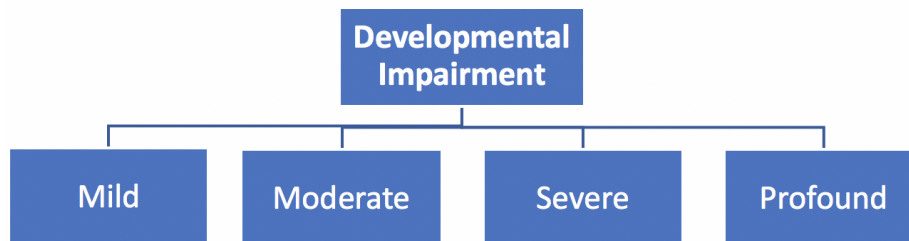


## 4f. Developmental or intellectual impairment

Developmental or intellectual impairment are collective terms for a number of conditions that adversely affect children's ability to learn and to cope within society. These conditions are either present at birth or acquired early on in their development and can be either genetic or be caused by problems during pregnancy or at birth, problems with nourishment or the result of children's responses to physical and emotional abuse.

The degree of impairment can range from mild to profound. These terms encompass a very diverse group, spanning those who might be later than their peers in beginning reading or understanding some concepts, to those who appear to be at an early stage of intellectual, communication, social and emotional development and who might need support for all activities. This latter group are likely to have at least one impairment additional to their learning disability and historically have been the group of disabled young people most likely to have not attended school or received education.

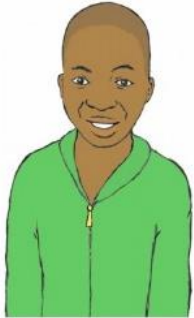


**Mild:** they will listen and talk but may find some concepts difficult to understand and have some limitations with expressive language. They will usually cope quite well socially.

**Moderate:** they will listen and talk, and usually be able to participate in classroom activities. However, they are likely to need additional help in developing independent living and social skills.

**Severe:** they will understand simple communication using signs and gestures but may have difficulty in understanding and, in particular, expressing themselves in spoken language. Children with severe developmental impairment usually experience great difficulties with day to day life but can nevertheless be helped to achieve some level of independence.

**Profound:** they have very limited ability to communicate, and often have limited ability to speak at all. Many of these children will need considerable care and attention at all times.



**Down Syndrome** is a genetic condition and is one of the most well-known forms of developmental impairment. It affects boys and girls of all races, religions, cultural, social and economic backgrounds. With support, children with Down Syndrome can make good progress with their learning. The following coping strategies are often very helpful for them:

- routine and order help them to understand and control their daily lives
- self-talk often helps children with Down Syndrome to control their behaviour, express their feelings and make sense of what is going on around them
- avoiding change and unfamiliar situations
- stubbornness and refusal to cooperate are often a sign that children with Down Syndrome do not fully understand what is expected of them.

## Identifying learners with developmental impairment

Sometimes a girl's developmental impairment will seem quite obvious. However, especially for children with mild or moderate developmental impairment, their difficulties might only become apparent following observation in the classroom.

### How can you identify learners with developmental impairment?

Look for girls who exhibit one or two of the following signs:

- difficulty understanding what you are saying, when the rest of the class seem to understand it well
- talking differently from the other learners, or not talking at all
- moving, speaking and learning more slowly than most of the rest of the class
- her speech is difficult to understand
- she does not play and interact well with other children of a similar age
- short attention span
- poor short and/or long-term memory
- hyperactive, aggressive or disruptive
- apathetic and indifferent
- has difficulty copying shapes, such as circles and squares.



## What can you do to support the learning of learners with developmental impairments?

### Physical

- For some girls with learning disabilities, attending the Hub could be their first extended experience of education. It is helpful to introduce them to the layout of the Hub and where they will sit or work with friends. They may find the layout and activities of the Hub confusing at first, so things such as a visual pictorial timetable with 'reminders' will help them to understand the structure of the day. Clear signposting of access to the toilet is also very helpful.
- Learners with severe learning disabilities may require short breaks from some activities, or to engage with learning activities that use particular practical 'concrete' materials. You may want to set up an area of the Hub where this can occur and be used by many throughout the day.
- When preparing your learning objectives, consider if you can create or use real-life objects, songs and movement to enhance the multisensory nature of your activities. Use real objects that the girl can touch, rather than just working with pen and paper.

### Social

- Praise and encouragement are particularly important in maintaining motivation and rewarding progress. Use praise and encouragement when the girl masters new skills and/or is trying very hard.
- Use simple words and sentences when giving instructions. Check that the girl has understood, and that they are able to signal when they have not understood you. Repeat words and clarify your meanings. Check (sensitively) that you have been understood.
- Other learners can sometimes help with tasks; this will also help the girl develop her social skills. Group work where other children can read any directions, or adult help to prompt unknown words is often helpful.
- Encourage the rest of the class to include the girl in their play and social activities.
- Ignore any undesirable behaviour as much as possible and give praise and attention when the girl is behaving well.

### Activities

- Do one activity at a time with the girl.
- Break each task down into small steps, starting with something she can already do. Go back one step if they encounter problems.

- Allow her to practise tasks several times so that they can master it and grow in confidence.
- The learner can be helped by worksheets written (or with symbols) to match their skills, which they can refer to, to keep them on track.
- An adult might take the child's dictation for feedback from group activities.
- A most helpful strategy for teaching children with learning disabilities is that of *differentiation*. Thinking about how you might differentiate your activities for a particular learner is likely to be useful for other learners in the Hub.

## Reference:

Adapted from: UNESCO (2015), *Teaching Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings*, Bangkok: UNESCO

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001829/182975e.pdf>

TESSA Project

UNICEF, 2001

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<http://www.open.ac.uk/about/international-development/projects-and-programmes/gate-girls-access-education>

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