfare and other NGOs focused on people with disabilities to promote issues of inclusion.

IMAGINE is a leading body of knowledge in Israel and worldwide, it offers lectures and workshops about its unique pedagogies and experience to professionals, it won 2 international educational awards on its pedagogy of Inclusive Bands and received a Special consultative status to the ECOSOC since August 2020 on music and special needs.

2. This report sheds light on music extracurricular activities in Israel and how they do not reflect the support of Israel on 136.87, 136.88 recommendation from 2nd cycle (A/HRC/25/15: 136.87. Take further steps in the area of promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, to improve accessibility to services, including for persons with disabilities living in disadvantaged areas (Canada); 136.88. Continue progress on various relevant programs, including broad based accessibility projects for persons with disabilities in the country (Indonesia)).
3. Israel has established The Commission for Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2000 which dealt with many issues over the past two decades. Nevertheless, when looking into the music conservatories, which are public places funded by public money, we find they completely disregard the promise to enhance equality, fight discrimination and eliminate accessibility barriers.

1) Extracurricular activities and inclusion :

4. In 2018 Keshet (an NGO that focuses on families of children with disabilities) held a conference¹ focused on the significance of extracurricular activities to children with disabilities. They pointed out that participating in extracurricular activities plays a

¹ Tamar Geva, Leisure time is not a child's play, Keshet 4th conference for special parents communities driving change, January 2018 available at: [link to article](#)

meaningful part in healthy human development and contributes to both personal and social development. Therefore it should be a basic right of every person and lack of such opportunities has a negative effect both on the child (psychosocial development, health hazards and greater exposure to at-risk behavior), their families (feelings of alienation and rejection from society and lack of activities in leisure time) and the society (bias and prejudice towards people with disabilities).

5. In 2019 The community centers organization conducted research² on the attitudes of parents towards diversity and inclusion. The results were so shocking that they reached the evening news. 9 out of 10 parents said they would rather their children not participate in an activity with children with disabilities. This astounding data goes to show the depth of bias and prejudice held by the Israeli society.

6. In 2019 IMAGINE decided to research the impact its musical activities have on its participants. 174 projects were included, from all across the nation, with a wide variety of ages and disabilities for a period of 3 years. Using a 360 questionnaire (child, parent, caregiver, teacher) the research focused on 5 aspects: musical knowledge, personal and social skills, physiological ability and motivation and secondary effect on the participant's life (frustration and violent behavior, and sensory and emotional regulation).
The research proved the significant effect musical activities had on participants: putting aside the improvement in musical knowledge (87%), there were meaningful improvements both in personal and social skills (72-75%) and physiological ability and motivation (72%). The most remarkable result though, was the secondary effect with 67% of participants performing better in school and family settings, expressing less frustration and violence and becoming more adaptive and flexible. IMAGINE strongly believes in the power of music on the human mind and this research only strengthened its belief.

7. All of the above-mentioned organizations and many more NGOs focusing on people with disabilities, believe that the most effective solution for changing these attitudes and creating a more equal and tolerant society, is creating more inclusive extracurricular activities and settings .

2) Accessibility and inclusion : The case of community centers organization

² Zeta-Tools, 2019 from article on Ynet : [link to article](#)

8. In 2011 Israeli parliament passed a legislation ordering the physical accessibility for public buildings³. This process is funded by both government and municipalities.

Regardless,

after over a decade, more than 50% of public buildings remained inaccessible⁴.

When promoting accessibility and inclusion it is not enough to focus on the building but

rather how to make the activities/services it offers accessible to all as well.

9. A good example of focusing on accessibility and inclusion is the community centers organization which made its centers not only accessible physically but also in the services and activities it provides. Operating Inclusive groups of extracurricular activities and unique groups for youth and adults with disabilities.

3) Music extracurricular activities :

10. Research from recent years showed the immense impact music has on the human mind⁵. It strengthens academic, personal and social skills along with self worth and wellbeing. IMAGINE has experienced its impact on over 7,000 participants in its projects of all ages, disabilities and levels of functioning. Music is a part of any special education school setting - but what about extracurricular activities?

11. When we take a close look at the music extracurricular settings we find conservatories and music schools that are totally exclusive and segregative. The 'approved' conservatories are publicly funded by government and municipalities but inclusion isn't part of the criteria for their approval for public funding. Having spoken to the head of conservatories in the Ministry of education revealed some disturbing facts:

- a. From almost 70 approved conservatories - less than 15% made their building physically accessible.
- b. Being inclusive to people with disabilities is not part of the criteria or agenda for approving a conservatory.

³ Ministry of legal, 2011 available at: [link to legislation](#)

⁴ Ha'aretz, 2021 (August 12 & December 4), Social & Educational section, available at : [link to article](#). [link to article](#)

⁵ Just a few examples: Andrew E. Budson, MD, Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School, October 7 2020, available at : [link to article](#)

The University of Arizona Global Campus, December 8 2021, available at: [link to article](#)

- c. Although people with disabilities are 17% of the population⁶, from about 26,000 students a year learning in conservatories across Israel less than 1% are students with disabilities (often within an outside initiative working in the conservatory).
- d. Moreover, when we look at the academic training for music teachers, there is not a single course on disabilities and inclusion despite the fact that the Ministry of education's agenda is to promote inclusion.

4) Echo - music for all :

12. The harsh reality described above, led to the creation of unique local initiatives of music extracurricular activities, the largest of which is IMAGINE's Echo project, creating inclusive bands for children and youth with and without disabilities. Echo was created to change this harsh reality.
Echo operates in 17 municipalities and is partially funded by government and municipalities. Nevertheless, it operates within schools and community centers and not in a proper musical setting. Furthermore, students of this project are not able to further develop musically, like having private lessons on an instrument in conservatories.
13. Echo's unique pedagogy of music for all was developed as part of the innovation accelerator of the Ministry of Education and has won 2 international education awards. It offers musical knowledge of both technological and classical musical instruments, and allows teachers to focus on the strengths and abilities of each student, while providing them with empowering experiences and nurturing personal and social skills. It also incorporates psychological and educational approaches that promote inclusion and diversity and uses innovative teaching methods gathered from leading projects of special music education around the world.
14. IMAGINE can offer a very simple and achievable solution to the problem portrayed in this submission. It could change the discriminatory situation that exists today and enhance equality, fight prejudice and eliminate accessibility barriers following the support of Israel on 136.87, 136.88 recommendations from 2nd cycle (A/HRC/25/15: 136.87. Take further steps in the area of promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, to improve accessibility to services, including for persons with disabilities living in disadvantaged areas (Canada); 136.88. Continue progress on various relevant programs, including broad based accessibility projects for persons with disabilities in the country (Indonesia)). The agenda of this

⁶ Brookdale institute, 2021 available at: [link to article](#)

extracurricular inclusion also correlates with UN SDG 2030 on education: 'To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

15. Using Echo's inclusive pedagogy and the unique knowledge and experience of IMAGINE, that granted it the special consultative status with the UN, IMAGINE created a unique one-year mentoring program that will enable all conservatories and music schools in Israel to become inclusive. We believe that this process could be achieved by the next UPR.
16. The one-year mentoring program includes training and mentoring of teachers working in conservatories and music schools on how to work with people with disabilities and how to include and integrate them into ensembles and bands. IMAGINE has created a dedicated website for this program offering inclusive musical practices and methodologies. We are starting a pilot program in collaboration with the Be'er Sheva conservatory and municipality and hope to share its results by July 2023.

4) Recommendation :

17. Promote legislation on content accessibility as well as physical accessibility, making services and activities accessible to people with disabilities.
18. Promote inclusive music settings through legislation and funding criteria and promote inclusive music teachers through mentoring programs and academic courses.
19. Ensure the rights of people with disabilities for extracurricular and leisure-time activities thus enhancing equality, fighting prejudice and eliminating accessibility barriers.
20. Promote inclusion in all facets of life as a social priority, offering each and every person equal opportunities to be part of the society and fulfill their potential.