



40th Session of the HRC, Geneva

4 March 2018

Annual Full-Day Meeting:

Rights of the Child

Speaker: Julianna Alexandra Hardesty Lewis

Oral Statement submitted by
**VIDES International – International Volunteerism Organization for Women,
Education, and Development**

Co-sponsored by
IIMA – Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice

Thank you, Mr. President.

VIDES International and IIMA highlight the crucial theme of this Annual Full-Day Meeting and welcome the Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on empowering children with disabilities through inclusive education.

As stressed by the remarkable speakers, children with disabilities are often excluded from the educational system. Globally, they are discriminated against and segregated, in some cases into special schools or classrooms, away from their peers.

Therefore, VIDES and IIMA call on States to:

- Prioritize legislation and provide funding for inclusive education to guarantee the participation of children with disabilities in mainstream schools from early childhood.
- Adopt and effectively implement policies and awareness-raising programs that truly empower children with disabilities through accessible infrastructures, providing them the opportunity to learn, play, and grow with their peers in a safe, enabling environment.
- Mandate and provide initial and continual teacher training programs in order to properly equip and prepare educators in inclusive classrooms, ensuring the empowerment of children with disabilities enabling them to find their voice and become active participants in decision-making processes at the local and national level.

Thank you.