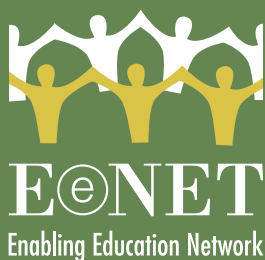


# Enabling Education Review

Issue 2 - December 2013

Special Edition: Inclusive Education and Disability



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This edition of 'Enabling Education Review' has been published jointly with the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) to coincide with the 2014 Global Campaign for Education: 'Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities'

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## Editorial

**Inclusive education is not just about disability and placing children with disabilities in regular schools/classes. Inclusive education is a process of school and system-wide improvements (to policies, practices, attitudes, environments and resourcing) that enable all children to participate in a quality education in their local school.**

If you are a regular reader of 'Enabling Education Review' and EENET's website, you will already be familiar with these ideas. Nevertheless, while inclusive education is not solely concerned with disability, the inclusion of children with disabilities remains a vitally important aspect of inclusive education.

For many years there have been concerns that the global Education for All movement, and approaches like child-friendly schools, have not always adequately addressed the specific access and participation needs of learners with disabilities. Broad approaches to inclusive education have not always resulted in significant improvements for children with disabilities – even though they bring about noticeable results in terms of improving general education quality, teaching practices,

attitudes, etc. Some barriers, unique to children with disabilities, cannot always be resolved through general improvements alone.<sup>1</sup> Yet sometimes inclusive education programmes are reluctant to engage in overtly disability-specific interventions.

This is a dilemma for education programme implementers and policy-makers. If they take too broad an approach, they risk glossing over the details of individual disabled learners' needs. If they take a disability-specific approach, they risk being criticised for not 'seeing the bigger picture' of inclusion and whole-school change.

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed critical look at these issues, see: Rieser, R (2013) 'Teacher Education for Children with Disabilities. Literature Review'. Prepared for UNICEF, New York. <http://bit.ly/18AGOAi>

However, programmes and policies don't have to take an either/or approach. It is perfectly possible (indeed desirable) for an inclusive education programme or policy to take a 'twin-track' approach, through which it works on broad system and school-wide improvements at the same time as addressing the specific needs of individual learners, particularly those with disabilities. Addressing the specific needs of children with disabilities is also in line with child-centred pedagogy, which is a key approach to improving the overall quality of education.

The twin-track idea is certainly not new, but it sometimes gets forgotten. We therefore felt it was a good time to publish an edition of the newsletter that stimulates thinking about how disability needs and rights can be addressed within inclusive education, using the twin-track approach.

The timing couldn't be better, as the Global Campaign for Education's 2014 theme will be disability and inclusive education. The Campaign reaches a huge global audience of policy-makers and practitioners, and takes a rights-based approach to education. It will therefore be calling for inclusive education as a key ingredient for upholding the educational rights of all children, including those with disabilities. The Campaign also acknowledges the importance of a twin-track approach; making recommendations for national governments and the international community to take actions that support systemic changes and interventions that offer individualised support to marginalised, disabled learners.

The articles in this newsletter offer a variety of perspectives on, and examples of, the inclusion of children with disabilities. As editors, we are not going to present our own judgements about whether each article describes a twin-track approach to inclusive education, instead we invite you to reflect on the articles, and perhaps comment and share your own experiences via our Facebook page.<sup>2</sup> If you would like to know more about the twin-track approach to inclusive education, see Rieser (2013) – details in footnote 1. The article from Cambodia also provides a simple description of the twin-track approach.

<sup>2</sup> EENET's Facebook page: <http://on.fb.me/1glbwtW>

Understanding inclusive education from a twin-track perspective can be confusing for policy-makers and practitioners. The articles from Cameroon, India and Malaysia offer personal reflections on practitioners' journeys towards understanding and implementing inclusive education. The article from India in particular reflects on the evolution of thinking from a disability-focused special needs approach to an inclusive education perspective.

Teachers and teacher education was the theme of the 2013 Global Campaign for Education. The centre pages of this edition (and the pull-out poster) present five key strategies for ensuring that teachers are better able to deliver quality education and support learners with disabilities. The Bulgaria article also shares a process of rethinking how teachers are educated about inclusion and disability.

Within a twin-track approach to inclusive education, the provision of targeted support for children with disabilities is often facilitated through itinerant teachers – like those described in the articles from Cambodia and Togo – who work directly with specific children and advise regular teachers. Similarly, resource centres and multi-disciplinary teams may support whole-school changes and address individual children's learning and participation needs, as outlined in the China and Moldova articles.

The important contribution that people with disabilities can make in inclusive education is explained in two articles. In Iraq, the perspectives of people with disabilities have been included in teacher education, and in Papua New Guinea Deaf people have been trained as teaching assistants, supporting the inclusion of Deaf students.

Surprisingly absent from this year's collection of articles are children's voices. We therefore encourage our readers to reflect on the importance of listening to children's perspectives on inclusive education, and to share with us (and the global network) your experiences of facilitating children to speak out about inclusion/exclusion, discrimination and diversity, disability rights, etc.



Leading up to the 2014 Global Campaign For Education (the Global Action Week is in May), we ask you to engage with the national GCE Coalition in your country. Use the opportunity provided by this global campaign to increase or improve advocacy and lobbying efforts by showcasing your initiatives to promote inclusive education. Also, encourage and support mainstream education actors to actively promote inclusive education and to think about disability issues. Let's create a vibrant campaign!

Useful information:

- Global Campaign for Education website: [www.campaignforeducation.org](http://www.campaignforeducation.org)
- Details of GCE national coalitions: [www.campaignforeducation.org/en/members](http://www.campaignforeducation.org/en/members)
- EENET's website: [www.eenet.org.uk](http://www.eenet.org.uk)
- IDDC's website: [www.iddcconsortium.net](http://www.iddcconsortium.net)

This edition of the newsletter is jointly published by EENET and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC), a network of international NGOs working on disability and inclusion within development. IDDC's Inclusive Education Task Group engages in various activities to advocate for inclusive education and provide guidance for practitioners and policy-makers, and is actively involved in both informing and promoting the Global Campaign for Education.

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We are very grateful to the following organisations, many of whom are IDDC members, for funding this publication:



# From sceptic to advocate: a personal reflection on the benefits of inclusive education training, Cameroon

Louis Mbibeh

Louis is a French and English language secondary-level teacher in the North West Region of Cameroon who has been teaching for over six years. Here he shares his experiences of learning about and using inclusive education techniques. He highlights the challenges and the way forward, to raise awareness and encourage others who are still sceptical of the implementation of inclusive education.

## First contact

An inclusive education workshop was organised by the SEEPD Program (Socio Economic Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities) of the CBCHB (Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Board) in 2011. I unwillingly attended as I didn't understand inclusive education. I had seen people with disabilities, but my attitude was usually that of indifference and pity; I would just shy away from them.

However, presentations by Mrs. Bridget Fobuzie and Mr. Ezekiel Benuh, on what inclusive education is and on disability/equality respectively, revamped my thoughts and I became determined to discover more. I participated in two intensive courses organised by the SEEPD Program. I found these workshops enriching and became an ambassador for inclusive education in a context where few people understand the concept.

## My response

I realised how much I have missed over the years and the number of students who have left my classes having learned little or nothing. This posed a challenge and I began to research the practice of inclusive education internationally and considered possible adaptations for the Cameroonian classroom.

Over the past two years my classroom practice has greatly improved. I now know that inclusive education is not only for persons with disabilities but it helps to make knowledge and learning accessible to all. My determination is therefore to forge ahead, not only from a general perspective but to focus on specific impairments and related classroom accommodations.

## Challenges and the way forward

Implementing inclusive education in a context where up to 75% of the staff is ignorant of its practice has not been a bed of roses.

Some of the challenges I have faced include:

- a. Attitudes: colleagues who have not received training in inclusive education tend to be unsure about it.
- b. Policy: since Cameroon has not yet adopted inclusive education as a policy it is often challenging to convince administrators of the value of inclusion-related matters.
- c. Infrastructure: basic necessities are lacking for all learners; e.g. ramps, play grounds, teaching / learning materials, etc.
- d. The curriculum: it is examination-oriented, and successful teaching is evaluated on the bases of completing the full programme.

We may not need a magic wand to overcome these challenges. Attitudes and policy cannot change overnight. So we try on a daily bases to explain to and show colleagues the benefits of inclusive education for all learners. If teachers start teaching inclusively, policy will surely follow and therefore improvements in infrastructure and teacher training methods.

The annual SEEPD Program training courses received by teachers are a laudable initiative in raising awareness. We encourage the programme and its partners (CBM, USAID, etc) to continue. In my opinion the SEEPD Program is one of the best ways of implementing inclusive education in Cameroon.

I believe the training I received is already yielding fruit. We do not regard challenges as a stumbling block but as opportunities to make progress. Not only have many of my colleagues been convinced of the value of inclusive education, but many more are anxious to be trained. I believe this is testimony that training more teachers is the answer.

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# Revisiting core assumptions about inclusive education in India

Kanwal Singh and Ruchi Singh

**EENET often indicates that everyone understands and interprets inclusive education in different ways. An important step in developing inclusive schools and education systems is therefore for practitioners and policy-makers to reflect critically on their own beliefs and assumptions. In this article, Kanwal and Ruchi reflect on the tensions between special and inclusive education in India, and on changes made to their own assumptions about inclusive education; a process which has led to their more successful implementation of inclusive education.**

A decade ago, inclusive education in India was a favourite topic of discussion among special educators. It began as an approach targeted specifically at children with disabilities. The purpose was to move children from segregated schools to regular ones, while providing adequate support and resources in the latter. It seemed an exciting venture – we learned a new set of vocabulary and felt good about making a difference!

There was no doubt in our minds about the benefit of inclusive education. However, as we prepared to move from the 'why' of inclusion to the 'how', we had nagging doubts. A number of questions tormented us: Were regular schools ready? They were not accessible; possessed no aids and assistive devices. Were teachers prepared? How would they manage 'our' children in a class of 50 students? Would children be able to cope with the rigid examination system? Who would be responsible for therapy, individual sessions and daily needs? Wouldn't other students make fun of 'our' children?

Animated debates within the special education community took place. Many special educators were sceptical and warned of repercussions. Arduous sessions were organised to convince them that it was going to be an ongoing process with long-term benefits, and that they needed to be more 'flexible' and 'change' with the times.

Ten years down the road we seem to be stuck in a time capsule; India still construes inclusive education as restricted to children with disabilities. There is little agreement among 'disability specialists' on strategies and practices to translate inclusive theory into reality. There is a disconnect between theory (which is based on a social and rights model) and current practice (which is dictated by the medical model of diagnosis, assessment and programming). Schools that pride themselves as pioneers in inclusive education have in reality set up special schools (called resource centres) within regular schools. Some in the special education community feel disoriented because of ambiguous roles and responsibilities. Perplexed regular school teachers and apprehensive parents add to the commotion.

As members of the special education community, what bothered us predominantly was that, although well-intentioned, the policies and practices advocated by the special education community in the last few years had done little to facilitate inclusive education. On the contrary, they had been instrumental in introducing and reinforcing exclusionary policies and practices within regular schools.

Four years ago an exciting task of setting up an inclusive primary school for an Indian not-for-profit organisation came along. This was a perfect opportunity to design and establish a school system that followed 'true' inclusion through an honest unison of theory and practice. We're not going to tell the story of that school here, but instead, will share the thought processes that went into developing the school.

We began by studying existing models of inclusive schools and identified the gaps between theory and practice. Soon we realised that we were challenging the commonly held beliefs and assumptions underlying the foundation of inclusive education in India. This exercise resulted in a new set of assumptions that subsequently defined our framework for inclusion, as summarised below:

Commonly held assumptions	Revised assumptions
Inclusion is only about children with disabilities	Inclusion is not restricted to children with disabilities. It encompasses all children; addressing exclusion in all forms to enable meaningful and quality education for all
All children with disabilities need special education	All children with disabilities do not need special education. Being disabled does not automatically imply a need for special education.
Only children with disabilities are 'special'. Children without disabilities do not require special attention or support	All children are 'special'. Any student could face barriers in education and require support/special attention at a given time; temporary or permanent.
Disability-specific NGOs have the expertise to lead inclusive policies and practice	Other stakeholders also have equally valuable experience and expertise. Disability-specific NGOs are important members of the team that should formulate inclusive policies and practice.
Regular schools in their existing condition are ideal learning grounds	Regular schools require major restructuring and reorganising to transform into ideal learning grounds.
Special educators are inclusion experts who can guide regular school teachers	There are no outright experts in inclusive education. It requires the skills of both special and regular teachers – a 'middle path' that imbibes the strengths of both special and general education systems along with new ideas to improve quality education for all.
The primary responsibility of implementing inclusive education lies with the regular school teachers	Teachers can implement inclusive practices only if all stakeholders fulfil their share of responsibilities.
Diagnosis and labelling students as having 'special educational needs' (SEN) facilitates their inclusion in school	Diagnosis, labelling and following individual programme plans not only facilitates exclusion but limits curricular expectations.
India could duplicate the inclusive education framework designed by countries of the North	The inclusive education framework needs to be specifically designed for the Indian context.
Inclusion has been unsuccessful in some countries of the North and so the same will happen in India	India has examples of successful indigenous and effective inclusive practices that countries of the North can learn from. Failure in other countries does not mean inclusion will not work in India.
Inclusive education policies and laws will inherently translate into changes within the education system	The minimal political, economic and social will to translate inclusive education into reality should not dampen our belief or efforts.

**Conclusion:** The process of redefining inclusive education and developing a more applicable approach to the Indian context has taken time. In doing so, however, we have challenged commonly held beliefs and developed a new set of core assumptions. Although not addressed here, this renewed appreciation of an Indian framework for inclusive education has resulted in a valuable repertoire of innovative practices, learning and recommendations that are being shared with the local education community. Our success has reaffirmed our commitment to continue working towards inclusive education through innovatively designed models, which we would be happy to share if you contact us directly. The revised core assumptions may be a little uncomfortable for the special education community, as the implementation of the resulting framework requires radical changes in thinking as well as action. It asks the community to review, even give up, many of their core practices. However, the revised roles and new direction, for many of us working in our chosen field of special education, are exciting and effective in improving quality education for all students.

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# Rethinking training for mainstream teachers, Bulgaria

Margarita Asparuhova

## Our overall approach

In 2007 we began to design and organise trainings for mainstream teachers on how to support and teach children with special educational needs in a mainstream setting. At that time most Bulgarian teachers were still having doubts about the benefits of inclusive education and were unsure about having a child with disabilities in their classroom.

In our work at Centre for Inclusive Education (CIE) we have always tried to apply innovative methods. Our trainings seek to present new knowledge and new approaches to inclusion that correspond to the needs of the local school reality. We therefore aim to:

- make teachers' **attitudes towards inclusive education more positive**;
- support mainstream teachers on how to provide an **inclusive environment** for their students;
- help mainstream teachers establish and develop a **team-work approach** in their collaboration with parents and with specialists who support students within the school;
- encourage teachers to identify, use and praise their **students' strengths**;
- share with teachers examples of **good practice** from the practical experience of our trainers;
- involve teachers in case study discussions and group workshops, thus facilitating them to **question their own practices** and at the same time encouraging them to trust their own professional experience and teaching approaches;
- raise awareness and focus attention on so-called **invisible disabilities**, such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, ADHD and autism.

Although CIE provides thematic trainings for mainstream teachers on how to support children with special educational needs in mainstream settings, our organisation

is not a typical training organisation. Our team is presently involved in a number of inclusion-related projects, which gives us the opportunity to take a more critical approach to the way we provide trainings for mainstream teachers and other stakeholders (specialists, support teachers, parents). This connection with the reality of project work enables us to make informed alternations to our training, so that we meet the target groups' needs and ultimately reach our goal of developing more welcoming schools, more confident teachers, more content parents and, of course, more happy children.

## Our projects

Our project, 'One School for All',<sup>1</sup> aims to adapt and apply widely in Bulgaria the third edition of the *Index for Inclusion*.<sup>2</sup> The project has proved that teachers' attitudes can be altered in deeper and broader dimensions through an attentive and respectful facilitation of **self-reflection on values, own practices and goals**. Thus, teachers have been able to assess critically their own concepts and actions and change them in accordance with the needs of other stakeholders (children, parents, and peers).

Another CIE project, 'School is My Right Too',<sup>3</sup> involves stakeholders from two schools and two kindergartens in one Bulgarian town. It seeks to collect in one place the perspectives of teachers, specialists, parents, children and local education authority representatives regarding the opportunities and challenges for developing inclusive education for children with special educational needs,

<sup>1</sup> 'One School for All' project is financed by the European Social Fund through Operational Program 'Human Resources Development'

<sup>2</sup> 'Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools', Booth, T., Ainscow, M., revised by Tony Booth, 2011, published by Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, UK

<sup>3</sup> 'School is My Right Too' project is (partially) financed by Open Society Foundations



aged 3 to 10 years. This project has allowed us to go beyond a 'preaching' approach to teacher training and use more **participatory approaches**, such as focus group discussions, child participation sessions that inform adults, and learning-through-experience workshops for capacity building.

CIE is also a partner within the EU project FIESTA<sup>4</sup> (Facilitating Inclusive Education and Supporting the Transition Agenda). This project has played a major role in the refinement of our teacher training agenda. As part of the project, literature and field research was conducted in 8 EU countries to inform a best practice report on inclusion, transition management and collaborative working.<sup>5</sup>

### Changing the focus of training

In refining our teacher training agenda we have been moving the focus from diagnosis-based thematic trainings, to seminars that intend to lead to a more profound approach to understanding children's current abilities and disabilities. Such an approach relies mainly on **direct and informed observation within the context of the child's cultural and social background**.

For example, four years ago the term 'dyslexia' was hardly known by practitioners. Now it tends to be overused for explaining all forms of reading difficulties, potentially shifting attention from other possible reasons why children are experiencing reading challenges (such as children experiencing emotional trauma or vision or hearing challenges; teachers' inability to teach using a style or pace that the student prefers, etc).

As such, a 'diagnosis approach' is not helping teachers to support learners effectively. Conditions such as dyslexia, ADHD and autism manifest themselves in spectrums, and it is impossible to train a teacher how to teach a student with such challenges through just a one-day training. A more effective approach

is to train teachers more broadly on how the various learning mechanisms operate (memory, attention, executive functions, etc); how to identify certain troubles with them; and what strategies can help reinforce these learning mechanisms. It is also important that teachers are trained to confidently discuss these matters with the children's support specialists, their parents, and, of course, with the children themselves.

Even though currently many teachers still expect to be given ready-made recipes for solving challenges, increasing numbers of them have benefited from the more holistic, self-reflection, and participatory approaches to training CIE has offered. Such shifts in the teacher training agenda are more time- and effort-consuming, but they are possible and worthwhile. Moreover, they are a logical and necessary step towards welcoming children with special educational needs into mainstream schools.

**Centre for Inclusive Education (CIE) is a Bulgarian non-governmental organisation, whose main aim is to promote inclusive education for every child. CIE continues the ten years of work initiated by Save the Children UK in Bulgaria and the region. CIE believes that every child should be given the chance to be accepted and valued, and is working for social inclusion and quality education for all children and to protect those in need. CIE's team works with parents, teachers, managers, professionals, local and state authorities, business organisations, national and international colleagues.**

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<sup>4</sup> FIESTA project is funded with support from the European Commission.

<sup>5</sup> The report will be available online by the end of 2013: [www.fiesta-project.eu](http://www.fiesta-project.eu)

## Building relationships for inclusion



A group of mainstream teachers, specialists and resource teachers is communicating to other participants an idea with gestures only. The aim of the activity is to emphasise empathy and attentiveness in education.



A mainstream and a resource teacher are drawing together with one pencil. The aim of the activity is to provoke self-reflection on team working, leading and following a lead.

In 2013, as part of the 'School is My Right Too' project, CIE facilitated a workshop focused on strengthening the relationships – mutual trust and partnership – between mainstream teachers, specialists and resource teachers who support children identified as having special educational needs in mainstream settings.

“The feedback received from the participants was mainly focused on the benefits from actually meeting the ‘others’ and thus having a better understanding of each other’s responsibilities, aspirations and challenges, which, in their own words, would improve their future collaboration,” Maria Tasheva, project coordinator.

We will provide a longer article about the impact of this workshop on participants’ perceptions of each other’s roles, and on the way they work together, for EENET’s 2014 edition of ‘Enabling Education Review’.

**The Index for Inclusion** is mentioned in several articles in this newsletter.

### What is it?

The full title of the publication is ‘Index for Inclusion: Developing learning and participation in schools’. It was originally authored by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow and piloted in 1997/8. It has been revised three times, most recently by Tony Booth in 2011, and is published by Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education. The Index for Inclusion is a resource that enables schools to carry out self-evaluation and improvement. It provides practical guidance so that the whole school community can work together to review all aspects of the school’s culture/attitudes, policies and practices. The Index helps schools to reflect on their values, carry out a self-evaluation from the perspective of diverse stakeholders; develop a practical school improvement plan; and work towards minimising barriers to learning and participation. The Index was developed for use in UK schools, but has been successfully adapted and translated for use in numerous countries.

### Where can you get copies?

Free downloads of the 2002 edition are available in English and about 20 other languages from EENET’s website: <http://bit.ly/1gFACtZ> The 2011 edition can be bought from CSIE: <http://bit.ly/19xn0MJ>

### Where can I find out more about using the Index?

EENET’s website and newsletters contain various articles about the Index and how it has been adapted in different countries. If you have been working on translating and adapting the Index, we’d love to receive an article explaining how you have used the Index and what results you have had.

# Researching my own solutions: interview with an inclusive teacher, Malaysia

**Rosnah Sahilan has been teaching for six years. She has a degree in Biotechnology and a teaching diploma. Here she explains her interest in supporting all the children in her class, and how she has experimented with her own solutions to inclusion challenges.**

## **What are your thoughts on inclusion generally?**

I think every child is gifted; it is for us as teachers to discover what they have. The negative things are in the school environment. As long as we try to understand children better, it won't be a big problem. We just need to do some research, so we can better understand their needs in school and what they need from us as teachers.

## **Why are you interested in research as part of your teaching job?**

In Malaysia some teachers still have negative attitudes about children with disabilities. We have not been exposed much to conditions like autism or ADD (attention deficit disorder) – staff know nothing about them. I think all teachers need to be trained to handle this type of situation. This is why I need to do research to help myself.

I am interested in including children with ADD and autism. This challenges my usual techniques. I think: "How can I include them with their friends in the teaching and learning? How can I support them in the class?" I have always tried to figure out a solution by doing a lot of activities, and finding out which ones are suitable and which are not. Through trial and error, I come up with a solution that is good for the children, that suits their behaviour and characteristics. Each child is different; no two children with a particular disability are the same.

## **What research activities have you done?**

I'm a science teacher; I love to do research and search for answers. I know that some disabilities have to do with the brain and

chemicals, etc, but it is not the fault of the pupil or their parents.

My mentor helped me. [Rosnah has been involved in a project to provide mentors to English language teachers to help improve the quality of English language teaching.] I told her about my interest in including certain learners and she gave me support. She helped me search for books and connected me to others with experience of autism who could give me practical advice, which I have used in class.

I have used the Internet to find ideas, but mostly I just try activities myself. I observe if they are working or not and then I make changes. It's like action research.

## **What have you learned through research?**

I have found that children with ADD and autism want to be like other pupils. The way they think and do things is slightly different from other pupils, but they still want and need the same things. I don't want to put them aside, I want to include them. It just takes time. Children who are new to the school environment can take extra time to get used to the routines.

I have also learned that it is easier to develop positive attitudes at a young age. Pupils in class more readily accept a child with autism, they respect him and don't bully him – although I may need to help by initially explaining about autism and by refusing to accept any bullying. It can take time, but the children will then carry their new positive attitudes with them in the future.

## **What has helped your research?**

In my case parents have supported their children and given lots of information and co-operation to the teachers. This is the advantage that I have, although I know some parents maybe don't talk to the teachers about their concerns.

**Rosnah can be contacted via EENET**

# Developing an itinerant teacher system that supports a twin-track approach to inclusive education, Cambodia

**Sandrine Bouille**

The use of itinerant teachers is a relatively new concept in Cambodia. Battambang province and the district of Thmor Kol are leading its implementation. The Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MOEYS) asked Handicap International to develop and support, technically and financially, the implementation of a pilot itinerant teacher system in 15 mainstream primary schools from the Otaki and Chrey school clusters. Here Sandrine explains the twin-track approach taken.

## Developing an itinerant teacher system

The system started in 2010 with the recruitment of four itinerant teachers who travel between mainstream schools and communities to offer advice, resources and support to children with disabilities, their teachers, and their parents. They support the concept of inclusive education and promote it to school directors and mainstream teachers.

Their main tasks are:

- directly supporting children with disabilities in classrooms and at home
- providing consultations and support to teachers
- identifying, assessing and referring children with disabilities
- providing teacher and community training and awareness-raising events
- working with children of different ages with various impairments.

## Broadening the scope of itinerant teachers

The definition of the itinerant teachers' tasks emphasised support for the individual needs of children with disabilities. However, few of these tasks addressed the barriers faced by children with disabilities within the school or promoted the inclusive education concept.

It quickly became obvious that the itinerant teacher system could not focus only on children with disabilities but should also focus on the quality of education in order to improve the learning environment of all children. There was a real need for mainstream teachers to understand the concept of inclusive education and develop inclusive teaching practice.

## The twin-track approach and its importance

Handicap International explains its twin-track approach in inclusive education as follows:

"The inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education requires cultivating and applying inclusive practices at all levels, rather than concentrating solely on a child's impairment... [this is] a twin-track approach, whereby the individual needs of children with disabilities are addressed at the same time as addressing societal, environmental, economic and political barriers to education".<sup>1</sup>

Concentrating solely on a child's impairment gives the impression the child is the problem because he or she needs special services, materials or support. It reduces the intervention to an individual level without any reflection on the necessary improvements required in the education system. Conversely, working only at the level of the education system may contribute towards ignoring the individual needs of each child. Working at both levels of intervention is necessary to create the best possible conditions for children with and without disabilities to learn and succeed in school and to ensure that children are afforded equal rights and opportunities in education.<sup>2</sup>

## The twin-track approach within the itinerant teacher system

In order not to overload the itinerant teachers, as the improvements in the education system were reinforced, the project delegated the work with the community and the parents to community members (village health workers and representatives of self-help groups of people with disabilities). Here are some concrete examples of the twin-track approach:

### Addressing individual needs of children with disabilities

For three school years, the system has worked with Ratanak – a young boy (now 15 years old) in grade 4<sup>3</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> Handicap international, Policy brief, Inclusive Education, September 2012, p.4

<sup>2</sup> As stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 24.

<sup>3</sup> In Cambodia, primary education consists of 6 grades. Children start school at 6 years old.



who is blind – to provide adapted material such as a Braille writer and abacus. During class hours, an itinerant teacher has supported Ratanak on a one-to-one basis to help him follow mainstream lessons and support him in acquiring specific skills. No individualised lessons or exercises are prepared for Ratanak, but teaching methods are adapted to his impairment. The frequency of the support has varied according to Ratanak's progress. First, the support was on a daily basis, today it is on a weekly basis.

The itinerant teacher supported Ratanak's mainstream teacher by providing advice and techniques, such as reading aloud what is being written on the blackboard, repeating frequently, and allowing Ratanak extra time to write in Braille or use an abacus. Peer-to-peer support was also set up, so that another student can support Ratanak during lessons when he needs some additional explanations or instructions and when the itinerant teacher is absent.

Itinerant teachers also have the role of identifying the specific needs of children with disabilities regarding health care and/or rehabilitation intervention.



### Addressing barriers within the school

Sopheap is a 16-year-old boy with Down's syndrome who was expelled from school due to behaviour issues; he would fight back when children teased and mocked him. Awareness-raising sessions with students using comic books, an animation movie and posters promoted messages about tolerance and valuing differences and diversity. This developed solidarity among the students. Sopheap is now back in school. He has improved his life skills and his behaviour has changed a great deal since his school friends are more friendly and positive.

Itinerant teachers are organising monthly sessions on improving communication with children, behaviour management, classroom management, and building

children's self-confidence. These sessions aim to improve the quality of education. Some teachers are keen to implement the new methods and gradually they are influencing other teachers. Sopheap's teacher particularly appreciated a training session on classroom rules, since clear rules – defined and adopted with the participation of the students – enables the teacher to concentrate more on teaching and supporting students than on discipline.

Each year, several sessions on developing teaching and learning material are organised in each school. The materials created are useful for supporting various learning styles and learning through play, which improves the quality of teaching. The materials developed during these sessions benefit all students, and adaptations fulfil specific needs of children with disabilities. For example, Ratanak's mainstream teacher developed cards with words written in Khmer and in Braille. In this way, Ratanak can participate in the game with his classmates.

### The impact of a twin-track approach

At the beginning of the project, the itinerant teachers were often considered special teachers in charge of teaching children with disabilities, so mainstream teachers relied on them to support the children with disabilities. Using the twin-track approach enabled school staff to better appreciate the itinerant teachers as promoters and supporters of inclusive education, which is not limited to the provision of special education in a mainstream setting. Mainstream teachers now consider the itinerant teachers to be trained educators who can provide advice on general teaching as well as being experts in disability-related issues.

Eventually, the twin-track approach has provided a better understanding about what inclusive education is; not solely targeting children with disabilities and focusing on their specific impairments and disabilities, but an education that aims to provide appropriate and quality education with all children learning together.

The current project will finish in December 2013.

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# Using itinerant teachers to support inclusion in Togo

Virginie Hallet

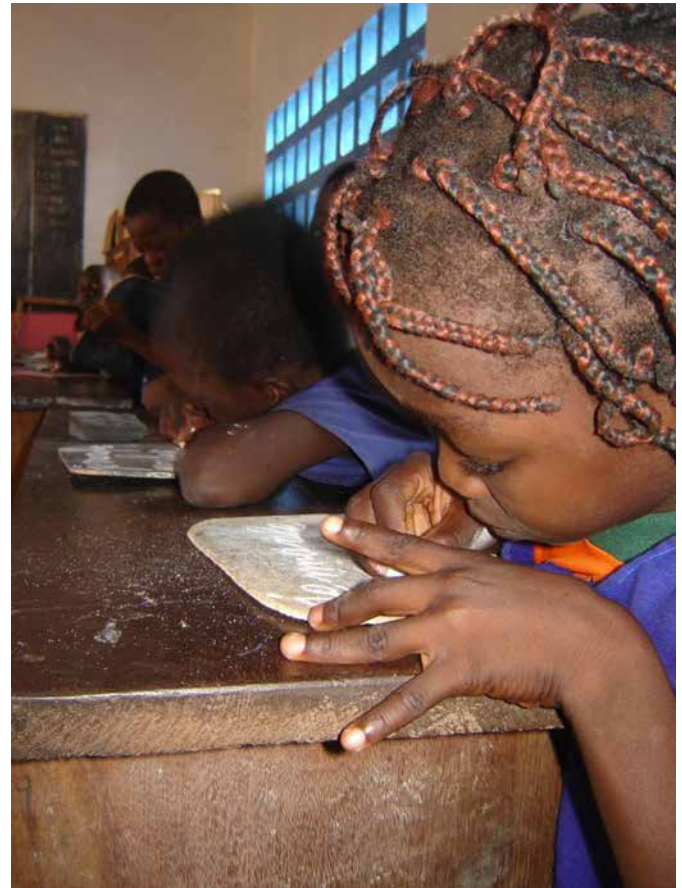
Over the last 10 years Togo has placed increasing emphasis on education, in response to the Education for All mandate. The country's Plan for Education (2010–2020) made education compulsory for all children aged 6–15 years, and since 2008/9 primary education has been free. Consequently enrolment increased, from 71% in 2006/7 to 87% in 2009/10. However, there are increasing numbers of school drop-outs too, an issue that cannot be ignored. In this article, Virginie looks at the use of itinerant teachers as a way of addressing the needs of disabled learners, as part of the drive to improve retention and participation and reduce drop-outs in Togo.

## Improving quality generally

The general quality of teaching in Togo is poor, and rectifying this will be a key step in improving learners' access to education and their participation in school. In 2012, the Teacher Training Institute reopened after 10 years of closure due to political crisis. School teachers can now access an in-depth six-month training course before beginning their careers, rather than starting to teach with virtually no training at all. This course includes a five-day module on inclusive education. It is hoped that the training will significantly enhance the quality of education in Togo.

## Developing an itinerant teacher system

More specifically, an innovative plan for itinerant teachers was introduced in 2010, initially in Dapaong, North Togo. The aim was to respond better to the individual and specific needs of disabled pupils and their teachers. Initially three mainstream teachers were recruited, only one of whom had previous experience in teaching children with visual impairments. Their preparation to become itinerant teachers involved a week of intensive training including Braille, sign language and more general approaches to use when teaching children with a range of disabilities, followed by weekly follow-up training, and intensive blocks during



school holidays. There were also weekly visits to special schools to work alongside trained specialist teachers.

Each itinerant teacher visits their allocated schools, and supports a number of children with disabilities within regular classes. Their main role is to directly support the children during lessons, and to discuss any difficulties that the child may be having with their teacher. Feedback has been positive, both from the children with disabilities who enjoy the extra attention, and also from their non-disabled peers who enjoy, for instance, learning to use sign language when the itinerant teachers work in small groups and include them.

## Relations between mainstream and itinerant teachers

Mainstream teachers in Togo are generally willing to accept children with disabilities into their large classes, and they usually have a welcoming attitude. However, they were initially



cautious; concerned that the itinerant teachers may be like inspectors. Over the past three years, however, the teachers have grown to understand and respect the itinerant teachers, and they now appreciate their support and skills.

In Dapaong, where the initiative started, it remains a challenge for the itinerant teachers to input into overall curriculum planning and structural change regarding the move towards inclusion within the schools. However, in the second geographical area where this system is being implemented, Kara, there has been much more success with overall structural change and with implementing joint planning and collaboration between the mainstream and itinerant teachers. The Handicap International team reviewed key lessons from the initial project, and began the Kara project with more emphasis on joint working from the outset.

Leopold is an itinerant teacher for children with hearing impairments. He supports children to sign during lessons and suggests the use of adapted teaching materials. He also shows teachers how to use pictures to help children communicate and understand more easily. He works with young deaf children and also with their peers, helping all the children to learn sign language, using a variety of fun activities.

### Impact

Currently 54 of the 438 disabled children enrolled in the mainstream schools within the intervention areas are supported by itinerant

teachers. These are the most vulnerable children, considered most in need of support. Overall, the itinerant teacher system has had a positive impact. It is difficult to identify the level of progress as the project specifically targeted children who were just starting school, so there is no baseline information about the children's level of education prior to the project.

However, after three years of piloting it is clear that children supported by itinerant teachers are experiencing more success in class than disabled children who aren't supported, particularly those with visual or hearing impairments. Mainstream teachers and families have also noticed improved social skills, interaction with other children and behaviour and daily living skills, even for children who have not made significant strides academically. The approach of using itinerant teachers has had a significant positive impact on the lives of children with disabilities in Togo and their families.

A video (in French) about the Togo itinerant teachers programme is available online: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLITmUsDBIg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLITmUsDBIg)

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Photos © Sandra Boisseau, 2010, HI



# Teachers for All: Inclusive teaching for children with disabilities

Ingrid Lewis

Many countries do not have enough well-prepared and motivated teachers. This impacts on the enrolment, participation and achievement of all children, but can be particularly detrimental to the education of children from marginalised groups. Teachers often lack training or support in teaching children with disabilities. Here, Ingrid summarises key ways in which we can better prepare regular teachers for diverse classes.

National standards for teacher training vary considerably between countries, and are often inadequate. Teacher training for regular teachers rarely provides the confidence, knowledge and skills to effectively support learners with disabilities. Recent research<sup>1</sup> has highlighted five key strategies to improve the situation. Each country will place different emphasis on these areas to suit their unique context.

## 1. Policy-makers and teacher trainers need to understand inclusive education

Those developing and implementing policies around education and teacher training need a sound understanding of inclusive education so they can promote inclusion across all aspects of education work.

Policy-makers and teacher trainers need to:

- understand that inclusive education is not just a separate or one-off project.
- understand the twin-track approach to inclusive education, and prepare teachers to *generally support all learners*; and be confident and skilled at *meeting the specific needs of students with disabilities*.
- understand the importance of inter-sectoral approaches: including children in education often requires effective links with health, social welfare, water and sanitation, public transport and justice sectors.

To achieve the level of understanding needed among policy-makers and teacher trainers, advocacy and awareness-raising efforts need to present clear and consistent messages on the above points. There should be follow-up training and support (including regular visits to schools and inclusive education projects) so that policy-makers and trainers keep learning and keep improving the pre-service and in-service support they design for teachers.

## 2. Inclusive education should be integrated into all teacher training

Inclusive education cuts across all aspects of education, so every teacher should learn how to make education more inclusive. This means learning how to improve the presence, participation and achievement of all learners, and how to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in particular.

Teachers need to embrace inclusive education from day one of their training, so that it is seen as integral to their work. Existing teachers also need to participate in ongoing professional development to help them constantly reflect on and improve their attitudes and practices. Professional development can include formal in-service training courses and informal learning opportunities like action research and teacher discussion groups. One-off or stand-alone courses on inclusive education are not enough.

Key actions needed include:

- Address inclusive education in all pre-service and in-service teacher training and through continuing professional development.
- Provide a mixture of (i) specific courses on inclusive education, and (ii) 'embedding' inclusive education principles into all teacher training activities.
- Review and revise teacher training courses, curricula and materials, with participation from a diverse range of education stakeholders.
- Advocate for teacher training institutions and ministries to undertake such changes.

<sup>1</sup> Rieser, R (2013) 'Teacher Education for Children with Disabilities. Literature Review'. Prepared for UNICEF, New York. <http://bit.ly/18AGOAI>



### 3. Teacher training must balance theory and practice

Teacher training needs to offer a balance of learning about the concept of inclusive education, and observing and implementing these theories in practice, with support from experienced colleagues. Teacher training needs to be relevant to the local context and culture, and well-managed so that trainee and in-service teachers don't feel overwhelmed. The split between theory and practice should anticipate real-life challenges in school whilst providing teachers with skills to be reflective and analytical practitioners.

Options for supplementing teacher training with disability-specific hands-on experience include:

- Directly involve disabled people's organisations (DPOs), people with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities in designing and delivering training.
- Special schools can often provide practical and technical advice and support. However, special school staff may also need training on how to support inclusive education in mainstream schools.

Cascade training mechanisms are seen as a financially efficient way of passing factual messages from one group of teachers to another. Yet they often do not support trainees to access practical learning or share experiences, and rarely provide sufficient follow-up. Such approaches need improving to provide school-based support, mentoring by experienced teachers, peer learning, and regular follow-up training.

### 4. People with disabilities should be involved in teacher training

There is a growing movement towards community involvement in school management and development. To be successful it must include representation from diverse groups, including people with disabilities. Yet usually those involved in planning and running teacher training do not have disabilities, or direct experience of working with people with disabilities. If teacher training around inclusion is to be practical and realistic, multiple stakeholders, especially people with disabilities, should be involved. Strategies include:

- Ministries of Education should involve people with disabilities during policy discussions about teacher training.
- Positive action should be taken to train, deploy and support teacher trainers who have disabilities.

- Guest trainers and speakers from different stakeholder groups and DPOs should be included in pre- and in-service training programmes.
- Trainee and in-service teachers should be given opportunities to work/volunteer with children and adults with disabilities.

### 5. The teaching workforce needs to be diverse and representative

To achieve inclusion for all children we need to look carefully at who becomes a teacher. Children who feel that their teachers have nothing in common with them, or do not understand them, may be less likely to engage in learning and more likely to drop out. A diverse teaching staff that represents male and female sections of the community, those with and without disabilities, and the ethnic, linguistic and religious groups found in the community, is therefore important.

People with disabilities are likely to face significant barriers to achieving the level of education needed to train as a teacher. Flexible policies for enrolment qualifications for teacher training, and/or creating and funding 'catch-up' courses for potential trainees are needed. The accessibility of teacher training – in terms of college buildings, course materials and equipment – also needs improvement and investment.

Teachers with disabilities may face discrimination in finding a job, either during selection or from outright bans on people with disabilities becoming teachers because of strict health and fitness assessments. They are also likely to face discrimination within the workplace, from colleagues or parents, or within payment structures and professional development opportunities. Employment regulations for teachers need to be reviewed and overhauled to remove such barriers.

This article is based on a longer IDDC paper by Ingrid Lewis (EENET) and Sunit Bagree (formerly of Sightsavers), available online: <http://bit.ly/1glgWuQ>

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# Deaf Teaching Assistants: providing education and employment opportunities for deaf children and adults in Papua New Guinea

Light for the World Austria

**For many children with disabilities, the lack of adults with disabilities in regular schools can be a barrier to their inclusion. Adults with disabilities can act as role models and may also give children with disabilities a stronger sense of belonging and of being understood. This article explains how Deaf Teaching Assistants are being developed in Papua New Guinea to help support the inclusion of deaf children in regular schools, and as a way of improving educational and employment opportunities for deaf adults.**

The project, run by Callan Services, aims to enhance quality primary education and basic health care services for children with hearing impairments. One of the key elements has been the employment of 20 assistants who are deaf or hearing impaired, known as Deaf Teaching Assistants.

The Deaf Teaching Assistants' role is part of wider efforts to build identity and promote Deaf culture, and to support 300 deaf children to be included in primary schools. The project also seeks to offer the Assistants opportunities to gain higher qualifications (with the goal of eventually becoming teachers) and to be trained in early years development. Several Deaf Teaching Assistants have already achieved entry level to higher education.

The Assistants are identified in the community. They are selected for their skills in communication and interacting within both the deaf and hearing community; and for their ability to relate to and work with young deaf children. They are also selected for their creativity, and most will have reached a basic level of primary education.

Deaf Teaching Assistants mostly receive on-the-job training from a specialist teacher in the Deaf Education Resource Unit (DERU) (separate classes attached to mainstream schools resourced by a trained teacher for deaf). They also have access to other educational opportunities and support to improve their English. Deaf Teaching Assistants have opportunities to meet each other at regional and national meetings. This chance to share

experiences is an important aspect of building and strengthening the Deaf community. The Assistants also have wider roles beyond their support role in the classroom. They participate and assist in local, regional and national sports programmes, and assist in the teaching of sign language.

Through providing training in early childhood education, the project seeks to help Deaf Teaching Assistants work more effectively with young deaf children and support their transition from the DERU classes into regular classes. The training also provides them with skills to support curriculum adaptations based on individual deaf children's needs, and to be a resource within mainstream classes.

Deaf education is relatively new in Papua New Guinea and many deaf adults have not had an opportunity to see their potential as key contributors to education nor to recognise their ability to get higher education and improved employment. The Deaf Teaching Assistant approach is providing education and employment opportunities. The Assistants also become positive role models for deaf children and their families in the community. Further, they have contributed to improvements in sign language skills in schools, among children and teachers.

The project has, in addition, enabled the development of a National Sign Language Teacher who will lead on sign language teaching. A key result of the project was the decision to further develop Papua New Guinea Sign Language, and recognition of the need for structured interpreter training and for a full review of educational approaches. The development of Papua New Guinea Sign Language is progressing with workshops across the country, and the Deaf Teaching Assistants are central in this process.

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# The role of people with disabilities in teacher training in Iraq

**Karen Chesterton Khayat**

**The development of inclusive education should always be built on a foundation of participation by all key stakeholders – children, parents, teachers, decision-makers, donors, and of course representatives of marginalised groups. A vital way of ensuring teachers are better prepared to support children with disabilities in their regular classes is to ensure that they have practical experience of working with children and adults with disabilities, and that the training they receive has been guided by the perspectives of people with disabilities. Here, Karen looks at initiatives in Iraq to achieve this.**

In the north of Iraq (in the three governorates of Sulaimany, Dohuk and Erbil in Kurdistan) the Ministry of Education developed courses for Ministry-employed teachers and awareness-raising sessions for education leaders. The courses provide an 'introduction to inclusive education' for in-service teachers who want to support children with disabilities in schools. The training was initially delivered through training-of-trainers courses, and is now provided regularly to teachers. The courses are sometimes funded by UNICEF and sometimes by the Ministry.

Within the courses, adults with hearing impairments and with visual impairments have shared their personal education stories, helping training participants to understand the role education has played in their lives. They have demonstrated assistive resources and tools, as well as techniques used for daily living with one or more impairment. Adults who are deaf have been engaged in the courses to teach basic sign language to teachers, using lists of words the teachers want to learn, and also demonstrating visual storytelling.

At awareness seminars for school principals, education officials and decision-makers, people with disabilities have been included as participants to bring their perspectives on inclusion into the discussions, and to share personal accounts of education. Parents of children with disabilities have also participated through question and answer panel sessions. Disability rights advocates have contributed to the training as guest lecturers, providing detailed

theoretical and practical information, and delivering hard-hitting messages on combatting discrimination.

Course feedback has indicated that the active participation of people with disabilities in the training courses has helped teachers to see people with disabilities as partners in upholding the rights of children in their classes, rather than as passive recipients of charitable services.

Contributors to the courses have mostly been identified through local disabled people's organisations (DPOs). The training activities have helped to initiate or reinforce co-operation between DPOs and the inclusive education programme. Although in some countries not all DPOs have the capacity to support teacher training, it is crucial to learn from and build upon efforts, in order to ensure that both community members and professionals with disabilities play a role in designing and delivering training on inclusion and equality.



*Deaf teachers demonstrating sign language and hearing teachers practising it*

A consultant helped the Ministry of Education to design the courses and run the initial training and awareness activities. The Ministry also formed a committee for the awareness seminars, made up of education and DPO representatives. The DPO personnel represented people with physical and sensory impairments, and were people with expertise in media/communications or the arts. The committee designed the awareness campaign (which also involved art and music) and were active in rolling out the seminars across the region.

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# Developing resource centres for inclusive education in China

Ming Liu

**One of the key challenges in developing inclusive education is that regular schools need ongoing support and advice – not just one-off training courses – to help staff and other stakeholders maintain motivation while developing the skills and confidence to become more innovative and inclusive. Support with implementing inclusive education can be provided in different ways. In this article, Ming Liu explains how resource centres are being developed in parts of China, as a way of supporting policy and changing practice at the local level.**

## Background

In China, Save the Children is working with seven counties in Sichuan Province, Yunnan Province and Xinjiang Uigur Autonomous Region to set up inclusive education systems and improve services for children with disabilities. The three-year project started in July 2012 and focuses on establishing resource centres, working in pilot regular schools, training the schools' heads and teachers, and training special education school teachers, so as to increase access to education for children with multiple and severe disabilities. The resource centres will drive the inclusive education system and should ensure services are sustainable after the project ends. The project is still very new, so this article focuses on sharing our experience of the initial development stage. We hope to be able to provide an update in a future edition of this newsletter.

## Resource centre roles

The resource centres are managed by the county education bureaux, and are expected to assume multiple roles, including: education administration; teacher training and teaching research; cross-department co-ordination; provision of rehabilitation services, consultancy and assistive devices and materials.

In relation to learners with disabilities, the centres should:

- develop county-level policy on educating children with disabilities, within the national and provincial education policy framework
- develop procedures and regulations relating to: screening and identifying children with disabilities who will need specialist support in education; the development and implementation of individual

education plans (IEPs); the assessment of school/teacher performance in meeting the needs of children with disabilities, etc.

- monitor regular schools for the purpose of providing targeted assistance as well as for assessment of progress in inclusion
- co-ordinate with county government, Disabled Persons' Federation, hospitals and Civil Affairs Bureau on the tasks of finding children with disabilities, collecting and sharing data, and improving referral and integrated services
- train general teachers and resource teachers in regular schools so they can better support children with disabilities
- develop assistive teaching and learning materials and provide assistive equipment
- provide rehabilitation services for school-aged children with disabilities, either in the centre or through outreach services
- provide consultancy for parents, and organise parent training and awareness-raising events.

## Ensuring sustainability

Setting up a resource centre like this means changes to the education administration system. It relies on the courage and willingness of the county education bureau to bring innovation to education management, redefining the roles of relevant departments, reallocating human resources and financial budgets, and introducing a series of policies and rules to regulate inclusive education. Save the Children therefore needed committed partners to enable the initiative to go ahead, and to be sustainable long term.

Counties were therefore invited to bid for partnership in this initiative, following a project introduction meeting. Selection of counties was done by Save the Children and the provincial education department against a list of key criteria. This process led to seven counties being selected and signing partnership agreements with Save the Children.

Through the partnership, Save the Children will provide technical support for setting up the resource centres, and training for education bureaux staff and resource centre teachers. The organisation will also provide some basic seed funding. Each county, however, is responsible for providing the physical space, arranging



and paying staff, allocating an operating budget for the centre and then running the centre.

### Setting up the centres

Resource centres are a new concept for the seven selected counties. At the project orientation meeting, we therefore took heads of the education bureaux and staff responsible for basic education to visit well-operated centres in Beijing. Here they could discuss with the district education bureau and centre heads and staff. The trip built understanding of the roles, structure, staffing, resourcing and operation of resource centres.

We developed criteria for selecting resource centre staff, in negotiation with the county education bureaux. With technical support from Perkins School for the Blind, we set up a team of trainers – consisting of special education experts from the United States, India and China – to train resource centre staff through five intensive workshops, each followed by on-site support and monitoring. During the first workshop, staff from each county worked together to draft their resource centre plan, including looking at the location of the centre, the layout of the physical space, the organisational structure, staffing, role descriptions, and resources needed. The staff presented their draft plan to the education bureau and the bureau will refine the plan based on their own context. This is where we are now.

The seed funding for the centres will be provided upon approval of their plans. The funds will purchase office facilities, rehabilitation equipment and decoration materials, books and toys for children. Throughout

the process of setting up the centres, Save the Children will work with experienced experts and centre managers to provide consultancy to each county through remote communications and field visits. The resource centre teachers' workshops and follow-up visits will be conducted to ensure that the staff have the necessary skills.

### Challenges ahead

Setting up a resource centre in a physical sense will be the easier part of this project. Staffing, getting a budget from the county government, and running the centre long term will be crucial for the success of the project. The education bureaux need to convince county-level government to invest in inclusive education. Creating resource centre staff positions, recruiting staff and paying them from the government budget requires the county education bureaux to negotiate with various government departments. Currently, the resource centre staff we trained are from different sectors, including county education bureaux, county teacher training centres, county special education services as well as regular schools. Eventually we hope they will become full-time staff working for the resource centre.

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## Supporting learners identified as having special educational needs in Moldova **Ludmila Malcoci and Cornelia Cincilei**

In this article, Ludmila and Cornelia share Sergiu's story of leaving an institution and being included in a regular school, with support from a multi-disciplinary team and a resource centre, as an example of the wider work being carried out by the Equal Access to Education project in Moldova.

### Sergiu's story

Four years ago, aged 11, Sergiu went to school for the first time. This was made possible when he moved from an institution for boys with intellectual disabilities in Orhei, Moldova, to live with a foster family. At that point he could not read or write, and had difficulty communicating with others. In September 2010, Sergiu joined the second grade in his regular school, and his social, emotional, and academic learning skills continued to improve. Today he is in the sixth grade; learning, participating in activities, and socially interacting with classmates. He is doing very well in school, and needs some support for mathematics, Romanian and French classes. His ongoing progress is due to the continuous support provided by the inclusive school staff and his foster family.



The school Sergiu attends is one of 22 schools in Moldova that are developing an inclusive approach to education with the help of Keystone Moldova as part of the Equal Access to Education (EAE) project. The Educational Department of Orhei District started the process in September 2011. Sergiu's school was assessed and then a school multidisciplinary team – comprising the school principal, deputy principal, teachers, psychologist and community social worker – was established and trained.



The team works with families of children identified as having special educational needs, including Sergiu's foster parents, in order to understand and respond to the children's educational needs.

Since January 2012, Sergiu's educational support has been guided by an individual educational plan. The plan was developed by the school's multidisciplinary team, with Keystone Moldova providing support through trainings, follow-up, monitoring visits and ongoing technical support. The plan outlines Sergiu's support needs in the classroom and his attendance at extracurricular sessions at a Resource Centre for Inclusive Education created by Keystone Moldova, in partnership with the school administration and Local Public Authorities at district and community levels. At the centre Sergiu accesses further learning support, occupational therapy, speech therapy and socialisation skills development.

To raise community awareness of inclusive education, two dramas addressing disability issues – one for adults and one for pupils – have been performed in Sergiu's community. These have helped change attitudes towards people with disabilities from "pity and compassion" to "persons with rights and abilities".



The Equal Access to Education (EAE) project is a four-year project (started in 2010) implemented by Keystone Moldova, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Step by Step Moldova NGO, and Local Public Authorities (LPAs). Financial support is provided by Open Society Foundations Early Childhood Programme.

The project primarily supports the educational inclusion of children identified as having special educational needs by addressing both social and pedagogical issues. It acknowledges the uniqueness of every child and the fact that each child develops at his/her own pace, has unique educational needs, and builds his/her own understanding of the world.

The project recognises that attitudinal and behavioural changes are needed on multiple levels. It therefore engages all stakeholders in the process of developing a more inclusive approach to education, starting at the ministry level and continuing through district and community levels to school administration, school teachers, social workers, local partners, community members, parents and pupils. Training and follow-up support for school staff (provided by the Step by Step programme) has led to changes in teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with special educational needs; has contributed to improved child/teacher relationships; and has generally increased the quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods.

*"The school inclusion of children with special educational needs is impossible without continuous training for teachers." Deputy Director of Vasile Lupu Lyceum, Susleni Village, Orhei District*

So far over 230 children have been included in regular classes; 3,500 people (school staff, parents, LPA personnel, pupils, community members etc.) have received training; and 15 resource centres have been developed in schools, providing additional support to more than 350 children.

A Beneficiary Impact Assessment conducted by Keystone Moldova in 2013 revealed that school attendance among children identified as having special education needs has increased, and their

parents' level of satisfaction with the education provided has also improved.

*"We have a very good connection with the school and have jointly solved every problem that arises. We focus on teamwork, and together can do great things." Social Worker, Susleni Village, Orhei District*

The impact assessment also found:

- all children receiving the targeted support were doing better in school
- children identified as having special educational needs had made more friends in school, and classmates were more accepting
- parents of children with disabilities were better informed about their children's rights and needs and more involved in supporting social inclusion
- the 22 pilot schools are providing inclusive education training and support to other community schools in their districts.

### Lessons learned

The project has already revealed several useful lessons, including:

- The implementation of inclusive education is a complex and continuous process that requires the development of sustainable cross-sectoral partnerships at multiple levels.
- The development of inclusive education is a step by step process that requires regular self-assessment from the perspective of the pupils, parents, support teachers and community members.
- The capacity building of parents, people with disabilities and school teachers in advocacy can increase the access to quality education of all people. Non-formal educational methods (social drama, debates, round tables, workgroups, etc.) have a significant impact on reducing stigma and discrimination.

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# Developing child-centred teaching and learning for inclusion, Burundi

Elie Sabuwanka

**Ensuring that children with disabilities can participate in education within inclusive, mainstream schools is not always about complex solutions. In this article, Elie outlines some fundamental child-centred teaching and learning approaches that have been used in Handicap International's project in Burundi to support the inclusion of all children in higher quality education provision.**

## The context

Burundi subscribed to the Millennium Development Goals and is committed to Education for All. Since 2005, education has been one of the government's most important priorities. Although elementary education is not obligatory, children do not pay primary school fees. Consequently, school attendance rates have risen from 63.5% in 2000 to 134.6 % in 2010. This figure, representative of the total number of children expected to enrol that year, is high due to many children enrolling late and/or repeating classes.

Nevertheless, the education of children with disabilities is left to private initiatives (mostly religious ones). The few children with disabilities who have access to school attend a few specialised centres, not recognised by the Ministry of Education.

## Pilot inclusive education project

Handicap International therefore started a pilot inclusive education project in 2010, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and a disabled people's organisation, UPHB (Union des Personnes Handicapées du Burundi). The project is being implemented in six pilot primary schools, and at a lower scale in 45 other satellite schools in the provinces of Bujumbura Mayorship and Gitega.

This pilot is contributing to quality improvements in education. Changes are being noticed in teachers' behaviour and job understanding. Generally, the school inspection office considers achievement of the school syllabus to be the most important criteria against which to measure teachers' work. Hence, many teachers think primarily about the syllabus and the different topics they teach; they

rarely think about the conditions of the children who will benefit from their teaching. The pilot project is changing this.

## Simple but effective approaches

The pilot project's added value is that children are now considered as the centre of the education system. On registration day, the head teacher gets as much information as he/she can about each child. Parents do not always talk about their child's situation, so the head discusses with them and the child to learn more about his/her abilities. Any impairments are identified so that the school can provide better support.

Teachers are advised to know and use the names of every pupil in their classes, rather than saying "you..." and pointing to the child, as they have done in the past. This simple step is particularly important for children with disabilities who are daily discriminated against and called names which refer to their impairment.

Each child with a disability has an individual education plan (IEP) defining his/her learning and socialisation objectives according to his/her abilities. The IEP proposes teaching and learning strategies. Parents, teachers and the children meet regularly to evaluate the IEPs and the children's progress, and to set new objectives and action plans.

Teachers are advised to use the IEP and think first about the kind of pupils they have in their class: during the lesson preparation phase, during the teaching period, and when planning for evaluation. A more child-centred teaching pedagogy is set up and all pupils, disabled or not, benefit from it. This kind of pedagogy allows children to interact and to feel more valued and included.

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# The journey towards inclusive education in Myanmar

**Mari Koistinen and Tha Uke**

For decades Myanmar has been ruled by a military dictatorship and disability issues have received limited attention. Myanmar has been opening up since 2011, and there is now growing interest in education for disabled children. The country has had a policy on inclusive education since 2004 – influenced by the global Education for All goals and aiming to provide disabled children with education in mainstream schools – but the level of implementation has not been well documented. However, some developments are taking place. The Eden Centre for Disabled Children (ECDC), for instance, has been a vocal advocate for inclusive education in Myanmar. In this article, Tha Uke and Mari provide an overview of ECDC's work, successes and challenges.

## Background

ECDC is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) for children with physical and intellectual impairments, established in April 2000 by Mr Tha Uke and Ms Lilian Gyi. Over the years the organisation has grown to meet the needs of service users. It now offers a wide range of activities including early intervention programmes, special education, counselling, physiotherapy and occupational therapy services, and inclusive education.

## ECDC's work

Tha Uke has been advocating for inclusive education in Myanmar for many years. With funding from Welthungerhilfe, an international NGO from Germany, ECDC was able to start an inclusive education project in 2007, with the aim of promoting and advocating for inclusive education in Myanmar. The project has worked to increase access of disabled children to mainstream schools in 10 townships in Yangon Division. The work has focused on providing facilities and a barrier-free environment, and on raising awareness of disability and inclusion.

ECDC has successfully conducted awareness-raising and experience-sharing workshops on inclusive education and disability for education sector personnel including: principals, Township Education Officers, teachers from special and mainstream schools, and officers from Department of Social Welfare which is in charge of the few existing special schools. Workshops have been held at least once a year over the last

four years. The project has also distributed learning materials and assistive and mobility devices to children.

## Leading the way

Maung Saing Win Htay has physical disabilities and is one of the beneficiaries of the inclusive education project. The project arranged disability-specific support and adjustments, such as providing a wheelchair, renovating the school walkway, and installing an appropriate toilet seat to make the sanitation facilities accessible. The project also supported visits to the community health clinic if Maung Saing Win Htay was unwell. In addition the project sought to make school and community-wide changes, by raising awareness of inclusive education among teachers, students, parents and community leaders. These various approaches enabled Maung Saing Win Htay to access and remain in school, when he might otherwise have had to stay at home. Maung Saing Win Htay's is now considered an agent for change for other disabled children in his community, having been the first child using a wheelchair to attending a mainstream school. This is no longer considered unusual in the community, and his teachers have learned a great deal about disabilities and are ready to welcome other children with disabilities into school.

## Focus for future work

One of the biggest challenges ECDC faces is the general lack of understanding about inclusive education among most education stakeholders, including policy-makers. There is an urgent need for greater awareness raising and advocacy at all levels. ECDC believes inclusive education should be part of teacher training (both pre- and in-service) and offer teachers practical advice on how to teach disabled children. Strengthening the multi-sectoral approach is vital, as is including all stakeholders in the process – a special focus on family members' involvement is crucial.

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## Assessing the inclusiveness of mainstream schools in Ghana

Patrick Thomas Otaah, Agnes Arthur and Sandrine Bohan-Jacquot

**A key question for any inclusive education initiative is: how do we know if our efforts are helping more children to gain access to school, and participate in the learning and social aspects within school. In an attempt to answer this, the Special Education Needs Division (SPED) of the Ghana Education Service (GES) has developed a checklist to enable more systematic monitoring of the inclusion of children with disabilities at school level.**

### **Inclusive education in Ghana**

The Government of Ghana is committed to providing free, compulsory and good quality basic education for all children. The inclusive education programme aims to increase the enrolment and learning opportunities of children with disabilities in regular schools by creating child-friendly school environments and support systems. The work is currently focusing on inclusion for children with less severe disabilities.

Since 2012, SPED, with UNICEF's support, has successfully implemented inclusive education activities – raising government and community

awareness; screening children; training teachers; and restructuring facilities – in 12 districts. Positive attitude changes have been observed and there are plans to expand nationally.

“Inclusive education helped to solve the mocking of children with disabilities with the teachers.”  
Parent in Savelugu Nanton District, June 2013

However, it was essential to learn more about the impact of these interventions at school and classroom level. As there was no monitoring mechanism for assessing school inclusiveness, SPED developed a checklist to enable more systematic monitoring – the Inclusive Education Monitoring Tool (IEMT).

The IEMT considers the specific needs of children with disabilities that are not met through general school improvements alone, since some broad approaches to inclusion can overlook specific disability issues (see UNICEF State of the World's Children, 2013 and the Editorial on pages 2-3). IEMT collects statistics on children with disabilities in mainstream schools, to fill a significant data gap in Ghana, and assesses their access, participation and academic success.



A practical science class in Choggu Primary A



### The Inclusive Education Monitoring Tool

The IEMT is based on international standards, adapted to the local context, and gathers qualitative and quantitative information. The information is gathered by head teachers, with contributions from teachers during school meetings, and then counter-checked by circuit supervisors, who are already regularly visiting and supporting schools and head teachers. Supervisors visit school facilities, observe classrooms, and informally interview teachers and children with and without disabilities, and then give feedback to the head and teachers. A space for comments within the checklist allows head teachers and supervisors to add information on issues specific to the school.

The tool intends to help schools self-assess and reflect on their inclusiveness. The monitoring will happen twice a year (June and November) to capture improvements and support decision-making for the new academic year. It will serve as a baseline for ongoing assessment of school inclusiveness in Ghana. At school level, it will help heads to identify barriers to inclusion within their school, and encourage a flexible approach to questioning inclusive practices. A progressive scoring system (not just 'yes/no') allows the school to recognise its current status and needs for improvement.

### Creation and testing of the IEMT

A draft was developed by SPED, based on the Index for Inclusion (published by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2007) and in line with Ghana's Inclusive Education Policy Framework (2012). The draft considered the local context; existing monitoring tools, and any gaps left by other GES data collection systems and the MICS survey; the need for quantitative data on children with disabilities; and the importance of having an easy-to-use monitoring tool. National and district level consultations were held, with a final workshop in June 2013.

The IEMT was then tested. Five teams of SPED/UNICEF staff and circuit supervisors led assessments in 22 randomly selected rural and urban mainstream schools and found that the IEMT was easily understood by users. Minor changes were made after testing to reduce misunderstandings and to include data on teachers' presence and status (trained/volunteer), and on

local contextual issues (e.g. nomadic children). The testing highlighted how general educational challenges (such as shortages of trained teachers, teacher absenteeism and poor teaching methodologies) impact on schools' capacity to welcome all children, including those with disabilities and other special needs. As expected at the pilot stage, half the schools had not started to address inclusive education specifically, and half were in the early stages, but had limited access to referral or support services; although positive attitudes and recognition of educational rights were found within the schools and community. The testing also helped identify stakeholders already active in inclusive education and disability.

### Content of the IEMT

1. Checklist of 25 indicators plus comment box
2. List of 15 statistical items on children with disabilities; data disaggregated by impairment/needs
3. Guide for the monitoring process (scoring, weighting, frequency, school visits, etc).

Additional tools were created to help District Directorates better understand the situation and manage existing resources within their districts:

- i. database of children with disabilities and other special needs, detailing support needs and the status of service provision for each child
- ii. database of inclusive education and disability stakeholders (e.g. organisations for persons with disabilities, NGOs, resource centres, special schools, individual benefactors)
- iii. database of competent teachers (as recognised by their peers) who can be resource persons for best practice sharing.

The IEMT will start to be used in 12 focus districts at the beginning of the 2013/14 academic year. Results will enable SPED to improve their planning of future inclusive education activities to fulfil the educational needs of all Ghanaian children.

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## Useful publications

### Leaflets and posters

Every child needs a well-trained inclusive teacher  
IDDC, 2013

This double-sided A4 leaflet was created by IDDC and EENET as a quick reference resource on teacher education and inclusion, for use during the Global Campaign for Education 2013. The diagram from the leaflet is reproduced as a poster inside this newsletter. The leaflet is available in English, Arabic, French, Spanish and German. Available online at: <http://bit.ly/1cmb25L>

Teachers for All: Inclusive teaching for children with disabilities, IDDC, 2013

This policy paper accompanies the IDDC leaflet. It provides more background information on the current situation regarding teaching and teacher training, and offers more in-depth suggestions for actions that can be taken to prepare more teachers for including children with disabilities in regular classrooms.

Available online at: <http://bit.ly/1glgWuQ>

### Videos

Deaf children and young people worldwide are too often denied their right to education

Human Rights Watch 2013

This short video highlights the importance of enabling deaf children to learn through the medium of sign language.

View online at: <http://bit.ly/1bT5ODw>

### Guidelines

Promoting Inclusive Teacher Education: Advocacy Guides

UNESCO, 2013

This set of five booklets aims to support anyone who wants to engage in advocacy to ensure that pre-service teacher education more adequately prepares teachers for inclusive education. The five booklets are: Introduction, Policy, Curriculum, Materials, Methodology. Each booklet is short and easy to read, and can be read on its own or as part of the set.

Available online at: <http://bit.ly/1hJlcDG>

Inclusive Education: An Introduction  
Leonard Cheshire Disability, 2013

This is a very short booklet looks at how Leonard Cheshire Disability approaches inclusive education and provides some examples from its own programmes around the world.

Available online at: <http://bit.ly/1glgZ9T>

### Reports

Equal Right. Equal Opportunity. Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities  
Global Campaign for Education, 2013

This report is a preparatory document for the 2014 Global Action Week. It looks at the state of education for children with disabilities and provides suggested strategies for practical and advocacy interventions to promote inclusion.

Available online: <http://bit.ly/1bbAZ78>

### Pasifika Enabling Education Network (Pasifika EENET)

This is a new information-sharing regional network that aims to increase knowledge and awareness about inclusive education. It is inspired by, although not directly run by, EENET. Pasifika EENET is the outcome of research by Dr Susie Miles (The University of Manchester); the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat; the Pacific Disability Forum; and involving stakeholders in the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati and Samoa. The research listened to children, parents, disabled people, teachers, teacher educators and policy-makers to identify networking and information priorities.

Pasifika EENET's website was launched by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in September 2013. See: [www.eenetpasifika.org](http://www.eenetpasifika.org) or email: [eenetpasifika@gmail.com](mailto:eenetpasifika@gmail.com)