



MAINSTREAMING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

SHARING GOOD PRACTICES



Save the Children

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ACRONYMS

CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
HOPE	Holistic Approach towards Promotion of Inclusive Education (Bangladesh)
ICF-CY	International Classification of Functioning, Disability & Health - Children & Youth
IDEAL	Inclusive Community Development and Schools for All (Indonesia)
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MED	Municipal Education Directorate (Kosovo)
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science & Technology (Kosovo)
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (Cambodia)
NESP	National Education Strategic Plan (Myanmar)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OEC	Opérations Enfants du Cambodge (Cambodia)
PET	Pedagogical Evaluation Team (Kosovo)
QLE	Quality Learning Environment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TTM	Thursday Technical Meeting (Cambodia)
UNCRC	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



INTRODUCTION

Inclusive Education

Save the Children, being a child rights organisation, recognises that education is a fundamental right of every child and that the state is the key duty-bearer to protect, promote and fulfil children's rights. Inclusion, or the operationalising of a child's right to non-discrimination, is consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified across the world except one country.¹

Non-discrimination is one of the major challenges education systems around the world face, and the values of inclusion are best taught at a young age. The reasons behind exclusion from and within education are complex, numerous and contextual. Children with disabilities for instance are often not able to fully participate in mainstream schools due to negative attitudes and low expectations, teachers who are not adequately prepared to support their learning, and infrastructural barriers. Children from minority populations may experience difficulties in learning due to language barriers and/or cultural stigma, while the hidden costs of education are a serious barrier for children living in poverty. Across all these categories, girls and children in emergency contexts are especially vulnerable. These are only some examples of the many different groups of children whose education rights have yet to be fulfilled.²

Save the Children is strongly committed to ensuring that all children have equal access to quality inclusive education, by reaching out to more children, especially the most vulnerable, leveraging resources in a more efficient and sustainable manner, and successfully contributing to the Save the Children global breakthroughs: Survive, Learn and Be Protected³. For all nine inclusive education projects the starting point is the child, and all projects seek to follow the Save the Children Theory of Change⁴ by:

1. Being the voice of children and addressing negative attitudes, through awareness raising on inclusive principles and values;
2. Being the innovator in addressing barriers to access, participation and learning through the creation and monitoring of inclusive quality learning environments and capacity building of teachers and school-leaders;
3. Achieving results at scale by influencing policies, and supporting the development of inclusive implementation strategies; and
4. Building partnerships with civil society, communities, governments, NGOs, UN agencies, universities and the private sector to share knowledge, raise funds and build capacity to ensure all children's rights are met.

Inclusive education as a right is described in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: 'Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the community in which they live'

Art. 24.2.b

1 The USA is the only country that has not ratified the UNCRC.

2 Source: Save the Children Stands for Inclusive Education

3 Page 6, www.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/Global%20Strategy%20-%20Ambition%20for%20Children%202030.pdf

4 Page 3, www.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/Global%20Strategy%20-%20Ambition%20for%20Children%202030.pdf

Save the Children defines inclusive education as “one dimension of a rights-based quality education which emphasises equity in access and participation and responds positively to the individual learning needs and competencies of all children. Inclusive education is child-centred and places the responsibility of adaptation on the education system rather than on the individual child. Together with other sectors and the wider community, it actively works to ensure that every child, irrespective of gender, language, ability, religion, nationality or other characteristics, is supported to meaningfully participate and learn alongside his/her peers and develop to his/her full potential.” Inclusive education thus means that different and diverse students learn side by side in the same classroom, while receiving support for their individual learning needs.

Save the Children’s Framework for the Future sets out a clear target that by 2030 “all children will have access to good-quality, safe and inclusive basic education, including in emergencies”. Save the Children will thus increase the support to mainstream inclusive education following a twin-track approach: inclusion as a right for all and - where needed – with targeted interventions (for example providing assistive devices, or free uniforms or school meals).

This focus is timely as it contributes to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG4, “Ensuring Inclusive and Quality Education for All and Promoting Life Long Learning”, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all. SDG4 has universal value, is rights-based and recognises education as a public good and has inclusion, equity and gender equality as fundamental principles. SDG4 brings a clear demand on all relevant stakeholder to ensure inclusion of All Children in education and being provided learning opportunities according to children’s diverse needs and abilities.



Inclusive education requires major changes in how children previously excluded are welcomed in schools by improving accessibility and overcoming barriers in attitudes, teaching methods and institutional policies. Inclusion is not simply the placement of these children in school. It is a process of changing what is taught and how it is taught, assessed and valued, so that learners of all abilities can achieve their full potential. Inclusion also deals with the wider learning environment of accessibility, physical and emotional safety, and school-community collaboration. Feeling emotionally safe and welcome translates in better learning, improved wellbeing and greater engagement. As such, inclusive education is about transforming education systems by (a) improving teacher education, (b) considering difference and diversity, and responding respectfully and adequately, (c) designing appropriate teaching-learning aids and equipment, (d) professionally supporting schools and teachers, and (e) actively engaging parents and communities. Studies have shown that inclusion is “more cost-effective, and academically and socially effective, than segregated schooling”⁵

One of the most critical principles of inclusive education is the recognition that no two learners are the same and so inclusive schools place great importance on creating equal opportunities for students to learn and be assessed in a variety of ways, promoting assessment to support learning rather than to compare learners and create unnecessary competition between students. In such an education system differentiated curricula, classroom arrangements and teaching strategies accommodate different styles and rates of learning, ensuring quality education for all in one national education system with national policies and mainstream practices that are inclusive and a national education budget that supports the optimal learning of all.⁶



5 UNICEF Position Paper on Education for Children with Disabilities

6 Source: Project Brief - Children who Learning Together Learn to Live Together

Save the Children Sweden's inclusive education portfolio

Save the Children Sweden has been an advocate for inclusive education for many years, especially focusing on children with disabilities and those from ethnic minority populations, also making this one of the organisation's key priority thematic areas. To promote this focus, Save the Children Sweden supports country offices to combat discrimination and to identify approaches in order to mainstream the inclusion of the most vulnerable children. Save the Children Sweden promotes the implementation of an integrated project approach, combining for example child protection, education and Child Rights Governance, as also reflected in the guiding principles of the Quality Learning Environment (QLE) framework.

IKEA Foundation has been a key partner supporting Save the Children Sweden to further this agenda through the "Soft Toys for Education" campaign in nine countries in Europe and Asia: Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Kosovo, Myanmar, the Philippines, Romania and Vietnam. These projects recognise that vulnerable children must be reached early, for what happens in the first years of school has a profound effect on education success in later years. Education, child protection and transparent governance mechanisms are at the heart of these projects, making sure that children have access to inclusive quality basic education while being protected from neglect, violence, abuse and harm at home, in school and their communities.

Save the Children Sweden's has an holistic approach to education. The organisation plays a technical role focusing on quality and financial management of projects through thematic advisors in the region and in Stockholm.

These advisors support project implementation, research, capacity building and advocacy, while facilitating cross-country and cross-project sharing, peer reviews and inclusive education learning events. These projects thus also contribute to Save the Children International's basic education goals (2017-2021).



SUCCESSFUL APPROACHES IN NINE COUNTRIES

Introduction

The IKEA Foundation supported inclusive education projects targeting vulnerable children, identified through a child rights situation analysis⁷ and/or project baseline, including children from ethnic minority, children with disabilities and those living in poverty. Key strategies to initiate and sustain inclusive education in the project countries include the development and sharing of evidence-based replicable approaches with inclusive monitoring and evaluation systems as well as the development and provision of resources and training to build capacity of education staff (Save the Children, government and non-government partners) to ensure they have the knowledge and tools to design, implement, monitor and evaluate inclusive education.

Inclusive education projects in the nine countries demonstrated approaches and strategies at national and local levels. At national level (1) education laws and policies were reviewed to ensure that non-discrimination and inclusion is prioritised, (2) education data was collected about access, quality and learning, disaggregated by different characteristics that could be ground for discrimination such as disability, ethnicity, gender, income, age etc. and, (3) there was close collaboration with civil society and NGOs, the private sector, religious organisations and interest groups – including Disabled Persons' Organisations – to leverage resources and support for inclusive education and to strengthen the cooperation between different sectors, such as education, health and social services. At local level projects (1) created enabling environments, especially focusing on developing inclusive attitudes and better understanding of children's rights, and (2) worked closely together with all stakeholders to identify key barriers that exclude children, and to address them through inclusive school management and development.⁸ In many of the project areas, communities, parents and government have shown interest and committed to continue their effort after the project closes.

The primary aim of this documentation is to provide a deeper understanding of how projects have applied more inclusive concepts in not only changing the lives of children with disabilities, those living in poverty or children from ethnic minority populations, their families and communities, but in catalysing changes in policies and practices to the education system to benefit all learners.

The stories follow a common structure describing the background of the project, a description of an approach that has worked especially well in the project, followed by stakeholder and partner engagement, participation of children, key milestones and significant challenges, scalability and sustainability, recommendations for replication and contact links for project tools and materials. A selection of practical tools and models have been attached as annexes.

⁷ See also: resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/crsa_guidelines2.pdf

⁸ Source: Save the Children Stands for Inclusive Education



BANGLADESH

EVERY CHILD COUNTS

Project background

Holistic Approach towards Promotion of Inclusive Education (HOPE) aims to reduce discrimination against children with disabilities at home, in their communities and in schools, as well as improve and institutionalise community and school based mechanisms to successfully provide education and other required support, inclusive of and responsive to all children from a given community. The project is implemented in two rural districts (Sirajganj and Kishorganj) and in one semi-urban sub-district (Savar) in close partnership with government officials at all levels. The project contributes to strengthening the child rights situation in Bangladesh through (1) enrolment of out-of-school children including those with disabilities, and (2) provision of rehabilitation services. Change and results are monitored and measured (at the end of the project) by comparing with the Child Rights Situation Analysis conducted at the beginning of the project. The project uses a multi-sector approach, bringing key stakeholders and duty-bearers together for consultation, joint decision making and shared ownership. The aim is for inclusive policies and practices to be improved through coordination, capacity building, advocacy and other community-based and school related activities.

A successful Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) approach

Children with disabilities face a range of attitudinal, institutional and practical barriers and few get the opportunity to attend school in their communities. The most prevalent disabilities among children in Bangladesh are physical impairments (31.13%) and hearing and speech impairments (26.36%)⁹. The HOPE project aims to improve the learning outcomes and wellbeing of children with disabilities and their peers. To address the societal barriers for children with disabilities so they can access and participate in support services, healthcare, education and social activities, the project introduced CBR. The HOPE project established 6 CBR centres in 6 Union Parishads¹⁰ to ensure services close to the community and institutionalise CBR within the local government system. The CBR centres, established within the Union Parishad office complex, provide basic physiotherapy services (with follow up) to children and their families. Before the start of HOPE, there were no community-based rehabilitation (CBR) services in the target areas¹¹.

Community-based rehabilitation (CBR) is a strategy within community development for the rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities, poverty reduction and social inclusion of all people with disabilities. CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of disabled people themselves, their families and communities, and the appropriate health, education, vocational and social services.

ILO, UNESCO & WHO, 2004

⁹ www.leonardcheshire.org/sites/default/files/Learning_Brief_IE_Bangladesh_2014.pdf

¹⁰ Union or Union Parishad is the smallest rural administrative and local government unit made up of nine Wards or villages

¹¹ Source: Child Rights Situation Analysis Report (2016), Save the Children Bangladesh

Working with children with disabilities, their parents, local government officials, CBR workers and education authorities, the project aims to build and replicate a CBR approach which is owned and supported by the local government structure to prepare for and sustain inclusive education. Traditionally CBR is organised in the community and by the community, using resources from the community, and targeting adults as well as children. The HOPE project has taken a cross-sectoral CBR approach especially focusing on children - health, education, empowerment, and social awareness - while institutionalising the approach within the government system as an innovation. Local Government officials have become very committed and even put aside budget for continued CBR, and the centres have been re-named Union Disability Service Centres to reflect this.

Access to CBR services greatly improved and the project has had a significant impact. During the first two years of the project, CBR services were provided for 1034 children, in addition to counselling services for their parents and community sensitisation activities. Assistive devices were distributed to 363 children, and 438 children were referred to other services¹². Every project year, more children with disabilities enrolled compared to the previous year. By the second half of 2018, 598 more children with disabilities were enrolled in their community schools, as a result of community enrolment campaigns, advocacy and a well-functioning CBR system that continues to support children after they enrol in school. Even from outside the target Union Parishads, parents come with their children to these new CBR centres.

NEW CENTRE EMPOWERS PARENTS

A Union Disability Service Centre was set up in Gujadia Union Parishad with the assistance of Save the Children and Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation. From remote areas, many parents come with their disabled children to this centre for rehabilitation services. Two trained CBR Resource Persons provide primary therapy services to children with disabilities as well as counselling to their parents on how to take care of their children at home. The result is that parents can now provide primary therapy at home. CBR Resource Persons make home visits to monitor progress. Parents are very happy to see their children's improvements. Even from outside the Union Parishad parents come to the centre after hearing about the CBR services. Currently 249 children with disabilities are receiving rehabilitation at this centre and 125 children with disabilities enrolled in primary school.¹³ The Union Disability Service Centre thus plays a catalyst role to make children with disabilities ready for school and schools ready for these children.

The Chairman of Gujadia Union Parishad expressed his feelings by saying: "My Union has now gone ahead one step further with the establishment of this centre. Opportunities have thus been created for children with disabilities to come out of their home and remove societal superstition".

¹² HOPE MIS, July (2018)

¹³ For the total HOPE project, covering the project period, 1335 children received CBR services and 598 enrolled in school.

There are two resource persons per CBR centre, one male one female hired from the same community. They receive 30 days training on different disabilities, appropriate rehabilitation methods and inclusion, followed by monthly hands-on refresher trainings. CBR workers contribute to the protection and development of children with disabilities. During home visits, children and their parents are made aware of child protection and child development issues. The CBR centre is open daily until 1 pm, to conduct sessions of 30 min per child with their parents attending. CBR workers do home and school visits in the afternoon. Parents of children with disabilities learn to provide rehabilitation services at home (physical therapy, sitting and walking exercises, toilet training, speech therapy and play therapy). Support provided includes physiotherapy, speech-therapy, daily living activities training, and white-cane and hearing aid instruction.

The CBR Centre Management Committee monitors the centre regularly. Committee members share their opinion with CBR Resource Persons on how to improve the centre's functionality. They used a toll-free number and a message box to share their views on the ongoing CBR. These mechanisms ensure accountability to the community.

Teachers were trained on inclusive pedagogy, so they know how to address the learning needs of different students in their classrooms. Upazila (sub-district) officials, school management committees, parents and communities learned through the HOPE project how to support their schools and ensure a safe and accessible learning environment for all children. Parents regularly meet at 'courtyard meetings' to discuss child development issues. Children's groups or Child Forums successfully lobbied with local government officials to improve school environments, roads, playgrounds and classrooms to also include learners with disabilities. Child Forums also played an important role in empowering children as active citizens who raise their voice for their rights.

PRIORITISING CHILDREN

During a recent rainy season extensive flooding resulted in schools being closed for several weeks in the project area.

The Union Parishad immediately arranged for boats for children and teachers ensuring that education could continue throughout a time that would otherwise have meant a gap in services. CBR workers also used these boats to provide therapy and counselling services to children with disabilities and their parents during this time, while coping with the flooding.

All actors were in agreement that the HOPE project had greatly contributed to the government prioritising education and other services for children.



The HOPE project developed a tracking system to continue to follow children with disabilities who received CBR therapy services. As a result, it is now easier to monitor how many and which children are visiting the centre regularly (or not) and who drop out so that CBR workers and district disability resource centre staff can respond appropriately. The tracking system can be used as evidence for further research or the government can use the data to design future programmes.

Engagement of stakeholders and partners

Parents, children, teachers, community members and local government officials have learned about equal rights and opportunities of children with disabilities. Parents of children with disabilities have become advocates for their children. CBR centres are completely managed by committees of community members. The Union Parishad provides rooms, electricity, sanitation and management support to the CBR centres. The 6 Union Parishads allocated a budget of total Taka 6,500,000 (Euro 63,725) for improved access, regular operation and management of these centres, while Union Parishads have also started to pay part of CBR workers' salaries and have committed to continue doing so. In all committees formed by the project, the participation of females and persons with disabilities is ensured. The Union Parishads have been very supportive and is taking its responsibility for children with disabilities and for a well-functioning Union Disability Service Centre seriously and provides assistive devices (e.g. wheelchairs).

Village Education Resource Centre (VERC) and Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation (BPF) implement the HOPE project as local NGO partners. These organisations connect with different service providers to ensure low or free of cost clinical assessment, therapy services and assistive devices. This way the project received 23 special chairs and 23 sets of therapy materials from Child Sight Foundation free of cost. The NGO partners also contribute to project visibility at the national level, for instance, by sharing the HOPE project approach with the Ministry of Social Welfare, resulting in this Ministry consulting and collaborating with the project. VERC and BPF assist the Union Parishad to develop sustainability plans for the Union Disability Service Centres beyond the project duration and have shared the HOPE approach with other projects thus increasing opportunities for scaling-up in other geographical areas.

45 government primary schools are now refurbished and accessible for all children including those with disabilities. The quality of the learning environment in and around the school has improved with more attention also on child protection issues. Schools have disaster prevention and management plans, and classroom observations show that interactions between teachers and children and among children in general are more respectful, due to disability awareness and understanding. Parents (and CBR workers) continue to provide rehabilitation services for school-age children who need them, and have started to monitor the progress of their children both related to rehabilitation and to school performance.

Child participation

A Child-to-Child approach through the Child Forum has successfully empowered children to join and speak up at community, school and local government meetings. Child Forums have become inclusive of children with disabilities and are gender sensitive in membership and leadership. Members of Child Forums have undertaken many initiatives such as identifying out-of-school children especially those with disabilities and getting them

enrolled in school, mobilising the community and their peers to remove social stigma towards children with disabilities, supporting children with disabilities to get from home to school and vice versa, establishing reading groups with younger children, and advocating for government budget allocation for CBR and inclusive education. The Child Forums have supported the enrolment of 1679 out-of-school children.

Key milestones

- Successful budget lobby by Child Forums, resulting in annual budget allocations for CBR and inclusive education;
- Local government commitment to provide space, electricity, sanitation and other support for the CBR centres at their office location;
- Teacher Training manual developed together with Department of Education, university academics, National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE) and Inclusive Education Cell officials.

Significant challenges

Social stigma continues to be a problem, and awareness raising campaigns using role-models, champions and the media showcasing successful children and adults with disabilities remains a priority. Disability is often still perceived as a medical problem requiring a clinical assessment. Clinical assessments however tend to result in labels that mostly relate to the impairment without considering the family situation, environment, social-emotional aspects or other characteristics of a child. As disability inclusive projects require a twin-track approach, stakeholders need to demand better coordination between the relevant ministries for better chances of disability mainstreaming. Teacher skills to address the individual needs of different children, including those with disabilities, is still a challenge, while teachers also need specific disability related skills such as Sign Language and Braille.

CHILD FORUM GIVES CHILDREN A VOICE

Golap Child Forum was established by the HOPE Project to ensure the rights and protection of all children in the Union Parishad. Child Forum members had dialogues with Union Parishad officials. They shared the difficulties faced by school-going children, such as the poor road from Kaichabari to Dagortali and from Bashbari school to Nalam road. Another issue they raised was that of Bashbari school's playground, which remained water-logged most of the time. The Dhamsona Union Parishad chairman decided to level the school playground, fencing it and repairing the school connecting roads. The Dhamsona Union Parishad Chairman said, "I could not even imagine that our children in the community could speak this way. I have written down all demands and the work will be done as a priority within the next budget." The result is that children can now easily and safely come to school and use the playground. It has increased school attendance rates and no dropouts have been reported since these problems were fixed.

Scalability and sustainability

The active involvement and leadership of the Union Parishad reveals how CBR can be upscaled and become sustainably institutionalised. Union Parishad members share their experiences and achievements in their monthly district meetings and champions have been acknowledged publicly. The Union Parishad has also demonstrated its commitment to continue CBR support and disability inclusive education by allocating resources from the local government budget to support families, provide assistive devices and pay part of CBR workers' salaries. Child Forum members – as part of Child Friendly Local Governance (CFLG) development - now join annual budget discussions and successfully lobby with government officials for children's rights and needs. Some NGO service providers such as CSF Global have committed to continue to provide support to the Union Disability Service Centre after the end of the HOPE project. The HOPE CBR approach has been presented and discussed at national and international meetings and conferences as well as during the new sector-wide planning process, motivating the working group to promote CBR inclusion within the Community Learning Centre strategy.

Suggestions for further implementation

By working together across CBR projects, communities can learn from each other and create cluster-like activities to for example design and develop educational toys.

While parents are waiting for CBR services, they can stimulate the overall development of their children by encouraging them to play, move around and interact with other children using easy to grip balls, big books with colourful pictures, and other toys.

When replicating the Union Disability Service Centre, it could be interesting to explore how to actively engage more fathers in the project, by showing fathers bringing their children to the centre or school in a video-clip, or through a case-study about a father who is actively involved in the development of his child or by organising meetings at places where fathers can join (e.g. at their place of work such as a factory) or at a time of the day that they are free to join (e.g. when not working in the field).

It will be important to share the HOPE CBR success also with national policy makers and invite relevant officials to visit and meet with Union Parishad change-makers.

And finally, for cross-country comparison and improved rights-based approaches to disability mainstreaming, internationally agreed methods of screening and classification-terminology such as ICF-CY¹⁴ and Washington Group-UNICEF¹⁵ must be used in Bangladesh, as is also promoted by Save the Children International globally.

14 International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health – Children & Youth (ICF-CY) apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/43737/9789241547321_eng.pdf

15 www.washingtongroup-disability.com/washington-group-question-sets/child-disability/

HOPE HELPED CHANGE SIAM'S LIFE

Siam doesn't speak like the other children in his village, and he doesn't walk so well. Siam is seven years old and lives in a village in North-East Bangladesh.

He was diagnosed early with cerebral palsy and like over four million children with disabilities in Bangladesh, he didn't go to school. There has been significant progress in including disadvantaged children in education in Bangladesh in recent years, but still many children like Siam are not even considered for school. Siam was destined for a life in poverty and without education.

His life changed when staff from the HOPE project, run by Save the Children and funded by the IKEA Foundation, met with Siam's parents and told them about the possibilities offered by the nearby disability service centre.

Siam and his mother have now visited the centre regularly for two months. The specialists at the centre have come up with a rehabilitation plan for him and he is already making progress.

Siam's father Kokhon Miah is optimistic: "My son is gradually improving, and his physical condition is better than it ever was. We are now hoping to enrol him in the nearby government primary school."

The project is not only helping children with disabilities directly, but also working on changing the attitudes towards children with disabilities in communities and local schools through meetings, trainings and workshops.

In Siam's village, and throughout the communities the project works in, attitudes are slowly shifting. The school authorities are beginning to be more positive about including children like Siam in formal education – something that wouldn't have happened earlier. The HOPE project will support 11,000 children in Bangladesh, who have disabilities and no previous access to education.

Tools and reference materials

Readers interested in more detailed information about the inclusive education approach by Save the Children in Bangladesh or in the tools (case-file; rehabilitation plan; service cards; tracking system) and training materials the project developed, can click on the links below or contact the project team using the following e-mail contact:

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www.facebook.com/hopeprojectbangladesh

savethechildren.facebook.com/groups/BangladeshCountryOffice

www.eenet.org.uk/new-blog-and-report-learning-from-colleagues-to-improve-inclusive-education

journals.euser.org/index.php/ejed/issue/view/202

www.bd-education.net/hope





CAMBODIA

CREATING QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Project background

There are many marginalised children in Cambodia, ranging from those living in poverty and children from ethnic minority populations to migrant children, children with disabilities and those living in remote areas. The Government of Cambodia has prioritised enrolment and quality of education as reflected in the (updated) Education Strategic Plan (2014-2018). Over 90% of primary school boys and girls (6-12 years old) attend primary school. However, only 74% of these children reach the last grade of primary school.¹⁶

A National Policy on Education for Children with Disabilities to ensure equal education opportunities, formal and non-formal, for children with disabilities with their non-disabled peers in public schools,¹⁷ was adopted in 2008, but enrolment and completion by these learners continues to be a challenge. Disability statistics are not readily available in Cambodia and, when available, are not considered to be reliable. Prevalence rates vary from 1.44% and 4.7% to more than 15% depending on data collection methods. Almost half of all people with disabilities in Cambodia are persons under the age of 20.¹⁸

Pursat is one of the poorest provinces and a rural area, 180 kilometres north-west of Phnom Penh. Enrolment is high, but so are repetition and dropout rates (8% and 6% respectively)¹⁹. Enrolment of children with disabilities is problematic due to negative attitudes in families and communities, school accessibility issues, and lack of specific disability support. In addition, most children with disabilities come from poor families. To address these challenges, Save the Children developed a project to reach out-of-school-children and develop inclusive quality learning environments, building the capacity of Children's Councils and teachers on inclusive education. The project provides technical support in 8 primary schools that function as models for other schools in the same district and supports more than 3,000 disadvantaged children (6-14 years) to get access to and benefit from inclusive education also by providing scholarships, school materials and means of transport (e.g. bicycles) when required. Awareness raising among local authorities, parents and teachers improved overall understanding of disability, and resulted in increased enrolment and retention of children with disabilities.

**A quarter of children
starting primary school
don't finish last grade.**

¹⁶ UNESCO UIS 2017 uis.unesco.org/en/country/kh

¹⁷ www.moeys.gov.kh/en/press-releases/policy-on-education-for-children-with-disabilities.html#W4O2G84zYkl

¹⁸ USAID/RTI (2018) Situation Analysis of the Education of Children with Disabilities in Cambodia Report: pg. 20-21

¹⁹ UNESCO UIS 2017 uis.unesco.org/en/country/kh

Learning environments that accommodate children with intellectual disabilities

Save the Children’s “Quality Learning Environment” (QLE) framework²⁰ outlines critical items across five guiding principles²¹ that the organisation believes should be present in a school to successfully support children’s learning and wellbeing. This framework was made inclusive of learners with disabilities and used for designing, planning and monitoring the project, adding information collected through school-community mapping and a teacher needs assessment. The collected data and subsequent consultation with other actors revealed a gap in knowledge and skills related to the education of children with intellectual²² disabilities. In Cambodia specialised NGOs focus on vulnerable people, including those with disabilities, but mostly only those with physical and sensory disabilities. Children with intellectual disabilities may have difficulties in understanding complex information, using logical thinking to solve problems, following directions and instructions, and using judgement and abstract thought. The project thus prioritised the rights and needs of children with intellectual disabilities and the development of inclusive quality learning environments, combining education, child protection and child empowerment.

Teachers were trained on disability and inclusive pedagogy, as part of developing quality learning environments for all learners. Together with other development partners and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS), Department of Special Education, a manual for teaching children with intellectual disabilities was developed and piloted in Pursat, incorporating practical teaching and classroom management strategies.

Demonstration classrooms were established by the project in all target schools to showcase inclusive teaching and classroom management as a “whole-school approach”²³ to other teachers, head teachers and parents. This way, other schools could see for themselves what an inclusive quality learning environment looks like and encourage their schools to develop the same, while making sure that children with intellectual disabilities, who often need different teaching-learning approaches, also benefit. Teachers in all eight model schools were able to model their skills to include and teach students who are not working at the same grade level as their peers by modifying their lessons and methodology. These inclusive methods were low-cost and doable in every classroom and included strategies like breaking down and simplifying tasks, using concrete items and examples to explain new concepts, allowing extra time for practice and role modelling desired behaviour.

20 resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/quality-learning-framework

21 The framework was reviewed during the project period and adapted a 5th guiding principle (school leadership and management) and decreased the number of indicators per guiding principle.

22 Intellectual disabilities are characterised by a reduced cognitive ability.

23 “Whole school approach” implies actively engaging all stakeholders such as local education officials, (head-) teachers, parents, community members and learners themselves. Components of such an approach include: building capacity, create a supportive school culture, implement school policies and practices, establish key understandings and competencies, create a protective physical environment and sustain school-family-community partnerships.

MAPPING THE NEED IN REMOTE VILLAGES

Data is important, not just for accountability, but to identify what works and what further improvements are needed. School mapping, introduced by the project in all target schools, is a way to identify vulnerable students while improving the quality and inclusiveness of classroom practices. Koh Wat primary school in a remote village in Pursat, uses school mapping to reach out and respond to the needs of disadvantaged students. The school director initiates annual school mapping together with local community members, including the Commune Committee for Women and Children and the Village Chief. This way the school collects updated and accurate data on households and children within the school catchment area. Data is used to verify all children are enrolled and to follow up on children's attendance, as well as provide direct support to children. When the school receives donations such as education materials from the local community the school director already knows which children are the most in need and makes sure these materials assist the learning of those children. The map identifies all households within the school catchment area, disaggregated by households with a child living with a disability (red triangles) and households with children at risk, such as orphans or children whose parents migrated (green triangles). The mapping also displays the location of teachers' houses, Village Chief and other local authorities.

Education actors from community to provincial level were trained on child rights and non-discrimination. School Support Committees learned how to identify children with disabilities and other vulnerable children and promote inclusive quality learning environments; and Commune Committees for Women and Children learned about violence against children and child protection. Teachers started to try out the Manual for teaching children with intellectual disabilities, developed by Save the Children and now endorsed by the MoEYS, while provincial and district trainers conduct monthly monitoring visits and teacher reflection meetings. Participation of all children in classroom activities and monitoring individual learning progress using formative assessment are a critical part of supporting teachers to become effective inclusive practitioners.

Teachers trained by the project demonstrated inclusive knowledge and skills by consciously reflecting on how their teaching and classroom management methods impact learners with different intellectual disabilities. They have developed a habit to check themselves at the end of every lesson whether all children, including those with intellectual disabilities, ask questions, answer questions, follow instructions, look interested and engaged, get a chance to write on the blackboard, use teaching aids and present their work and learning in various ways.

The project promotes children's decision making in school activities by demonstrating how children as members of the Children's Council, including those with intellectual disabilities, voice their ideas through drawings, role-plays and Focus Group Discussions and influence the annual school self-assessment and improvement planning process, using the Quality Learning Environment (QLE) framework²⁴.

²⁴ School Codes of Conduct for children and teachers were developed together in all demonstration schools.

Parents and children, including those with intellectual disabilities, say they like the newly decorated classroom environments, which has resulted in improved attendance and more parental support to the school.

Questions were developed to stimulate discussions with children – including those with disabilities – about their educational experiences. Giving children a voice and continuous professional development support for teachers – using Cluster²⁵ Teacher Meetings, while developing inclusive quality learning environments - have been key in this project. The project has resulted in increased enrolment of children with disabilities and other vulnerable children and teachers becoming inclusive teachers for all.

Teachers from the 8 project model schools have shared their successful inclusive strategies with teachers in the same cluster. These strategies included for example:²⁶

- Get to know your learners well as whole persons (beyond a disability or other challenge);
- Work with other teachers; observe each other's classrooms and provide feedback (e.g. to reflect on how certain teaching methods impact different learners);
- As teachers, model respectful language and behaviour in the classroom for all children to copy;
- Observe students while teaching and when students are working individually or in groups. Based on observations, decide where and when individual learning or behavioural support is needed;
- Use approaches like cooperative learning, peer-to-peer tutoring, buddy-system²⁷;
- Use differentiated instruction²⁸;
- Establish a quiet work space for children who get distracted easily.

Engagement of stakeholders and partners

At the national level Save the Children leads a coalition of experts to develop national guidelines on inclusive education and positive discipline to be used and rolled out by the MOEYS as a collective responsibility of the Save the Children Cambodia country office education team. The Pursat project works with the Department for Special Education and NGO partners to promote wider implementation of inclusive policies and practices by e.g. jointly developing manuals and other materials and sharing project experiences. At the provincial and district level, Save the Children works in partnership with the Pursat Provincial Office of Education and the Bakan District Office of Education as well as with Opérations Enfants du Cambodge (OEC). OEC is a local NGO with expertise in community mobilisation and inclusive education.

At community level the project works in close collaboration with the School Support Committees, the Commune Committees for Women and Children and with schools, communities and children themselves to implement and monitor activities. Especially focusing on responding to the rights and needs of children with intellectual disabilities in all these partnerships has been new for most stakeholders, not having realised that these children are among the most misunderstood and discriminated against in communities and schools.

²⁵ A cluster consists of 5 to 10 schools depending on distance and geographical accessibility.

²⁶ Source: personal communication with (head-) teachers and district education officials during 2017 workshop.

²⁷ Buddy systems teach and give children the opportunity to practice the important values of respect, care, valuing diversity, responsibility, friendship and including others. Buddies of children with intellectual disabilities learn the skills associated with empathy and compassion through activities in the classroom and at the playground. It also helps combat teasing and bullying.

²⁸ Differentiated instruction involves giving students choices about how to learn and how to demonstrate their learning.

Child participation

Children's Councils play an important role in making schools inclusive. These Councils were institutionalised by the Ministry as part of the Child Friendly School initiative, but functionality and impact vary by school, depending on the commitment of (head) teachers. In schools where children are considered a resource, Children's Councils function well, and children learn about Child Rights and skills such as leadership, cooperation and problem-solving. Making Councils inclusive of students with intellectual disabilities has been challenging. These children may need additional support to function well as members of such Councils, e.g. by repeating information or explaining new knowledge by simplifying or visualising concepts. Children with disabilities have been successfully consulted on school improvements. Issues Children's Councils discuss and act on, include enrolment campaigns, waste management, cleanliness of classrooms and latrines and school gardens, while project Children's Councils were also involved in school-community mapping, and supporting other students in learning-clubs.

Key milestones

- Teachers in the eight model schools know why and how to develop Personal Support Plans for students who need them.
- Development of a comprehensive manual on how to teach children with intellectual disabilities in inclusive classrooms, officially approved by the MoEYS for use in in-service training.
- Commune Councils in the project locations started to allocate budget to support marginalised students, also those with disabilities, with learning materials, uniforms, bicycles, etc. in the annual Commune Investment Program.

CREATING AN OPEN SCHOOL-COMMUNITY

In Koh Wat Primary School, the director developed a new initiative to improve school management, teacher performance and support for disadvantaged students. He uses 30 minutes of teaching time each week to meet with all teachers to follow up on the progress and challenges of vulnerable students, including checking attendance and learning performance. This is an opportunity for the director to support his teachers, as well as to promote home-visits to families with children who may be struggling to learn. It has helped to create an open and participatory school-community: parents/caregivers are invited to observe their children in the classroom, and they now participate in preschool classes with children under five. As a result, parents and caregivers make a serious effort to assist their children's learning at home and provided material support to the school, such as electric fans for classrooms and education materials to be given to the most vulnerable students. The weekly, systematic follow-up with teachers has been critical in building this accountability and trust between school and community.

Significant challenges

- The project promotes participation of children with intellectual disabilities in the Children's Councils, however, it remains difficult to change the mindsets of peers and even teachers, who continue to have low expectations of the capabilities of these children.
- Disability screening remains problematic and over-labelling is a serious risk. Too many children may get labels of having an intellectual disability.
- Clinical assessments can only be done in far-away places such as Battambang, Siem Reap or Phnom Penh, while more comprehensive²⁹ assessments are seldom done.

Scalability and sustainability

- (Head-) teachers from non-project schools in Bakan have been invited by the District Office of Education to visit and learn from the demonstration schools and ask their commune leadership for support to do the same.
- Bakan district and Pursat provincial authorities share their IE experiences with other districts and provinces during their own technical meetings; exchange visits between districts and provinces have been organised for wider learning and replication.
- By using (or reviving) existing structures and procedures, successful project developments can be more easily institutionalised for continued use. The Thursday Technical Meetings (TTM) is a good example, making teacher peer support the heart of the project. Experienced IE teachers meet within the cluster to share experience and support others. TTM promotes teachers to discuss inclusive pedagogy, what works well and what remains a challenge. Here teachers agree on sustainable implementation of inclusive methodologies. TTM has become opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own practice and learn from each other, rather than being a place for complaints and lamentations, which used to be the case.

Suggestions for further implementation

For successful replication, evidence is needed of what works and indicators developed for inclusive practices. For example be: (1) All students support each other in their learning, (2) Teachers and parents of children with (intellectual) disabilities cooperate well, (3) All students feel that their opinions and views are valued, (4) The school ensures that all students attend every day (5) All students are engaged in all lesson activities.

It will be important to demonstrate the use of internationally agreed definitions, classification and identification of disabilities – including intellectual disabilities – such as based on the UNCRPD and using the ICF-CY and the Washington Group-UNICEF Child Functioning Module.

Continue capacity building of actors and stakeholders and develop demonstration classrooms, working with existing platforms and structures and lobby for inclusive education mainstreaming rather than separate stand-alone modules in existing teacher education programs.

²⁹ Comprehensive assessments go beyond clinical screening, also collecting data on participation restrictions and environmental factors which are essential for constructing a complete understanding of disability. This includes e.g. identification of discriminatory attitudes, physical and communication barriers as well as gaps in legislation and delivery of inclusive services.

SAM MET TEACHERS THAT UNDERSTOOD HIM

Sam Ouen, 14, lives in rural Cambodia with his grandparents. The family is poor and Sam Ouen's parents have found work in Thailand.

Like many children with disabilities, Sam Ouen has not been officially diagnosed. When he was old enough for school, his grandmother wanted him to attend but she knew it would be hard. Sam Ouen didn't talk much, kept to himself and didn't engage in domestic work or play with his younger siblings.

The school close to Sam Ouen's home is part of the Inclusive Education for All project, funded by the IKEA Foundation and run by Save the Children, and this gave Sam Ouen a great opportunity. He was able to meet with a teacher who understood his needs and knew how to teach him in the same class as the other children in the village.

As well as his teacher's support, Sam Ouen gets help from community workers who are trained to provide personal support and follow-up for marginalised children. Together with Sam Ouen, they developed a personal development plan for him to ensure that his parents, teachers and local authorities know what support he needs to attend school regularly and benefit from it.

Sam Ouen is more sociable now and has started to learn how to write.

"I want to be a teacher. I like coming to school with the teachers and students. Being a teacher, I can earn money and good food to eat."

Save the Children, working with local partners and the provincial office of education, is training teachers and other school staff to teach and work with children with disabilities. The organisation also works closely with local councils to make communities aware of the rights of children with disabilities. Local councils also work with Save the Children to recruit and train local support groups which provide social and psychological support to marginalised children.

Tools and reference materials

Readers interested in tools and materials developed by Save the Children in Cambodia for the inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities in quality learning environments, can contact:

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CHINA

A FOUR-PILLAR APPROACH

Project background

Children with disabilities in China face multiple barriers to accessing quality education, because local schools have little capacity to manage inclusive practice that supports all children's learning. The policy framework is still relatively weak and incomplete and there is generally a negative attitude towards children with disabilities attending regular schools. For example, some of the concerns parents of typical children voice include: "Children with disabilities will disturb classroom discipline and distract other children from their studies", and "Children without disabilities will copy inappropriate behaviour from children with disabilities" and "Teachers will pay too much attention to children with disabilities and neglect other children"³⁰. It is estimated that 72.7% of children with disabilities are enrolled in school, of whom 50% go to special education schools³¹. The role of Save the Children Sweden/Save the Children International has been to provide technical support for the project design, tools for Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning, training materials, and the development of inclusive education quality indicators.

The project aims to increase enrolment of children with disabilities into regular inclusive schools and contribute to a change in attitudes towards children with disabilities through a national inclusive education campaign. Resource centres (in Pi county and Wuhou district in Sichuan province; in Weishan county and Jingdong county in Yunnan province acting as regional technical hubs) and resource rooms (one in every regular school with a resource room teacher) have been established and are now functioning well to support students with disabilities in regular schools. Local government partners are supported to implement the new Regulation on Education for Persons with Disabilities. The project promotes the existing online in-service teacher training on inclusive education and advocates with universities to integrate inclusive education into pre-service teacher education programs with the aim to scale up inclusive education activities especially in Sichuan and Yunnan.

43% of regular schools still refuse to enrol children with disabilities, thus not fulfilling the Regulation on Education of Persons with Disabilities principle of "zero rejection"

2018 survey by Save the Children China, Inclusion China and One Foundation

³⁰ Survey commissioned by Save the Children China in 2018

³¹ CDPF (2013) Annual Report

Successful approach

At the start of the project it was found that children with disabilities do not get the support they need when enrolled in regular schools and were mostly ignored. This was due to lack of inclusion knowledge, skills and experience, while attitudes and perceptions toward disabilities remained unchallenged in Chinese culture. Many parents still view disabilities as a source of shame and refuse to get the official disability certificate. The project collected data on children with disabilities and those with additional support needs, on teachers, parents and community members in project and non-project schools³² and developed a capacity building package. Policies were analysed and public engagement campaigns for inclusive education designed and implemented.

A four-pillar strategy

Pillar 1

In-service training such as capacity building of special schools to act as resource centre for mainstream schools to become inclusive. Implementation under this pillar is sub-divided into four approaches or 'field pilots':

1. Training of teachers (from Resource Centre³³ teachers, resource room teachers, regular teachers, new teachers and heads of school),
2. Community-based inclusive education services focusing on improved knowledge and skills for parents³⁴,
3. Set-up of support systems for children who need such e.g. based on Individual Education Plans (IEP), and
4. The development and monitoring of inclusive education quality indicators at school level.

Pillar 2

Pre-service teacher education: In partnership with universities, inclusive education is being mainstreamed in regular teacher training colleges known as "Normal" colleges. This pillar focuses on the development of an IE curriculum for ALL teacher education students, with and without a special education major.

Pillar 3

Policy advocacy for the establishment of a policy and regulatory inclusive education framework in all project counties by influencing laws with research evidence and public awareness raising on new laws and its implementation.

32 99 schools in 2 project counties in Sichuan province; 199 schools in 2 project counties in Yunnan province, total is 298: 40 project schools and 258 non-project schools.

33 A Resource Centre is a special education school that provides technical assistance to regular schools to become disability inclusive schools; a Resource Room is a separate classroom in a regular school with a resource room teacher to be able to pull out students (with "special needs" or disabilities) who need additional individual learning support.

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Pillar 4

Joint public campaigns with other NGOs and parents' organisations to challenge and change negative stigma associated with children with disabilities in mainstream schools using research, charity concerts, metro advertisements, children's activities (such as Student Reporter Club and inclusive Summer Camp) as well as (social) media.

Supporting the teacher training system towards an inclusive approach has been especially successful, because teachers felt they lacked inclusive knowledge and skills and were eager to change that. The project thus developed a training program to help teachers develop and use Individual Education Plans (IEP) and provide individual support to children with disabilities. Resource Room Teachers designed activities considering the individual needs of learners with disabilities and based on their IEPs³⁵. Resource Room Teachers use various strategies in the resource room and in the regular class to support the inclusion process, such as changing the classroom seating arrangement, providing multiple sensory presentations of lessons, allowing children to express what they are learning in different ways like visual, auditory and kinaesthetic, reducing the number and difficulty of assignments, and adapting and simplifying the lesson for better understanding.

The biggest positive change the project team witnessed was teachers being willing to support children with disabilities using Individual Education Plans (IEP) and individual case management. The project agreed with the local government to routinely hold coordination meetings and develop capacity of local partners to implement and monitor the process and progress towards inclusive education. Every semester, monitoring visits are made to project schools to follow up on teachers' inclusive classroom practice and document those.

“Before I received the training on inclusive education, I took it for granted that children with disabilities should study in special education schools, but when I learned about inclusive education, I decided to learn more and improve my teaching skills to be able to support all children. I think every child should be accepted.”

Resource teacher Liu Li



³⁵ An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a plan for the school-year for students with specific learning support needs, for example due to a disability. It describes how the child learns, how s/he best demonstrates what s/he has learned and what teachers and other service providers will do to help the child learn more effectively. The IEP is developed by a multi-sectoral team of teachers, support personnel, parents and as much as possible the student. A child-friendly IEP is important to actively and meaningfully engage students themselves to feel more involved in their education and thus more motivated to reach the targets they have helped to set for themselves. Not all children with disabilities have IEPs, many such as those with more individual learning needs such as learning disability, ADHD or with behaviour and emotional problems have an intervention strategy. However, in China the local education bureau and resource centre request resource room teachers to make an IEP for children with a disability certificate.

Engagement of stakeholders and partners

Collaborating with local education bureaus, the Ministry of Education and other organisations working toward inclusive education such as One Foundation, One Plus One and Humanity and Inclusion³⁶ has been key to the project success using the 4-pillar approach.

Parents have been actively involved too; 29 parent committees have been established in Sichuan and Yunnan with 47% being parents of children with disabilities. Parents of children without disabilities reported increased understanding about inclusive education and regarding the challenges faced by children with disabilities. 1,845 parents have done Positive Parenting training and 80% of the feedback was positive, which was also demonstrated by their changed ways of interacting with their children and encouraging their children to talk about their thoughts, ideas and concerns. One parent reported that before the training she was pessimistic about her child's potential, but her attitude has become more positive after receiving the (United Nations developed) Disability Equality Training. She is eager to implement her new knowledge and parenting skills at home such as instructing her child positively not negatively, telling her child how to do things rather than doing them for the child, encouraging the child and praising it for every small success to gain more confidence.

Child participation

The project actively engaged children with and without disabilities and those from ethnic minority and majority populations. Activities include the Student Reporter Clubs whose members are children with and without disabilities who make other children and adults aware of disability issues and inclusive education. Club members meet every week around certain topics or to learn skills related to their role such as photographing, interviewing, writing and editing.

The actress, producer and entrepreneur, Ruby Lin, has been a successful champion and Goodwill Ambassador for Save the Children in China to promote inclusive education.

See: youtu.be/a7H7GB453UQ

³⁶ Previously called Handicap International

THE LITTLE REPORTER CLUB

Established in 2016, the Little Reporter Club is one of the most popular clubs in our school. All children, including those with disabilities, are welcome to join the club.

“A teacher told us that the Little Reporter Club is a consultant team for children experiencing inclusive education because our school is part of the inclusive education program. Our main responsibility is to raise awareness of schools and children around us about disability issues and learn about the importance of being inclusive and accept and help students who have difficulties in learning and living. Last August, Save the Children took us to the Little Reporters summer camp in Beijing. We visited a radio station to learn interview skills. A paper-handwriting event and a photography exhibition were organised. I learned a lot in that summer camp, which helped me develop greater interest in activities of the Little Reporter Club.”

Sunny, on 1st June – International Children’s Day

Key milestones

In 4 counties in Yunnan and Sichuan, the education system is transforming into a more inclusive system through teacher capacity building, IE working groups and cross-departmental cooperation³⁷. Children, parents and teachers report inclusive changes in their schools as a result of the 4-pillar approach.

- 4 Resource Centres are successfully transforming into regional technical hubs to support mainstream schools to become inclusive schools.
- 792 children with disabilities and 45,413 students without disabilities experience inclusion.
- 2,006 teachers and 2,789 parents have been trained on inclusive education (including using Individual Education Plans) and evidence from follow up visits has shown change in attitudes and improved support for children with disabilities.

“My dream is to become a photographer; I want to take pictures of the sea and sharks! A shark is the most powerful fish in the sea and can eat all the bad fishes.”

Du Duo - a student reporter club member who has a hearing impairment

³⁷ As reported and evidenced in the project’s annual report 2017.

Significant challenges

- Development towards inclusive education is a long-term change process, a 3-year project is not able to institutionalise such a change and mainstream schools still lack knowledge, skills and experience in implementing inclusive education.
- Most mainstream teacher education programs do not provide inclusive education training, leaving newly qualified teachers without the specialised knowledge and skills to support children with disabilities.
- Parents of children with disabilities are unaware of their children's rights to, for example, health and education services. Especially parents living in rural areas or from ethnic minorities lack such knowledge, while they also tend to be less involved in decision-making processes in their schools and communities and thus miss the opportunity to lobby for their children.
- Lack of strong legal support.
- Existing policies and regulations such as human resource allocations, public funding for children with disabilities, teacher performance appraisal rules, and student development assessments are not disability inclusive and thus hinder such developments.

Scalability and sustainability

Activities are becoming sustainable by supporting municipal and provincial Special Education Resource Centres in Sichuan and Yunnan to scale up the in-service inclusive education teacher training (both online and offline) and by assisting the Chinese Society of Education to promote and share the inclusive education course to other universities. By developing an evaluation framework together with the Ministry of Education to implement the Regulation on Education for Persons with Disabilities, counties can now be better supported to ensure their schools are (becoming) inclusive as part of the system. As the local government owns and leads the inclusive education development, they have experienced what changes can be made and what support is required and feasible. In this manner, local government partners can share their inclusive education practice model at other levels of the system and promote to institutionalise inclusive education at all levels. Already, regular municipal supervision has improved, and IE project counties have received a higher government ranking compared to other counties, showing government project recognition.

At the national level successful advocacy for the revision of the Regulation on Education for Persons with Disabilities has led to a strong central government support for inclusive education and for regular schools to improve the quality of education while accommodating the educational needs of children with disabilities (zero tolerance for regular schools to refuse children with disabilities).

Suggestions for further implementation

To replicate the approach, it is suggested that a collaborative structure is established between resource centres and resource rooms to ensure effective implementation of inclusive education.

JIAWEI STARTED SCHOOL AGAIN

When he was small, Jiawei's mother took him to kindergarten, but the teachers didn't know how to take care of him.

Jiawei was born with cerebral palsy, in a village in Sichuan province in south west China. Not only were the teachers not trained, but the kindergarten was not built for someone who couldn't move like the other children. His mum decided that it would be better for Jiawei if she took care of him at home. Jiawei, like so many children with disabilities in China, never entered the education system.

When Jiawei was 14 things changed. A nearby school became the first that Save the Children used to show that children with disabilities can be integrated in a regular school. The Education for all project, funded by the IKEA Foundation aims to increase the education opportunities for children with disabilities in China, by training teachers, changing attitudes in communities and introducing systems for inclusive education.

So, Jiawei started school again, this time he met teachers that had been trained by Save the Children's staff and he had a support teacher to help him develop further. Another important difference was that other students and parents had had the opportunity to learn about disabilities, so many of the previous prejudices were gone. Jiawei is now in fourth grade and enjoys school. He studies hard and feels he has strong support from people around him.

"All the teachers care about me and help me in my studies. My classmates often help me too."

The project will help over 45,000 children, but also show to authorities and other organisations that inclusive education is possible and that it is not complicated to give children with disabilities possibilities they did not have before.

"Studying is the first step to carry on my dreams," Jiawei says. "It will allow me to find a job, to save some money so that I can open my own small grocery shop."

Tools and reference materials

Readers interested in more detailed information about the inclusive education approach by Save the Children in China or in the tools and training materials the project developed can contact Liqian Luo, Inclusive Education project manager Liqian.luo@savethechildren.org

See also: campaigns.savethechildren.net/blogs/hedan/save-children-china%E2%80%99s-inclusive-education-campaign-event-partnership-ikea#page-content





INDONESIA

THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE APPROACH

Project background

The Inclusive Community Development and Schools for All (IDEAL) project responds to learning and development needs of children with disabilities living in rural and slum areas in West Java Province, while promoting inclusion of all children in the mainstream education system and a supportive environment in schools and communities. IDEAL takes a child-centred approach by activating duty bearers around a child's right to education and protection. The project partners with government, Community-Based Rehabilitation³⁸ (CBR) Organisations, Family Forums, Disability People's Organisations and Civil Society Organisations.

IDEAL especially identifies local inclusion barriers and support needs. The project focuses on behaviour change towards positive attitudes and behaviours through strong collaboration of stakeholders and actors that result in improved classroom and teaching approaches. The project intervenes at different levels at the same time, from national policy advocacy to teacher education, and from demonstrating inclusion through community-based rehabilitation and family forums to raising public awareness on child rights.

Currently, the Inclusive Education Department of West Java and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) are key partners. IDEAL supports these partners in reviewing and developing new regulations that promote inclusive education. The project also supports the development of a child protection system. IDEAL has started to use more Information and Communication Technologies when implementing the project and has developed a 60-second film to advocate for inclusive education through social media.

“One method of drawing a child out is to have them tutor other children in a topic they like. This strengthens inclusion. It shows that all kids have strengths even when it is not apparent. It creates pride in accomplishments and social life.”

Kartika Sari, Teacher, Class 4,
SDN 3 Lembang

³⁸ Community-based rehabilitation (CBR) is a community development strategy for the rehabilitation, equalisation of opportunities, poverty reduction and social inclusion of children/adults with disabilities. CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of disabled people themselves, their families and communities, and the appropriate health, education, vocational and social services (ILO, UNESCO & WHO, 2004). Family Forum is a group of parents of children with disabilities brought together to support each other, share ideas, and receive support from trained therapists.

Based on lessons learned from the project's previous phase it has become clear that problems in the family need to be addressed first to increase the chance of success later in life when reaching school age, including access to therapy and social welfare services and interaction with peers and neighbours. Often the first problem is when parents and other extended family members do not acknowledge that a child has a disability. Families tend to feel ashamed and hide the child, who is then often also not allowed to socialise with other children. A worst-case scenario is when the child is left alone at home without any caregivers when parents leave the house, for example for work. In many cases, children with disabilities are not well cared for due to lack of positive parenting skills and because most families are low-income families. In the community, negative attitudes and language from adults and children create an unwelcome environment for children with disabilities. These children are often perceived as bringing bad luck and the family as being cursed and therefore children with disability are often hidden.

Therefore, the project promotes community-based rehabilitation (CBR) and social inclusion, IDEAL also provides opportunities for children with and without disabilities to play together. CBR volunteers implement family-based care and conduct local campaigns to reduce negative stigma associated with disability. Initially only a few children with disabilities were identified, but after Family-Forums and CBR were established, numbers increased. For example, in Ngamplang (Cilawu sub-district) only 11 children (nine boys and two girls) came for CBR in June 2015, but this had increased to 42 children (29 boys and 13 girls) by November 2018.

HELPING PARENTS OVERCOME FEARS

"In the past, I never thought about children with disabilities. I did feel so mean towards them", Dede says.

Dede (38) is a CBR volunteers in Tasikmalaya and now actively links parents and schools to ensure that children with disabilities are welcomed and included and receive quality education. She regularly visits families with children with disabilities and brings them in contact with the resource centre close to the nearest school.

"Challenges come both from parents who are worried about their children and from the school that feels there is no capacity to respond to the needs of children with disabilities" explains Dede. But she never gives up connecting everyone and help them address their fears. As a result, children with disabilities in Manggungjaya Village now enrol in their community primary school.

The Golden Triangle – a new approach

Family-needs must be addressed to help children with disabilities as early as possible, while also pre-primary and primary schools need to be supported to enrol more learners with disabilities and the capacity of teachers built to respond to their needs effectively.

Through the project, three partnerships have been identified as critical in order for inclusion and inclusive education to be successful: partnerships with families, communities and schools. IDEAL refers to these as three pillars of The Golden Triangle. The three pillars reflect the need for cooperation in order to identify, support and include children with disabilities, starting with the active involvement of parents/families in Family-Forums and with Community-Based Rehabilitation. Parents are empowered with knowledge and skills for positive parenting, daily living activities and child stimulation, supported by professionals, CBR volunteers, family-forums and teachers.

Parents play a critical role in increasing their children's chances for accessing rehabilitation, education and social inclusion opportunities and they have found supportive allies in IDEAL's community-based activities that give families the strength and knowledge they need to not just accept but also to nurture and manage their child. By emphasising contact with children and their families, IDEAL successfully begun to change community attitudes, correcting the myths and undermining the fears and the shame surrounding disability. The use of community-based rehabilitation and parenting groups as an entry point for therapy, discussion and experience sharing about disability and inclusion was instrumental in ensuring mutual support. These activities were highly effective as forums for promoting the rights of children with disabilities and as spaces for organising inclusive play groups where all children can come together. They were also pivotal in preparing children for school.

Community based rehabilitation (CBR) centres screen children with disabilities and provide counselling for their families. The Family-Forum provides health, social, education, protection and case management services. Social workers and CBR volunteers may refer children to other professional services when needed. IDEAL trained teachers and other school staff. With better knowledge and skills to implement inclusive education, staff could support all children that faced barriers, including those with disabilities, to enrol.

Through close collaboration between teachers, social workers and CBR volunteers, additional support needs may be identified, and children receive extra support from other professionals if needed. Regular schools have started to work together with special schools as resource centres to get support on teaching methods, lesson planning and classroom management that include children with different disabilities. To facilitate these partnerships, IDEAL co-organises regular meetings between schools, parents/families, CBR volunteers and the resource centre to monitor children's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development.

TEACHERS LEARNING BRAILLE

Elsa and her parents (Cipatujah Sub-District, Tasikmalaya) get support from the CBR centre and the school. Elsa has a visual impairment. "It is our responsibility as parents to make sure that Elsa gets a good quality education," says Marlina (42), Elsa's mother. Elsa would be the first student with a disability to be included. All teachers are keen to learn writing and reading in braille (using stylus and reglet) which is being taught by the resource centre team as well as mobility training with Elsa in the school.

The Golden Triangle approach is presented as a process which begins with identification and involvement in Family Forums and Community-Based Rehabilitation Centres. Following assessments of need and therapy, children are encouraged and supported to enrol in school. The very personal approach of CRB has proven an essential first step in promoting inclusive education. Schools also depended on partnerships between teachers and other schools to share ideas and approaches. Model inclusive schools that have established a strong connection between school, family and community have been used by other schools to visit and learn from. Teachers require a great deal of mentoring to ensure their new pedagogical approaches are maintained, improved, and shared. Areas with a supportive local government tend to have better outcomes in terms of community attitude and acceptance compared to where such support is missing. Where local leaders took on a disability champion role, they lobbied for access to Village Funds for community-based activities.

The Golden Triangle approach places children at the centre. If these children need additional individual support, IDEAL project responds and at times very innovatively. For example, audio books (Buku Bicara) were developed to help all children – including those with disabilities – benefit from (fiction and non-fiction) books. These are now online accessible and available in play store.

To achieve the IDEAL project goal “to increase access to quality inclusive education for children with disabilities to attain their right to education and protection”, strategies were developed at family-, community- and school level. At family level the lack of knowledge related to daily living activities and good parenting was addressed. Family-forums as support groups have played an important role, while also encouraging more fathers to get involved in child care and parenting with the support of Majelis Ulama Indonesia (a Muslim institution).

At community level, CBR volunteers were trained on community-based child protection systems and basic rehabilitation therapy. Campaigns to promote social inclusion, family-based care and inclusive education were organised in collaboration with Disabled People's Organisations.

At school level, the project trained school principals, teachers and school-supervisors on inclusive education, incorporating assessment training to help teachers identify the learning needs of individual students. IDEAL has made successful links with special schools/Resource Centres to support mainstream schools in becoming inclusive schools.

The Golden Triangle approach would not be able to function well without support from the government, especially local government, which is close to communities. IDEAL successfully built the capacity of CBR centres and family-forums to advocate for government budget allocations to sustain CBR and Family-Forums beyond the project duration.

Engagement of stakeholders and partners

The three pillars highlight the key stakeholders: parents, community and school. In addition, the project collaborates with Children's Forums. Key partners for the project are government authorities at different levels such as at village, district/municipal, and provincial level to create awareness and build capacity. For example, the village level local government is actively engaged in the community-based child protection system. At District/Municipal level, collaboration focuses on inclusive education implementation. At provincial level, the project lobbies for all special schools to become Resource Centre to support regular schools that have enrolled children with disabilities.

To raise awareness and advocate for children with disabilities – also beyond the project period – IDEAL partnered with local NGOs as strategic partners. The project built the capacity of these partners who have now a much better understanding of disability rights and children's rights and thus the implications of the government's ratification of the UNCRPD and the UNCRC for policies and practices.

Child participation

Collaboration with children happens through the Children's Forum. Children have for example been actively involved in the IDEAL project planning and provided inputs for drafting the new education regulations in West Java. They were also involved in campaign activities and asked questions and received personal answers from the Governor of West Java Province at a personal meeting.

Key milestones

- The Golden Triangle has been established and is implemented with support from community, families, schools and local government, with improved knowledge and skills, leading to decreased stigma.
- Model schools demonstrate inclusion and are promoted by local government within the existing system also making use of teacher working groups (KKG or Kelompok Kerja Guru) to improve professional knowledge and skills for inclusive education.
- Based on IDEAL advocacy, special schools are becoming Resource Centres to provide technical support to regular schools, while sustaining collaborative links with CBR centres.

IMA SUPPORTS INCLUSION

Ima Choerija's (48) teaches at SD Cigugur Tengah, in Cimahi. Before the start of IDEAL, she just felt sorry for children with learning problems or disabilities and didn't know how to help such students. But now, she even trains other teachers on how to adapt their teaching methods. Ima welcomes children from the CBR centre and supports their learning and makes sure that children help each other and are kind to each other. She encourages all children to participate in activities and asks for their ideas. She tries to understand the uniqueness of each child and how an individual child learns best.

"Reno (7) one of my students likes to lead the morning prayer. He has autism. One day he brought a cat to class. I adapted my lesson for the day and focused on science and cats" explained Ima smiling.

Her effective inclusive skills have been acknowledged and she became a master trainer in West Java. Recently she received the award for "best inclusive teacher" in West Java and was ranked third nationally.

Significant challenges

- Negative attitudes and perceptions regarding children with disabilities take long to change. Teachers often say they do not have the capacity and experience to implement inclusive education and they worry that if they enrol a child with disabilities it will annoy other students. Also, parents of children without disabilities tend to object if their children study alongside a child with disabilities.
- Physical access is a challenge and not adequately addressed by schools and education departments. More advocacy is needed for children with physical impairments to be included in regular schools
- Understanding inclusive pedagogy as an approach that flexibly responds to diversity and thus helps teachers to accept different learning needs, is not easy. Teachers tend to over-label children.
- Schools do not welcome community involvement in solving child protection issues in school as part of community-based child protection mechanisms. Therefore, the community cannot monitor cases and how these are responded to in schools.
- There are no reliable data on disability prevalence and the rights of children with disabilities. More accurate data is needed to prove to government that disability is not a minor issue.

Scalability and sustainability

Because of the strong partnership with government the project is well understood and co-owned by the government. This has led to cost-sharing and scaling up also during the project implementation time, with funding coming from the government, village fund, school operational grants and school budgets. As a result, the project approach has spread across 238 schools, 136 villages and 37 sub-districts, with a total budget coming from outside the original project of IDR 1,471,800,000 (USD 109,000).

The Golden Triangle approach has been perceived as an innovation by government partners and the IDEAL project has now re-packaged the approach and disseminated it through information and communication technology (webinars, YouTube, social media). Therefore, the approach, materials and other IDEAL achievements can be accessed easily by many audiences.

Suggestions for further implementation

- Family Forums and Community Based Rehabilitation can be replicated in other countries as a bottom-up approach for developing inclusive schools and continuing to sustain the links between the three Golden Triangle pillars throughout the process towards inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools and society at large.
- Strong interagency collaboration is key to strengthening inclusion in communities and schools. The sustainability of these coordinated efforts needs to be assured through good management. Each member of the collaboration network, government and non-government, needs to be fully aware of their roles, rights, requirements and responsibilities through regular coordination meetings, MOUs and Standard Operating Procedures. Especially if led by government partners at different levels and linked to existing policies and new developments such as related to the implementation of SDG4, chances of sustainable results increase.

FITRI THRIVES IN THE REGULAR SCHOOL

When Fitri was diagnosed with what the doctor called mental retardation, it was difficult for her parents to see any hope for her future. Her older brother also has a similar disability and her parents had already experienced first-hand the lack of services and the discrimination against children with disabilities in Indonesia.

But since 2014 the family has been able to access family-based care services as part of a Save the Children led programme funded by the IKEA Foundation. Therapists and volunteers started visiting and supporting the family, they encouraged them to find a regular school for Fitri.

Now Fitri is in primary school. For the first month, her mother walked to school with her and sat holding her hand every day, but slowly Fitri is developing social skills and independence with the help of the teacher and her mother.

“She can be on her own in the class now.” Fitri’s mother Entin says. “She still can’t work on the tasks the teacher gives her, so I still need to help. But the teacher, Mrs. Juju, is also always helping her in class.”

The family-based care programme has so far supported over 3,200 children with disabilities, and 22 schools have been supported to become more inclusive through teacher training and structural improvements, which have so far benefitted around 650 additional children with disabilities.

“The school is way up in a hilly area.” Fitri’s mother says. “It is a little bit far, but it is fine. In this school, all her friends are new. I hope Fitri will speak soon, now she can only say mama.”

Tools and reference materials

Readers interested in more detailed information about the Golden Triangle approach by Save the Children in Indonesia or in the tools and training materials the project developed can contact: Wiwied Trisnadi – project manager wiwied.trisnadi@savethechildren.org or Marni Silalahi – basic education adviser marni.silalahi@savethechildren.org





KOSOVO

HELPING PEDAGOGICAL EVALUATION TEAMS LEAD THE WAY

Project background

The concept of Inclusive Education (IE) emerged in Kosovo during the last two decades as an alternative to segregating children with disabilities in special schools. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) developed a policy, based on equal education rights for all children, and has guided the transition of special schools into resource centres, and attached classrooms into resource rooms as a step towards inclusive education. However, the process has been challenging related to for example inaccessible school infrastructure, poor conceptual understanding of inclusive education, stigma related to disability and ethnic minority groups, lack of skills and techniques among teachers to support the learning of children with disabilities in regular classrooms, and the absence of early identification and pedagogical evaluation of educational needs of children with disabilities.

Save the Children partnered with local civil society organisations to support inclusive education by (1) promoting the enrolment of children from marginalised groups, such as children with disabilities and those from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in pre-primary and primary schools; (2) transforming schools into safe, inclusive and interactive learning environments; and (3) enabling and empowering children, parents and communities to demand their rights.

Save the Children has been a key-actor in both supporting the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and the Municipal Education Directorates (MED) in rolling out inclusive policies at local level and in schools, in testing innovative approaches and replicating good practices. By documenting what has worked best, Save the Children was able to use evidence-based advocacy to influence the government at all levels to embrace the policies, investment and practices that support holistic development of all children in one education system. Close cooperation with MEST and MEDs to institutionalise good practices by Pedagogical Evaluation Teams (PET) led to achieving results at scale. Strong partnership with children, parents, Disabled People's Organisations, and Civil Society Organisations from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, have been the foundations to ensure the sustainability of the activities.

There are an estimated 45,000 children with disabilities in Kosovo. Save the Children has focused on showing families, teachers and municipal officials that there is an alternative to exclusion: That children with disabilities – and children from minorities – can be included in schools.

Pedagogical Evaluation Teams (PET) assessing learning needs of children with disabilities

At municipal level, PETs were introduced in Kosovo's education legislation in 2012 and were to be established in each municipality. However, lack of clear mechanisms for funding and timelines for the establishment of PETs resulted in no PETs established at all.

Save the Children realised that for inclusive education to materialise, it was important to support not only schools, but also the relevant support systems such as PETs to sustain an inclusion culture. Identification of learning needs of children with disabilities on the one side, and the capacity of service providers to meet those needs on the other side, would be crucial to ensure that effective inclusive education was to be provided. Keeping this in mind and the earlier unsuccessful MEST establishment of PETs, Save the Children embarked on a pilot project to test and build evidence on the function and importance of Pedagogical Evaluation Teams (PETs) in the organisation's project locations.

In the project municipalities (the seven largest municipalities of Kosovo), Save the Children established what they called Professional Resource Teams which consisted of multi-sectoral stakeholders such as education practitioners, health professionals, social workers and psychologists. The function of these Professional Resource Teams was similar to the earlier proposed function of PETs, which is 'to assess the pedagogical needs of learners with disabilities and to ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skills to develop and use Individual Education Plans (IEP) for each child providing them with concrete action points on needed support and eliminating barriers in school access and retention'. The work of the Professional Resource Teams was monitored and documented by Save the Children, MEST and MEDs. Using evidence-based advocacy following this successful pilot resulted in the municipalities endorsing the Professional Resource Teams in 2015, which were then revived into PETs, including members of the Professional Resource Teams.

Save the Children continued to support capacity building of Pedagogical Evaluation Teams with inclusive education training focusing on different disabilities and learning difficulties and adjustments needed to best meet the individual needs of such children in regular classrooms. Training was also provided on developing Individual Education Plans (IEP), to be able to translate needs into learning objectives, and on the Index for Inclusion,³⁹ to ensure that PET members understand the inclusive education concept and the changes that schools may need to undergo to create inclusive cultures and practices in and beyond the classroom. In addition, PETs were provided with didactic materials, manipulative toys and other tools to assist them in assessing children's individual needs. Professional events for knowledge and skills exchange between PETs were also supported.

39 www.csie.org.uk/resources/inclusion-index-explained.shtml

Pedagogical evaluation steps

Step 1 A pedagogical evaluation request is initiated by parent/caregiver, school, Municipal Education Directorate, Centre for Social Work or Family Medicine Centre.

Step 2 Within two weeks of received request, a date for pedagogical evaluation is set together with parent/caregiver.

Step 3 The PET, including municipal official for IE (coordinator); psychologist; pedagogue; social worker and support-teacher, evaluates the child based on a functionality model as per International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health – Children and Youth. PET can decide to reach out to other professionals that are not part of the team, when necessary.

Step 4 Within five days, after the evaluation completion, a report inclusive of recommendations directed to the school is shared with the Municipal Education Directorate which has the final authority to order the implementation of recommendations.

Step 5 School principal is responsible for implementation of PET recommendations and responds to Municipal Education Directorate.

Step 6 Child's teacher in cooperation with school principal, support teacher and parent/caregiver will use PET recommendations to develop the Individual Education Plan.

Step 7 A child will be re-evaluated by the PET upon request by the school (at least every second year)

Based on the need of Pedagogical Evaluation Teams to have standardised instruments, Save the Children in cooperation with MEST, the University of Bologna and the University of Padova, and with inputs from PETs in the field, developed tools based on the ICF-CY. Using internationally agreed methods for identification and correct terminology, this also addressed attitudinal and environmental barriers.

Save the Children invested in establishing child-friendly rooms for pedagogical evaluations in the seven project municipalities. These child-friendly spaces are used by PETs to carry out the evaluations and for meeting with parents/caregivers to discuss how to best support their children at home.

The project practices and lessons learned have contributed to Municipal Education Directorate (MED) representatives, Pedagogical Evaluation Team (PET) members, and school administrative and education staff, becoming more receptive to inclusive approaches. The pilot testing of better functioning PETs led to and informed the revision of the legislation on Pedagogical Assessment of Children with Special Needs, to include a better definition of the place and function of PETs to deliver inclusive education. The revised legislation also states that the recommendations by Pedagogical Evaluation Teams will be mandatory following the endorsement of the Director of the Municipal Education Directorate as local education authority. This will inform the school development plans and budgets for additional support services that children may require in school and makes PETs an integral part of the increased inclusive education investment.

ACADEMICS SUPPORT INCLUSION

The Pedagogical Evaluation Team (PET) in Peja Municipality was set up by the Directorate of Education with support from Save the Children. Together with the MEST, professors from Italy were contracted who along with a technical working-group and a group of teachers, started piloting draft-instruments for the evaluation of children with disabilities and those with additional learning needs.

Shqipe Karagjyzi, leader of the PET, says: "Our successful performance was made possible with Save the Children support for staff capacity-building and improving the evaluation rooms. With this support, we are now able to successfully offer high-quality professional services to children in a child-friendly and relaxing environment". Shqipe also participated in the 5-day exposure visit to Bologna in Italy, organised by Save the Children.

Shqipe says: "That visit was important as we learned about the high inclusion rate of children with disabilities in mainstream education and society in Italy and showed us how to initiate similar actions for Kosovo".

Currently, Save the Children supports the MEST and Pedagogical Evaluations Teams to pilot evaluation instruments before these can be standardised across Kosovo, such as a referral form to refer a child from school to the PET and document the child's progress in school and a recommendation form for schools, which includes an overview of a child's present functioning and potential functioning.

Engagement of stakeholders

Capacity building of Pedagogical Evaluation Teams to assess the needs of children with disabilities, would not have been this successful if it was a stand-alone approach. Good timing of the project in relation to new legislation for the establishment of Pedagogical Evaluation Teams (PET), ensured the Ministry's full support throughout the project implementation and provided Save the Children full access to all PET development processes at national level. This strengthened Save the Children's position as an advocate for inclusive education, which contributed to stronger endorsement at local level. To encourage and sustain involvement of all PET members, Save the Children applied a transparent participatory approach, continuously acknowledging valuable contributions by all stakeholders and partners involved.

In collaboration with our partner Handikos and other Disabled Persons' Organisations the project strengthened the role of parents through awareness raising on children's rights and the importance of equal opportunities to quality education and other services. It resulted in a changed mindset among parents and their willingness to shift from special education to inclusive education. Campaigns supporting the enrolment of children with disabilities in regular pre-primary and primary schools led by Handikos, contributed to increasing requests for pedagogical assessments. In addition, Handikos also referred newly identified children with disabilities to the Pedagogical Evaluation Teams to ensure that Individual Education Plans (IEP) were in place, irrespective of whether children were attending regular schools or non-formal education services.

HALIL IS A SUPPORT TEACHER

Halil, trained by the project, implements an individual lesson plan for Sumeja in "Tefik Çanga" primary school. Sumeja has an intellectual disability and joined the regular class a year ago. Halil put a lot of effort into including Sumeja by communicating his inclusive approach with other teachers, peers, and their parents. Talking about his job, Halil explains that it is not only about supporting Sumeja but also about enabling other teachers to do the same. The project provided in-service training and on-going support for teachers to increase knowledge and capacities of teachers to implement inclusive methodologies. 20 teachers from rural areas were specifically trained on working with children with Down Syndrome, provided by our partner Down Syndrome Kosova.



Child participation

Although PETs are mandated to assess the pedagogical needs of children with disabilities and learning difficulties, the overall project was inclusive. It promoted inclusion, participation and violence-free schools for all, with a special focus on marginalised children such as those with disabilities and from Roma and Ashkali and Egyptian populations. By improving the learning environment and teaching-learning quality for these groups, the project contributed to quality improvement for all children. In addition, children have become active participants in their own evaluation exercise.

The project promotes child participation in school-based processes, including awareness raising on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Topics such as equal education rights for marginalised children were discussed in interactive sessions facilitated by community-based partner organisations, who are trusted and known by the communities. Child participation is also ensured in decision-making processes at local level through Child Led Municipal Assemblies, which increased the number of representatives from children with disabilities and from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Members of eight Child Led Municipal Assemblies were engaged in a UNICEF Podium Innovation Lab initiative, teaching adolescents to advocate for their communities, and convert these advocacy initiatives into projects, which were designed, implemented and evaluated by children themselves.

Key milestones

- Municipal Education Directorates (MEDs) experienced and acknowledged change due to the establishing of functional Pedagogical Evaluation Teams (PET), which now required their involvement in planning of human and other resources to support inclusive education in their municipalities.
- PET members experienced change because for most of them, this was the first opportunity to view inclusive education through a lens of pedagogical assessments and opportunities to support the education of children with disabilities and additional learning needs.
- School administrative and education staff in target municipalities realised that inclusive education goes beyond school walls, also to be supported by external structures such as Pedagogical Evaluation Teams and others.

LOCAL PARTNER HELPS CHILDREN ENROL AND STAY IN SCHOOL

Sevdije, Gjyljeta and Merlinda, belong to the Roma minority community in Kosovo, who live with their parents and three younger siblings, in a house without running water, kitchen, or inside bathroom. Despite their daily life challenges and poor economic conditions, they never gave up on their dream to go to school. Gjyljeta (10) never enrolled in school. Our partner, Nevo Koncepti provided her with all the needed support and enrolled her in school. Merlinda dropped out of school when she was in 5th grade. Through our project advocacy and support, Merlinda returned to school. Following her sisters' steps, Sevdije loved going to school. The sisters attend supplementary lessons and extracurricular activities, facilitated by the project to catch up and improve their school performance and engage in activities with other pupils.

Significant challenges

- Due to financial limitations, the Ministry of Finance set a limit for public sector employment. the establishment and functionalisation of PETs was possible only if the PET members were coming from the lines of civil servants already employed at municipal level. This implied that engagement in PETs required performing PET duties in addition to other, often primary engagements, set by their contracts. Thus, PET related work was not perceived as a priority due to many competing tasks.
- At the onset of the project there was a huge gap in public information and knowledge about the existence of Pedagogical Evaluation Teams and their function. Although a lot has changed, there is still lack of awareness among teachers and parents regarding the existence and role of PETs, especially in schools and municipalities where Save the Children did not work. In our day-to-day work, in particularly as we are looking into rolling out the practices, we have realised public awareness must be raised regarding the role of Pedagogical Evaluation Teams.
- PETs in municipalities where the project did not intervene still lack professional capacities and essential resources to carry out pedagogical evaluations of children with disabilities.

Scalability and sustainability

Scalability and sustainability of the approach has been secured through continuous engagement with and transfer of knowledge to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), the Municipal Education Directorates (MEDs), the Pedagogical Evaluation Teams (PETs), teachers and administrators, civil society organisations and communities. Institutionalisation of the practices through PETs and internationally agreed evaluation instruments at local government level are a good foundation for future sustainability. In addition, updating and reaccreditation with the Ministry of the in-service training modules on inclusive education, Individual Education Plans and the Index for Inclusion, used for capacity building of PET members and teachers, will ensure the distribution of the same information and setting of the same standards across Kosovo. The government adapted legislation to sustain PETs, based on the documented good practices of Professional Resource Teams by the project and will continue its investment as foreseen in the Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021.

Suggestions for further implementation

The approach can be contextualised for replication in other countries. To maximise impact, it should be combined and coordinated with efforts focused on awareness raising, community mobilisation, teacher training and targeted capacity building of different stakeholders.

“THE EDUCATORS ARE WONDERFUL”

Going to pre-school is a big thing for many children, but for Roland, who is diagnosed with Autism, attending the special nursery funded by the IKEA Foundation and supported by Save the Children was a life changer.

“I still remember the first time he came home and said ‘tractor.’ I burst into tears and could not stop crying and hugging him,” Roland’s mother Marta says.

When Roland, who is now three and a half years old, came to the pre-school a year ago, he did not speak at all. With the help of staff trained in inclusive education Roland is now doing well.

“Being here has had such a positive effect on him,” Sulltane, one of Roland’s teachers, says. “In the beginning he could not even stay still and be with other children, and now he loves to sit down and read books together with his friends. His favourite thing at the moment is reciting the alphabet and working with numbers.”

The IKEA Foundation project supports nine pre-schools and nine primary and lower secondary schools throughout Kosovo. The educators in the project not only support children and train other teachers, but also help the parents of children with disabilities.

“The educators are wonderful; they talk to me daily and advise me on how to work with Roland at home. This has made so much difference for me since I had very little knowledge before,” Marta says.

The project funded by the IKEA Foundation is part of a larger programme that aims to include children with disabilities and minority children in pre-school and primary education. The programme reaches 600 children with disabilities, but also improves the learning situation for over 12,000 children in one of the poorest parts of Europe.



Tools and reference materials

Readers interested in more detailed information about the approach with Pedagogical Evaluation Teams (PET), developed by Save the Children in Kosovo or in the tools and training materials the project developed (see also links below) can contact:

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Administrative Instruction (MEST)
No 16/2017 Professional Assessment
of Children with Special Instructive
Educational Needs

Best Practices Model Report



MYANMAR

A SYSTEM APPROACH TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Project background

This three-year inclusive education project is implemented in seven townships⁴⁰ targeting pre-primary school-age children in Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centres and Kindergartens⁴¹ in Magway Region, a “dry zone” with high development needs, in Kayah State, in Shan State and in Kayin State. The overall project goal is to increase access to education and improve learning outcomes of the most vulnerable children (particularly children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities) in early grades. Apart from teacher capacity building in close cooperation with the Department of Basic Education, community- and school-based interventions focused on disability inclusion to support teachers, communities, district and township officials and showcase best practices. In addition, policy engagement and working with other development partners are critical aspects of this project. Save the Children as the only international NGO in Myanmar has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Basic Education under the Ministry of Education. The project baseline – using the Save the Children Quality Learning Environment⁴² framework - showed that just three out of 58 could be considered quality schools. A second – qualitative – study was necessary to better understand communities’ attitudes, teachers’ skills and capacities and the understanding of township officials regarding inclusion. The results of this study highlighted varied levels of understanding. It was also found that bullying of children with disabilities is widespread, teaching strategies to promote inclusion in classrooms lacking and there is poor knowledge of types of disability.

The teacher trainings were so well received that the project quickly expanded from 80 to 312 townships.

⁴⁰ Townships are the third-level administrative divisions of MMR and are the sub-divisions of the districts

⁴¹ Kindergarten is part of the primary school and considered a Foundation Year

⁴² QLE: Quality Learning Environment resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/quality-learning-framework

A system approach towards inclusive education

To address these challenges, the project uses a multi-pronged approach by working with stakeholders at national level (Ministry of Education; Teacher Education Colleges; members National Education Policy Commission), international development partners, township- and community level officials, creating awareness through workshops and seminars on disability issues and inclusive education, while also networking with Disabled People's Organisations.

This approach has been good for Myanmar, with a new government and many new developments in the education sector, such as curriculum reforms and teacher education changes. The project has consciously looked for and explored ways to influence existing structures and initiatives such as those by the Ministry of Education (MoE) or by other international development partners. JICA⁴³ and the MoE curriculum reform team have been made aware of the importance of inclusion and ways in which the primary grade curriculum and textbooks can be made diversity and disability inclusive. Moreover, this has led to the official permission for Save the Children to build the capacity of mentors with teacher training responsibilities (especially newly trained and inexperienced teachers) and school-cluster heads on inclusive education, focusing both on conceptual understanding and practical teaching-learning strategies. This initiative, which had started in 80 Townships was expanded to 312 Townships across the country. These are not one-off workshops, but part of ongoing Professional Development for mentors and cluster-heads and Save the Children is starting to see results in terms of improved technical understanding of disability and strategies to include children with disabilities.

“The workshop has showed me how to start implementing IE effectively. There are children with disabilities in every community and schools need to be able to support those children. We found more than 40 children with disabilities when we collected information about children with disabilities in our township. Although these children are enrolled, there are still weaknesses in supporting them in school.

This workshop will help me and my cluster-heads to better discuss with teachers and identify how they can be supported to address the needs of learners with disabilities.”

U Kyaw Aung, Assistant Township Education Officer, Oaktwin

43 JICA: Japan International Cooperation Agency



As Save the Children has been instrumental in developing the Kindergarten curriculum (also using an inclusion lens) for the primary education Foundation Year, standards and indicators were needed to monitor and measure the quality of the Kindergarten program. Based on consultations with MoE officials and the existing Save the Children QLE⁴⁴ framework, the project team successfully developed a quality monitoring framework for Kindergartens in Myanmar.

Inclusive education workshops are now facilitated by the project for township education officials, district social welfare officials, school (cluster) heads and primary teachers. These workshops cover topics such as the meaning of non-discrimination and inclusion, international agreements (UNCRC, CRPD, SDGs etc.), inclusive education, what disability is, types of disability, disability laws and legislation, teaching tips for including children with different disabilities, etc.

At community level, awareness of disability, inclusion and education rights for children with disabilities is being raised with children, parents, teachers and community members using puppet shows. The project supports school infrastructure improvements for better accessibility for learners with and without disabilities, by for example establishing partitions between classrooms, building wooden floors and providing age appropriate furniture, in addition to establishing toilets and water tanks.

“After watching the puppet show, parents who had not enrolled their disabled children to school are sending their children to school and the number of children enrolment in ECCD centre and primary school has increased in our village.”

ECCD Management Committee member,
Mile 16/17 village, Oaktwin

⁴⁴ QLE: Quality Learning Environment

JICA and the curriculum reform team have understood the importance of inclusion. Disability has now been incorporated in the new primary school curriculum in text and textbook illustrations. In the textbooks, children with disabilities are shown as equally valued members of a community who should be able to access the same school and the same curriculum with the learning support they need.

Similarly, the project has linked up with UNESCO that is involved with updating and renewing the pre-service teacher education program (supported by DFAT⁴⁵), one of its pillars being that teacher education now needs to align with SDG 4, to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. Save the Children was asked by UNESCO to share the organisation’s inclusive education teacher training experience and how to monitor and continue to support change in the classroom. Especially the capacity building of teacher mentors and cluster heads was interesting for UNESCO and based on follow-up meetings, joint workshops and exchange project visits. Both UNESCO and Save the Children picked up new ideas and strategies. For teachers to be effective with all children UNESCO for example incorporated the principles of “learn-apply-reflect”. The project thus contributes to the need in Myanmar that teachers must be equipped with diversity inclusive and responsive values and teaching-learning skills to be able to cope with multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-ability classrooms.

As part of the education reform in Myanmar, a National Education Strategic Plan / NESP (2016-2021) was developed, which Save the Children has been able to influence to focus more on inclusion. The project has subsequently aligned with this strategic plan especially in its objective to improve access, quality and inclusion in basic education. Key strategic government messages covering all levels of the system from community to national level have become project key messages: “All children can access, progress through and successfully complete quality basic education”; “All school children develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies that are relevant to their lives and to the socio-economic development needs of 21st Century Myanmar” and “All children get a head start on their learning pathway through accessing quality preschool and kindergarten education”. It has helped the project to find legitimate ways – based on NESP language - to lobby for mainstreaming inclusion. Save the Children engages at all levels of the system and with different duty-bearers and partners who are initiating and supporting key changes in the sector. Opportunities are proactively sought and utilised to demonstrate, discuss and share the project’s inclusive education experience, reiterating the NESP key messages. Government and development partners are now following suit while asking Save the Children for technical support for capacity building and implementation of inclusive education. This approach has been successful also because those influenced by the project now feel they jointly own and facilitate inclusive developments, while contributing to the implementation of SDG4.

During focus group discussions teachers said that they give extra support to children who experience difficulties in understanding and learning. For example, they adjusted their teaching method or arranged the classroom seating or repeated explanations of concepts in different ways. They also made sure such children would play with other students to develop their social skills.

Field-visit report by Caroline Naw
in Pakokku Township

⁴⁵ DFAT: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)

Engagement of stakeholders and partners

At township level, education officials support the inclusive education training of cluster heads, head teachers and primary school teachers at weekends. They support by inviting the teachers to attend the workshops which are held at the township education office premises. Township education officials encourage teachers to share their new knowledge and skills with other teachers in their school clusters. Cluster heads have also been given a Training of Trainers (TOT) which are then cascaded down to workshops at school and cluster level using a whole-school approach. At community level, parents and other community members now lobby for inclusion of all children in their community schools and help building toilets, classroom partitions, wooden flooring, tables and chairs.

Child participation

By influencing government and development partners, the project promotes child participation as an integral part of inclusive, child-centred teaching and learning, based on the philosophy that all children are unique, and have individual strengths and weaknesses, while some children may need more support than others. The project lobbies for more attention for social-emotional learning and values education, so that children learn critical “soft skills” like empathy, cooperation, non-violence conflict resolution, respect for difference and diversity, etc. Inclusive teaching strategies are thus strategies that actively and meaningfully engage all children, not only in whole class activities but also through pair- and group-work, and peer-to-peer teaching.

Key milestones

- The willingness of government- and non-government development partners to be influenced by Save the Children’s inclusive education project.
- Official permission to train education officials and teachers on disability and inclusive education, disability laws and rights of children with disabilities;
- More children – with and without disabilities - coming to school as a result of the school- and community-based puppet shows about disability and other children’s issues linked to education, protection and health.

“In this workshop I learned that disability is often a combination of an impairment and barriers that can be overcome by removing the barriers. This workshop has enhanced my capacity and that of other teachers to identify those barriers and we were shown good practices and practical techniques.”

U Khin Mg Myint, primary school principal and cluster head, Saw



Significant challenges

- Myanmar's education system is a centralised system which means that education officials in states, regions and townships only become active if there is an official direction or guideline from the national authorities. Having a strategy is only a first step. Implementing such a strategy and thus mainstreaming inclusion will still take some time and advocacy at the national level, while close cooperation with key international development partners needs to continue.
- Accessibility remains a challenge, especially for children with physical disabilities. The project addresses this in project schools as part of the annual school improvement plan, while advocating for the same in other schools through the school cluster system.

Scalability and sustainability

By proactively working with government and international development partners working in the same sector, coverage and impact are multiplied. Making sure workshops are of high quality and relevant for each target audience as well as providing examples of good inclusive practice from within Myanmar (documented project schools) has led to credibility and trust. Teacher mentors throughout the country have been trained on inclusive education and they are now providing continuous professional development to their teachers to learn how to teach and manage children with different disabilities in their classes. Using a cluster approach also increases scale, as good quality lead schools support other schools, using a whole school approach. Township education officials and cluster heads – being part of the existing system - have been trained as facilitators and cascade the training to the schools they are responsible for, both project and non-project schools. This way, the project has exceeded the number of target schools reached, which have increased from 347 to 515. Project experience and evidence can be used for continued advocacy with government and other education partners to promote inclusive education in Myanmar.

Suggestions for further implementation

1. Lobby for inclusive education mainstreaming and further strengthening collaboration with international education partners such as UNESCO, JICA, DFAT and others working in Myanmar while relating more strongly to the government's SDG4 commitments.
2. Continue to raise disability awareness at school and community level using puppet shows while building capacity of other education actors to use a similar approach so that more regions and states can be reached with the same message.

MAUNG PHONE'S TEACHER DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO TEACH HIM

Maung Phone is seven years old and lives in a village in Myanmar.

In common with many children with disabilities in Myanmar, Maung Phone faced abuse and a lack of understanding - both at home and at school.

Maung Phone has not been formally diagnosed. He fell ill a year ago and was in hospital for quite a long time. Since then he has not been able to walk, his eyesight is poor and he has a severe stammer. His teacher was initially reluctant to accept him to her class. She didn't know how to teach him.

Through an IKEA Foundation funded project, run by Save the Children, Maung Phone's teacher was trained in how to better include children with disabilities in the classroom.

Today Maung Phone goes to school regularly. The new teaching methods used by his teacher include group work with just a few students in each group. This has helped Maung Phone to engage better with his classmates and the teacher. He has started to speak more and made him less scared at school.

"I feel happy to come to school," Maung Phone says. "My teacher loves me very much. I play with my friends and work with them."

The project, funded by the IKEA Foundation, aims to increase access to education for children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities in Myanmar. So far, the project has supported over 8,000 children in over 340 villages, giving them access to quality education that is inclusive. Over 2,000 teachers have been trained to help them include more children in school.

Tools and reference materials

Readers interested in more detailed information about the inclusive education approach by Save the Children in Myanmar or in the tools and training materials the project developed can contact the project coordinator Caroline Naw naw.caroline@savethechildren.org or the head of education Sridevi Srinivasan sridevi.srinivasan@savethechildren.org





THE PHILIPPINES

ENGAGING CHILDREN IN ADVOCATING FOR NON-DISCRIMINATION

Project background

The KASALI project works with partners to provide an inclusive learning environment, ensuring participation of children with disabilities, aged 12 years and below. KASALI as an acronym for “Kabataang-Aralin sa Lahat ay Ibahagi” which means: Education for All Children. The Filipino word kasali means ‘being included’. The KASALI learning model aims to give equal education opportunities to girls and boys with and without disability in quality and protective learning environments. KASALI contributes to national and global goals of quality education⁴⁶, especially for disadvantaged children.

Children with disability are among the most marginalised in the world, and it is doubly difficult for those who come from a poor family. This is true also for the Philippines. For many children with disabilities, exclusion begins immediately after birth as their birth remains unregistered and without official recognition. They are cut off from social services and legal protection crucial for their survival and development. Their marginalisation increases with age as many never enrol in school. Even if in school, their individual needs may not be responded to due to insufficient number of teachers, absence of disability-adaptations, materials and facilities. In addition many face daily discrimination in their families, their communities and at schools.

Save the Children’s Theory of Change is the interlinked framework KASALI applies to ensure quality and effective programming for children with or without disabilities in achieving our vision in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation.

Save the Children’s KASALI project has supported more than 500 children with disabilities to enrol in school since 2014.

⁴⁶ At the national level, KASALI contributes to one of the objectives of the 2015 – 2018 Road Map of the Department of Education, i.e. to provide equal opportunities to children with disabilities to access quality and age-appropriate education programs and services. At the global level, KASALI contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All

1. **Be the Innovator:** KASALI developed a Disability-Inclusive Education Model by establishing model schools as community-based learning resource centres in demonstrating Inclusive Education in action. Furthermore, a Community-based Inclusive Development (CBID)⁴⁷ model is piloted to ensure accessibility of children with disabilities to auxiliary health services that support their development needs.
2. **Be the Voice:** It is important to make policy makers, local and national authorities aware of the need to develop a learning environment that respects and promotes the rights of all children. At different levels, efforts were made to harmonise and strengthen initiatives to ensure access and inclusion of children with disabilities through referrals, training and availability of disability support services. At the national level, the project actively engaged with advocacy networks that push for the enactment of disability supportive policies. Through KASALI efforts, the Memorandum of Understanding across relevant government agencies signifies their commitment and support towards a more inclusive and protective environment for children, with or without disabilities⁴⁸.
3. **Build Partnerships:** project implementation will only be successful if done in partnership with others, such as government actors, civil society organisations, academia, parents, teachers and communities. As a result, Save the Children has become part of the Council for the Welfare of Children's Sub-Committee for Children with Disabilities. This effort is also being replicated at the local level by having on-going collaboration with the members of Local/Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (L/BCPC).
4. **Achieve Results at Scale:** at all levels, strong advocacy and policy work is needed to ensure that the voice of the most vulnerable is heard and their right to education and non-discrimination respected. To contribute to this, a Manual of Procedures was developed, and various researches were conducted in partnership with academic institutions in support of adoption of inclusive education and disability-friendly programs and services in the Philippines. In fact, the Department of Education has expressed interest in adopting materials/tools/technologies produced by KASALI for use country-wide.

⁴⁷ CBID is an approach to enable disability inclusive development. It brings about change in lives of people with disabilities at community level, working with and through local groups and institutions. It further enhances and strengthens CBR engaging all community members.

⁴⁸ The Memorandum is expected to be signed before the year ends. The Department of Social Welfare and Development, National Council for Disability Affairs, Commission on Human Rights, Council for the Welfare of Children have already signed; Department of Health, Department of Education and Department of Interior and Local Government still need to sign the Memorandum.

The prevailing negative attitude and perception of community members was identified by the KASALI project as one of the major barriers for creating an environment that enables meaningful participation of children with disability. To address this the project prioritised a strategy to promote an inclusive culture through awareness-raising activities in parent education sessions, workshops in schools, local government trainings, and community orientations. These capacity-building activities focused on children's rights, disability concepts, inclusive education and using respectful language. Based on pre- and post-tests, observations and policy changes, knowledge improved, demonstrated in changed behaviours of duty-bearers and stakeholders towards children with disability. In particular, the project witnessed an increase in enrolment of children with disability in regular schools, collaborative efforts of teachers to learn more about disability and inclusive pedagogy, governance systems established to deliver inclusive services, and school improvement plans with a vision to raise disability awareness.

As the project geared towards a whole school-approach with adults who promote and deliver on the rights of children with disability, a similar intervention was needed for key stakeholders: children. While public schools were engaged in anti-bullying campaigns, these campaigns did not include a focus on non-discrimination of children with disabilities. As a result, a specific strategy to reduce discrimination and isolation of children with disabilities was designed by the project.



Equality and Non-Discrimination Modules were developed with lesson examples utilising age-appropriate storybooks and video documentaries. The modules were designed for integration in the existing Values Education curriculum, to make children aware of diversity issues with the aim to improve their attitude towards children perceived as different, especially peers with disabilities. The modules were meant for children, with or without disability, to increase knowledge on disability, learn about the value of individual strengths of children with disability and how to positively accept and appreciate peers with disability.

The module lesson examples were based on the principles of Directed Reading Thinking Activity (see box) and using both text and audio-visual material. Locally-available storybooks for children from Kindergarten to grade 3 were mapped and the stories selected were: Lorkan, Ang Matulunging Butanding, Xilef, Sandosenang Sapatos, and Ang Madyik Silya ni Titoy⁴⁹. For children in grade 4 – 6, audio-visual material on dyslexia, cerebral palsy, progeria⁵⁰, autism spectrum disorder and visual impairment was identified.

Elementary school teachers and early childhood care and development (ECCD) workers in the project sites participated in workshops to enhance their skills in storytelling, material development and facilitating reflective questioning for discussions on disability. At the end of the workshops, participants planned for a phased incorporation of the lesson examples in their monthly and yearly lesson planning. Results collected from pre and post tests indicated a process toward positive change, and some responses indicated a shift from a charity perspective to a more empowered view of children with disabilities.

A study, conducted by the University of Santo Tomas to assess the effects of the modules showed a significant number of children expressing willingness to play with, and invite a child with disability to their birthday party, and to stand with a child with disability if bullied in school.

Directed Reading Thinking Activity

Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) is an approach that follows the following sequenced steps to enhance understanding:

1. **Preview** the reading. Look at the title, headings, summary and pictures.
2. **Predict** what the story is about after looking at the title, headings, pictures, and/or after reading a small portion of the text.
3. **Read** the text silently in predetermined sections.
4. **Check** predictions by confirming or refuting their accuracy with evidence from the text.
5. **Summarise** the main points: Ask students to summarise and state the main points of what they learned in their own words either orally or in short written form.

⁴⁹ The book titles selected cover themes about friendship, parenting, teacher and community support for children with disabilities.

⁵⁰ Progeria is a rare genetic condition that causes a person to age prematurely

Engaging of stakeholders

Key to implementing a whole school and community approach is to engage all stakeholders. At school level, school principals, teachers, and non-teaching staff who received capacity-building on disability-inclusive education were further oriented on adopting a participatory approach in school improvement planning. This was cited as a model of good practice at the Department of Education - Division Office level, for other schools to learn from. Furthermore, parents and community members were trained to support children with disability. With this overall increased awareness, these stakeholders are now better able to support initiatives on non-discrimination.

Child participation

With the significant gains in raising awareness among children using the KASALI Equality and Non-discrimination Modules, the project identified the potential of using children's stories to create a stronger message and further train and empower children to advocate for themselves, for diversity issues and for their peers with disability.

KASALI envisioned and started to support children reading to each other, discussing issues related to disability and discrimination, exploring experiences in their schools, and developing creative ways to address these. As such, KASALI piloted a Non-Discrimination Storytelling Camp for student-representatives of the project schools. The workshop consisted of interactive activities and games centred on self-discovery (rights, positive self-concept and personal experiences), societal awareness (diversity and disability) and strategies to create meaningful change towards non-discrimination.

Child advocates who participated in the storytelling workshop returned to their schools with plans to raise awareness of peers on non-discrimination and anti-bullying, and teachers and parents supported the children to launch art and storytelling activities focused on appreciating diversity in their schools.

USING STORYTELLING TO UNDERSTAND DIVERSITY

Storytelling workshops on using the KASALI Equality and Non-Discrimination Modules were conducted for ECCD workers and elementary teachers. Participants were provided with discussion points on children with disability and practical tips on utilising the lesson examples in their classrooms and day-care centres. They worked together to explore ways of presenting concepts of non-discrimination to young children and developing creative materials to engage their class in understanding difference and diversity. These teachers are now capable of raising awareness through storytelling and video documentaries. In 2017, 1,209 children, with and without disability, participated in awareness-raising sessions conducted by trained teachers. To date, the schools and daycare centres covered by KASALI project have independently utilised the modules in their classes. Teachers and school heads have given positive feedback regarding using the modules to create an inclusive environment among children and have incorporated them in their curriculum.

Key Milestones

- The success of the Equality and Non-Discrimination Modules were marked when schools and ECCD centres started to independently incorporate the lesson examples and fully utilise the content of the modules in their daily activities. Teachers allotted their own resources in implementing the modules as they observed the positive effect on children and its contribution to building an inclusive classroom environment. As a result, children with and without disability now benefit from a more inclusive and welcoming learning environment cultivated in the schools.
- For Save the Children Philippines, further innovations related to this intervention is KASALI's input in the First Read⁵¹ project's book development process with its first ECCD book about inclusion: Pitong Tsinelas (Seven Slippers). First Read research revealed the serious lack of reading and learning materials for very young children, and much more so for children with disabilities. The book, Pitong Tsinelas, features slippers personifying children coming from different backgrounds and having different characteristics yet are still able to play together. The book has text with a dyslexia-friendly font, minimal graphics with warm pastel colour for visual sensory adaptation to children with autism spectrum disorder and is available with Braille translation in the same book, to provide opportunities for children with and without sight to read together. The Ministry of Education has now also started to use the book in non-project schools.



⁵¹ First Read is an ECCD project aimed to improve the development of children aged 0-4.

TEAMBUILDING STARTED THE CHANGE

The School Supreme Pupil Government of R.P. Cruz Elementary School invited Save the Children to conduct a teambuilding workshop on planning programmes with a non-discrimination lens. Workshop participants included student-leaders who learned about human rights for children based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and about principles of non-discrimination using games and interactive activities. Children created newspaper articles about the dreams and goals for their school for the next two years.

One of the participants wrote, “In the year 2020, my dream for our school is that many children with disability will be able to graduate because they will gain confidence and believe in themselves, and no one suffers from ridicule and bullying.” Plans were produced, directed towards making school activities inclusive of children with disability. Since then, members of the Pupil Government have presented those plans to their Barangay (village) committee for further support from parents and teachers to improve their plans to advocate for non-discrimination.

Significant Challenges

The KASALI Project further intensified its child participation component through the piloting of a non-discrimination storytelling workshop during the project’s extension phase. This led to the discovery of the great potential children have, to advocate for themselves, and to further initiate capacity-building activities for adults to support children accordingly. However, as this was done towards the latter part of project duration, KASALI had limited time to actively seek out representation of all children and enhance their leadership skills. For now, KASALI focused on existing student leaders to help them learn about diversity issues. This resulted in action plans made by the student leaders aimed at consulting peers to influence future meaningful child-led programs in their schools where all children will be able to participate.

While KASALI actively engaged in advocacy networks that push for the enactment of policies supportive to children with disabilities, challenges remain due to conflicting views and definitions of inclusive education among government and civil society actors.

Scalability and Sustainability

The research Descriptive Study on the Implementation of the Equality and Non-Discrimination Modules for Children in partnership with University of Santo Tomas is one of the studies conducted to describe the successful non-discrimination approach actively engaging children. The results informed further module refinement which can then be adopted and used by the Department of Education to sensitise children on disability through storytelling and video documentaries.

The Department of Education has also expressed interest in adopting and using KASALI developed materials, especially related to teacher capacity building, at a national scale. The Department has specifically sought the technical support of the project team to make this happen. Leveraging on the KASALI achievements, the country office is exploring ways on providing technical support at the national level and holding a more significant role in pushing for policies related to Inclusive Education⁵² and children with disability.

Suggestions for further implementation

A good way to adopt a similar strategy to raise awareness among children, is to find out about existing (material, human and financial) resources, identify gaps and be open-minded for opportunities within the communities where a project is working. For a whole-school approach, collaboration and partnerships with all stakeholders is a must in order to inform, improve and institutionalise the approach. For instance, the partnership with the university allowed the project to gather data on the most effective approach for awareness raising and sensitisation. In addition, KASALI did benefit from the rich collection of children's stories, teachers with creative story-telling skills and children eager to listen to and see stories come to life – which the project effectively maximised to share the messages of non-discrimination and inclusivity. In other countries, other approaches may be more successful depending on context and cultures for example by using media such as traditional music, teacher-made short stories, vibrant visual art, puppetry or lively theatre performances. Key is to be as dynamic and creative as possible, because working with children has endless possibilities.

⁵² At the national level, there is the pending Inclusive Education Bill at both Senate and House of Representatives. Within the Department of Education, there are two pending policies: Inclusive Education Framework and Learners with Special Needs.

CARISSA WAS ALWAYS DIFFERENT

Carissa is 10 years old but hadn't been diagnosed until recently. Her mother April always knew Carissa was different. Carissa had difficulty moving and communicating, but April could not afford medical tests or therapy for her daughter.

Last year, when the family moved to a larger city close to the capital Manila, to be with April's brother, they found out about the KASALI project. The project is run by Save the Children and funded by the IKEA Foundation. Carissa was finally diagnosed with cerebral palsy and referred to a Special Education class in a school that is part of the project.

Carissa has greatly improved since her first day of school. She really enjoys being with her classmates, and is learning things her mother didn't think were possible for her.

"She proudly shows her school work to her brother when she gets home and then they help each other with homework," April says. "She always has her school bag with her, even at home. She really looks forward to going to school every day." Outside of school, Carissa is attending therapy sessions at a Community-Based Inclusive Development centre, set up as part of the project.

With the help of funding from the IKEA Foundation, Save the Children's KASALI project has supported more than 500 children with disabilities to enrol in school since 2014.

By providing capacity building for teachers, local government offices and councils, the KASALI project is working towards the protection and inclusion of all children with disabilities, from early childhood to primary education.

Tools and reference materials

Readers interested in more detailed information about the inclusive education approach by Save the Children Philippines or in the tools and training materials the project developed such as Disability-Inclusive Training Manual for Schools, may contact

Basic.Education@savethechildren.org





ROMANIA

SUMMER KINDERGARTEN AS A MODEL FOR INCLUSION

Project background

Romanian and European research institutes and NGOs estimate that there are around 2,5 million Roma people – which is 11% of Romania's population, and this population also has the nation's highest birth rate. The Roma ethnic group is the most exposed to discriminative treatments⁵³ and stereotypical perceptions of this ethnic group include that they are criminals, exhibit violent behaviours and have no interest in education. Only 20% of Roma children attend kindergarten due to – according to interviewed Roma parents – lack of services in their proximity and financial resources, and lack of trust in service provider staff. 80% of children who never go to school are Roma children.⁵⁴ The stigma associated with being Roma is so strong that it affects the way programmes and services are designed (no holistic approach), services are delivered (staff often lack required skills) and the access to services (e.g. Roma parents are reluctant to register their children in school because they are afraid their children will be discriminated).

90% of children participating in Summer Kindergartens have later enrolled in regular schools or kindergartens.

The Summer Kindergarten project (2016-2018) addressed some of the following problems:

- There are no public kindergartens⁵⁵ in rural areas or in the proximity of Roma communities;
- Kindergarten teachers coming from the majority population, lack knowledge about the Roma culture and how to approach and work with this ethnic group in a constructive manner;
- There are no Roma⁵⁶ mediators that could help to accommodate the children in the kindergartens, support parents in making the decision to register children in the education system, facilitate the liaison between preschool and primary school so that the children have continued positive education experiences;
- Roma children and children with special education needs are referred to the poorest schools, with the least qualified teachers and inadequate learning conditions.

⁵³ Gallup (2009)

⁵⁴ National Report on Roma Inclusion in Early Child Development Services (2010)

⁵⁵ Public Kindergartens are free of cost (but not always of good quality)

⁵⁶ There are no Roma teachers. Less than 2% of the Roma population finishes high school, and even less get a university degree, even though there are dedicated places for Roma students.

The project's mission is to fight discrimination in education and in society at large by establishing an inclusive, safe learning environment, to which all children have access, are welcomed and valued for their diversity and have their needs met in quality, flexible teaching and learning environments. The projects' immediate objectives are to improve school readiness and reduce the risk of school dropout for 1,000 pre-school Roma children through the Summer Kindergarten programme and to improve access for Roma children to inclusive, safe and good quality primary schools.

Summer Kindergarten as a successful approach

The annual Summer Kindergarten as a model for the inclusion of children from Roma communities has worked well. The approach consists of the following elements:

- Train teachers and school mediators;
- Prepare children to ensure their smooth inclusion in mainstream preschool and primary school, by implementing an eight-week Summer Kindergarten programme prior to the start of the school year;
- Involve parents in the activities to reinforce, and build on the education benefits for their children;
- Monitor children's cognitive, physical and social-emotional development in kindergarten/primary school to be able to respond timely and adequately when needed;
- Attract local authorities and community stakeholders to support Summer Kindergarten activities.

Summer Kindergarten aims to facilitate the integration of 3 to 5/6-year old children in the public education system and reduce the gap between children with and without pre-school experience. Key target groups are: (1) children: from disadvantaged communities, predominantly Roma; (2) parents: to increase their awareness of the importance education for their children's development; (3) teachers: especially kindergarten teachers and school mediators, who also receive continuous professional development.

Summer Kindergarten takes place throughout the summer break for 40 consecutive work days and is open every day, from Monday to Friday, four hours/day. The optimum structure for each group is 20 children, supported by at least two adults (teacher and mediator), while parents are encouraged to participate in activities. Locations are selected in consultation with the School Inspectorates and based on criteria like the number of children and the socio-economic situation of the target community.

MEDIATORS HELPED GIVE ANTONIO A SECOND CHANCE

Antonio (6) comes from a family of four. His mother is often sick and his father unemployed. They live in a one room house. Neither of his parents finished primary school grade 3. At the start of Summer Kindergarten, Antonio refused to participate in activities or share toys. He would often fight, and it took a lot of patience and encouragement from the teacher, to gain his trust. The wounds from the previous kindergarten ran deep – he was bullied, beaten, humiliated and rejected by teachers and peers and stopped going to school. When approached by the Roma mediator, Antonio and his parents needed a lot of convincing. The mediator invited the parents to observe the program while Antonio joined the program. After some time, they saw Antonio smiling more, shouting less and making friends. Now Antonio plays with other children and enjoys the activities.

"I would like the Summer Kindergarten to never to end" Antonio says smiling. In September, Antonio was enrolled in preparatory class at School no. 1 in Timisoara. His grades are average, but he goes every day because he has new friends in school.

Summer kindergarten intervention stages

1. **Training of teaching staff and school mediators:** The selection of programme locations is followed by identifying teachers and mediators with the support of the local city council and school inspectorate. Four-day training sessions are organised each year prior to the start of the programme addressing topics such as: the needs of disadvantaged children, Roma culture, history and traditions, education of Roma children with reference to the legal framework, communication with families from socially disadvantaged environments, family counselling, children's rights, and holistic child development.
2. **Identification and selection of children:** Children are identified by the teacher and mediator prior to the start of Summer Kindergarten, by visiting the community, and by requesting the kindergartens, schools or partner institutions for references. Non-Roma disadvantaged children may also enrol, and sometimes children older than six who never had a chance to go to school enrol in the program. For each selected child, a profile is made with general information regarding the child and his/her family, parental consent to participate, and a description of the child's progress throughout the programme.
3. **Meetings with parents:** Prior to start of Summer Kindergarten, the teacher and school mediator organise a meeting to discuss the programme with parents⁵⁷ and encourage them to get involved in the activities. Parents are regularly updated on their children's progress and meet with the teacher and school mediator whenever needed. School mediators (most of Roma origin) play a critical part in maintaining good relations with the parents.

⁵⁷ Mostly mothers as many fathers work far away – also outside Romania – or are in prison

4. **Summer Kindergarten Implementation:** Selection and planning programme activities is the responsibility of the teacher following the initial assessment of the children (to be able to track individual progress) and based on the curriculum agreed upon at national level. The educational activities consider a child's age, his/her social context and learning pace. Activities and tasks are implemented through play in a child-friendly and social-emotionally safe learning environment, avoiding criticism and punishment, and stimulating positive interaction and appreciation among children. Teachers report children's progress using a standardised form⁵⁸ focusing on a child's wellbeing and school readiness competencies⁵⁹, also for teachers to select appropriate follow-up activities. Children also get a daily snack and school supplies to participate in the activities, while their families receive material support consisting of basic food products⁶⁰. Local authorities and community stakeholders can significantly contribute to the success of the programme and are encouraged to become partners in the program.
5. **Children's enrolment in mainstream education:** Teachers and school mediators support families to ensure their children are registered in the public education system for the following school year. The support consists of identifying kindergartens or primary schools where children can enrol, helping with the registration, notifying teachers in the respective schools about the child's situation, and organising meetings between children, their parents and teachers to get to know each other.
6. **Follow-up monitoring:** When enrolled in a mainstream kindergarten or primary school the project continues to monitor a child's progress by collecting information on attendance, learning results and parental involvement. Sometimes, after completing Summer Kindergarten, children face difficulties in maintaining regular attendance, due to financial barriers⁶¹, long distances between the children's residence and the kindergarten or school, and, in some cases, due to marginalisation of Roma children by teachers and other children. Thus, it is important to continue to monitor and support the children and their families also by engaging all local stakeholders, Roma or non-Roma.

58 Developed by Save the Children, in line with the Preschool education national strategy and the Education Law, officially approved by the Ministry.

59 A set of abilities (cognitive, language, motor, social-emotional, personal autonomy) that children are expected to have mastered when entering primary school.

60 Roma communities/families are generally very poor and without ID cards, may not receive the support they need. The project also provides support for Roma children to receive such ID cards for future support.

61 Education is free in Romania, but many schools lack education materials and parents are expected to provide these.

Engagement of stakeholders and partners

At central level, the Ministry of Education, approved the overall methodology, the curriculum and the accreditation of the teacher-training programme, while the school inspectorates approved the selection of teachers and Roma mediators. Local administration/city council allocate budget to pay Roma mediators and Summer Kindergarten educational materials; they also supplement the budget for Summer Kindergarten teacher salaries. At community level, teachers are involved in identifying and selecting children, as well as in counselling parents to participate. They also support the enrolment of children in mainstream schools, and monitor their adjustment, attendance and school results throughout the following year. One of the success factors of Summer Kindergarten is the active involvement of parents as partners in the education of their children. This partnership – based on mutual respect and trust – facilitated collaboration between teachers and parents in finding the best approach to ensure a harmonious development and a favourable learning environment for their children.

Child participation

As a child rights organisation, Save the Children promotes and demonstrates meaningful participation of children. Realising this with very young children may require a different approach compared to older children such as for example by using Circle Time⁶² and co-operative learning activities. Though the Summer Kindergarten curriculum and teaching approach is also interactive, the project is currently developing additional activities especially focusing on participation of young children.



⁶² Circle Time is an approach to help develop positive relationships between children. It aims to give them tools to engage with and listen to each other using different ways of communication. It is often used as an opportunity to solve problems affecting the class, e.g. teasing or bullying. The whole class takes part in Circle Time based on certain ground-rules, led by the teacher who also sits in the circle. The Circle encourages unity, respect, turn-taking and working together towards a shared vision. www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/introducing_circle_time.pdf

Key milestones

- School attendance following the Summer Kindergarten was unexpectedly high: around 96%⁶³ of children attended classes, with absences caused only by diseases, family issues or economic migration. This good result is linked to the cooperation between Roma families and teachers, facilitated by Roma mediators, based on improved understanding and respect for the Roma culture and the needs of the communities. In addition, the play-based program focusing on emotional learning and social skills appeals to the children and keeps their interest high.
- Around 90% of Summer Kindergarten children over the years enrolled in regular schools or kindergartens and were still in the system by the end of the school year in June 2018. Out of the 90% who enrolled in the schools 65% finished the school year, with good or very good academic results.⁶⁴ For most children Summer Kindergarten was the first contact with education. They experienced a welcoming and responsive learning environment with adults considering their individual needs and development pace. Children acquired the skills and confidence to enrol in the mainstream system.
- 83% of the Roma parents involved in the project reported higher levels of trust in the education system and being less worried about their children.⁶⁵ The role of Roma mediators, who have extensive knowledge of the Roma culture, has been critical in this change of attitude and experience. The mediators brought schools and parents together to discuss issues and expectations, to communicate Summer Kindergarten activities, and to engage parents in the programme.
- The Ministry of Education approved the programme and its good practices have been documented.



⁶³ Throughout the project period enrolment, attendance, retention and learning results are monitored for all children both during Summer Kindergarten and when entering the public-school system, while also monitoring changing attitudes of parents.

⁶⁴ Of the remaining 35%, around 20% leave the region or country with their families (high mobility is a constant and challenging feature). The remaining 15% had to repeat or was transferred to other forms of school support e.g. "second chance" programs;

⁶⁵ Same source as footnote 53

Significant challenges

- Working with the central government is challenging and their lack of involvement generated delays in the process of recognition of good practices and methodology;
- High level of politicising in Romanian ministries led to poor selection of decision makers in both health and child education areas. Lacking in-depth child education knowledge, representatives at central level in the Ministry of Education, superficially analysed proposals and procrastinated decisions. In addition, frequent staff changes in these offices, followed by changed priorities, increased the challenge of cooperating with central authorities.
- Partnerships between Save the Children and local authorities at Summer Kindergarten locations, were good and collaborative. However, local authorities depend on central budget allocations and approvals which can jeopardise local initiatives;
- Save the Children Romania staff lacks advocacy skills (and need to invest in capacity building). Considerable experience in inclusive education has been achieved and Save the Children is a member of national task forces that develop and improve strategic documents, however, unless this expertise is translated into strategically influencing decision-making, with the help of professional lobbyists, it will fail to positively impact the lives of vulnerable children.

“Children from my neighbourhood, that are my friends, are not going to school because they don’t want to... Because their parents didn't go either.”

Corina, 9 years old,

Scalability and sustainability

Following the Ministry of Education approval of the Summer Kindergarten as well as the development of a good practices guide, the first steps towards scalability and sustainability have been ensured. Summer Kindergarten can now be organised across the country with minimum resources, and with local stakeholders who are willing to work together. Existing schools/ kindergartens may provide the space necessary to organise a Summer Kindergarten without additional costs. The most important local resources are teachers with the mindset and skills to include children from disadvantaged backgrounds, along with school mediators.

A critical factor to ensure scalability and sustainability is financial support, which has been taken care of in the National Strategy for Child’s Rights Protection and Promotion 2018–2020 ensuring public funds to hire 5,000 additional professionals⁶⁶ for quality education for vulnerable children. The Save the Children project was referred to as good practice during the development of this strategy. Furthermore, the financial budget formula for schools enrolling 50% of their students from vulnerable communities has been corrected and approved. This means that schools with 50% of their students at educational/social/health risk, will have more budget available to improve education quality and develop adequate educational plans for such children.

⁶⁶ Roma mediators, school counsellors, support teachers

Suggestions for further implementation

Based on the Summer Kindergarten experience the following suggestions can support improved implementation in similar projects:

- The basic syllabus should be flexible and adaptable to individual children, considering their psychological, cognitive and social-emotional development, their family situation, etc.
- Teachers need training beforehand, so they have the necessary information about disadvantaged children, including how to positively communicate with parents from such communities.
- Creating a network of mediators to maintain continuous contact between kindergarten/school and families has proven efficient and effective throughout the project duration and should be replicated.
- Collaboration with the children's parents is key, both to counsel them and engage them in the programme, to help address fears parents may have regarding the treatment of their children and to help them better understand the importance of education for their children's future.
- Involving local authorities to reinforce the spirit of belonging to a community is also recommended, while including and supporting the wider civil society and community at large.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY

Bianca, 6, wants to be a princess or a doctor when she grows up. She hasn't made her mind up yet.

Bianca is from one of the poorest suburbs of Constanta, on Romania's Black Sea coast. Her family is part of the country's Roma population – one of the most marginalised ethnic groups in Europe. None of her older siblings go to school, and her family struggles economically. Their home has no electricity or running water. Bianca's chances of an education and a way out of poverty seem bleak.

Last summer Bianca joined the local summer kindergarten programme, run by Save the Children with funding from the IKEA Foundation. The programme aims to prepare children from poor and marginalised backgrounds for school and support them to start school. Following the summer programme, she was able to enrol in a preparatory class in a government school in Constanta.

Bianca has been at school for one term. In today's art class she draws a princess with a red cross on her dress.

"She works at the hospital, you know. She helps all the sick people in the kingdom," Bianca says. "I will be just like her, but not right now; I need to finish school first."

Now that she is in school, her chances of being the first in her family to finish school – and break the cycle of poverty and exclusion – are far greater.

The IKEA Foundation funded Save the Children programme Inclusive Education for All - Without Discrimination, aims to contribute to building a culture of inclusion in Romanian schools where all children can attend, are welcomed and valued for their diversity and have their needs met in appropriate, flexible learning environments.

Project staff prepare children for school, but they are also training teachers, decision makers and school employees.

Tools and reference materials

Readers interested in more detailed information about the Summer Kindergarten project developed by Save the Children in Romania or in the tools and training materials the project developed can contact: Anca Stamin, education program manager anca.stamin@salvaticopiii.ro or George Roman, lobby director george.roman@salvaticopiii.ro





VIETNAM

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS THROUGH SCHOOL DIALOGUE

Project background

Despite years of economic growth and development, children in Vietnam still face significant child rights violations, especially due to growing disparities between the rich and poor. A survey showed that 68% of children aged 1-14 had experienced violent discipline in the home during the last month.⁶⁷ Promotion and protection of children's rights is jeopardised by lack of effective law enforcement, inadequate public awareness and poor practical implementation in communities and schools. As experienced during the first phase of the project, quality education in Vietnam is defined as high academic results measured by tests and exams scores, while there is little awareness of, and attention to more holistic education which incorporates social-emotional learning and well-being for all. The project baseline found frequent use of corporal punishment and the absence of mechanisms for children to report abuse, discrimination and bullying, as well as inadequate policies and anti-corporal punishment legislation remain serious issues and thus key areas to address for the education and child protection project implemented by Save the Children in four districts in Ho Chi Minh City. Ho Chi Minh City, is the biggest city of Vietnam with a population of nearly 8,5 million, consisting of 24 districts.

The project's aims are to make sure that marginalised children attend good quality inclusive basic education; corporal punishment is eliminated in project schools and communities in close collaboration with children and parents; the quality of community-based child protection networks and mechanisms are improved, ultimately creating a child-friendly and violence-free community and school environment, while meaningfully engaging children!

**94% of students
responding reported
violence and bullying
behaviours of other
students this school year.
30% said they had been
punished by teachers or
school administrators
this school year.**

Project KAP survey 2018

⁶⁷ Source: UNICEF Vietnam Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2014)

A successful approach

Project monitoring (including observations and interviews with stakeholders) revealed a major gap in the implementation of children's rights and a total absence of participation of key stakeholders such as children and parents to claim their rights. The project therefore started to address this and experienced that such a participatory approach worked well. More active and meaningful participation especially of children to influence duty-bearers such as parents, teachers, school-principals and local government officials helped to raise awareness about children's rights, improve the child-friendliness of learning environments and to promote children's protection against violence. During the first phase of the project the approach focused on awareness raising, extended with an approach called school dialogue during the second phase of the project.

Awareness raising was done through different activities, one of them being parents, teachers and children committing themselves to the protection and promotion of children's rights by discussing and signing the child rights posters. Children and teachers have also been trained on child rights and child protection prior to this, to address violence against children. At the start of each school-year posters were designed by children with support from Save the Children and distributed to every class for signing. Parents and teachers were also asked to sign and commit to a violence free learning environment at home and in school. Each signed poster was hung on the classroom wall as a daily reminder to teachers, parents and children.

The project team received positive feedback from students and teachers. Students reported that they experienced less corporal punishment from their teachers and teachers revealed they learned to better control their emotions and anger.

Mr. Pham Phu Quoc Khanh from Nguyen Van Nghi Secondary School said: "The teachers benefit greatly from the project. They learn how to control their emotions and use positive discipline techniques. As a result, the students also react in a positive way. Corporal punishment hurts children's dignity".

A student from Nguyen Van Nghi said: "Prior to this project, teachers used corporal punishment on us, but now teachers change their way of teaching and managing the lesson using positive words".

Other duty-bearers such as local education officials also participated in these activities and the project has successfully lobbied for zero tolerance of violence, at the same time improving child rights knowledge and understanding among children, parents, teachers and education officials as well as counselling services in school.

The School Dialogue encourages children, parents and teachers to voice their opinions and agree on how to develop violence free learning environments in school and at home for their children. This has been innovative in Vietnam with the project employing an indirect and non-confrontational approach. Questions such as “What would I do in this situation if I were a parent?”, or “What would I do in this situation if I were the school principal?” did reflect children’s wishes and opinions on issues affecting them directly or indirectly. The old method of using direct questions and additional probing questions rather than a dialogue did not encourage children and parents to share their honest opinions, especially related to sensitive child protection issues. Most project schools have now rolled out the model with positive feedback and lesson learnt. Using the School Dialogue model has shown it strengthens the relationship and trust among children, parents and teachers.

One of the parents said that “When my children made mistakes, I could not control myself and I wanted to beat them. But learning about positive discipline changed me. I learned to educate them by proper actions and to be mindful of verbal abuse, also to listen to them and to help them to distinguish right from wrong”.

The School Dialogue has proved to be an opportunity for teachers, parents and students to participate in discussions on matters that affect them. Previously children and parents felt they could not discuss school matters with teachers so easily and children often experienced they should be seen rather than heard. School dialogues have broken those communication barriers and now link key stakeholders and allow them to participate and speak up on their issues. Crucially, opinions and ideas collected during school dialogues do also inform the school improvement plans whose progress is annually revised.

What the project learned from both approaches – awareness raising and the School Dialogue – is that stakeholder participation creates transparency and is key for getting support to improve children’s school experiences and that child rights awareness raising (including on the new Vietnam 2016 Child Law) is a long-term and on-going activity.

“Learning about positive discipline changed me. I learned to educate by proper actions and to be mindful of verbal abuse.”

Parent taking part in School Dialogue



Engagement of stakeholders and partners

The project works in partnership with local authorities including the Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs and the Department of Education and Training, to discuss violence against children issues in schools and communities and jointly explore solutions.

The project directly works with teachers, children and parents, engaging them in district-wide campaigns to promote non-violent schools, homes and communities for children to grow up in and make the public aware of the legal consequences of using violence or corporal punishment on children.

The project conducts child rights workshops especially with teachers to help them apply child rights principles such as non-discrimination, equal education opportunities, child protection and participation in their schools and classrooms.

Child participation

Participation must be inclusive and therefore represent different children such as boys and girls, different ethnic groups, migrant children, those with disabilities and children from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Some children, such as those with disabilities, may be more affected by violence than others, and their voices need to be heard. At city and district level, a platform for children to raise their voice to the local authorities takes place every quarter. These Child Forums, which represent school-based children's clubs and thus different children, make local government officials aware of children's rights issues and their suggestions for change and improvements. Children's Clubs discuss such issues at school-level and suggest how to create child-friendly and non-violent learning environments. Example of initiatives include green libraries, food-fairs for fundraising, drawing competition days, and reading corners made of recycled materials.



Key milestones

- 5,585 marginalised children, including migrant children, children living in poverty and those with disabilities, benefited from the project activities (e.g. through case management, activities for migrant and other deprived children)
- In 2018, Go Vap Department of Education and Training made School Dialogue an official activity required for all schools in that district to implement each school year. Also, the People's Committee of District 10 in Ho Chi Minh City expressed the same interest and is planning for next year's replication of this model.
- 90% of students, parents and teachers participated in the campaign and signed the stop-violence-against-children posters, leading to improved violence awareness and a positively changing learning environment, based on children's feedback.
- 2,000 children and 1,500 parents have participated in School Dialogues

Significant challenges

- Though violence against children in schools decreased resulting from the project's child rights awareness raising, poster signing and school dialogues, it is not yet clear whether violence against children within the family also decreased.
- Government regulations and staff policy in education and child protection systems, especially for management and leadership positions, prescribe periodical rotation. This often leads to inconsistency and/or discontinuation when replicating good project models as well as decreases the intended project values.
- Not all schools have been successful in using the two approaches as it depends on a committed school management. Furthermore, without full endorsement by all local governments and thus institutionalising the models, this challenge remains.

Scalability and sustainability

The project also received positive feedback from non-project schools after rolling out the awareness raising and School Dialogue models as concrete methods to address violence against children. The two approaches have been well acknowledged by local governments which is now leading to wider endorsement of the models in areas outside project locations, firstly in District 1 and District 10, and afterwards potentially to be replicated across all of Ho Chi Minh City's 24 districts.

Schools that only received support during the first project phase and have continued to implement these approaches, have become model-schools for others to visit and learn from. For example, Phuoc Hiep lower secondary school in Cu Chi shared that by using the two approaches the school managers learned much more about students' education experience such as their family circumstances and difficulties in studies, which allowed the school take appropriate action to better support students. The school principal now planned to carry out the awareness raising and school dialogue activities twice per school year.

The local government partner in Go Vap District, having observed a school dialogue, showed a special interest in replicating the model across the whole district⁶⁸ and implement the activity at least once per semester. The activity is continuing in Thu Duc and Binh Tan districts and the project team will continue monitoring its implementation and scaling up.

Suggestions for further implementation

If other projects in Vietnam or other countries would like to replicate the awareness raising approach and/or the School Dialogues, the following suggested actions may lead to improved results:

- The awareness raising activity using child rights posters and signing those is more visually effective in schools than in a community. Therefore, to target communities, other activities may be needed to create impact on stakeholders outside the school setting. As an example, school report cards could be used to deliver messages about ending violence in the community.
- A proper hand-over mechanism of why and how to conduct awareness raising and School Dialogue activities needs to be in place, especially in systems where school principals are regularly rotating. This could be a guideline and a monitoring system for out-going and in-coming principals so that opinions and suggestions from children, parents and teachers are used for the development towards a child-friendly learning environment.

⁶⁸ Go Vap district has a population of more than 561,000 (population census 2011).

TRANG DISCUSSES VIOLENCE WITH SCHOOL MANAGERS

Trang, 14, knows how deeply ingrained corporal punishment is in the Vietnamese education system. She has seen teachers beating students daily.

“Even though parents felt sorry for their children, they tended to agree with the violence and accept it as a way to discipline children,” Trang says.

Trang decided to help change the way children were seen and treated by adults in her community. She joined a child-led group at her secondary school and has become an advocate for children’s rights.

Many families move from the countryside to the rapidly growing Ho Chi Minh City, looking for work and a way out of poverty. These families end up in crowded districts like the one where Trang lives. Many families are very poor. It is a new and tough environment for children, and their families lack social support. Nearly 70% of all children under 15 in Ho Chi Minh City have been beaten or otherwise physically abused – and children of migrants are especially vulnerable to abuse, inside and outside school.

The project Trang is part of tries to create a more child-friendly environment at schools and provide direct support to vulnerable children. Child-led groups that advocate for child rights can increase knowledge and contribute to changing policies. The project, which is funded by the IKEA Foundation, also works with local government, teachers, parents and the general public to prevent violence, neglect and abuse of all children in this area, particularly poor and migrant children.

Trang has learned a lot through the Save the Children led project, and today she is confident to talk to adults about issues like violence and abuse.

“I never imagined that I could discuss issues with school managers and teachers without constraints,” Trang says. “We are now able to share our ideas to build a better learning environment and feel confident to speak out against school policies that will not benefit us.”

Tools and reference materials

A sample of the poster on stopping violence-against-children and an example of a School Dialogue agenda can be found in the annexes of this publication.

For other information about this project please contact: Mr. Nguyen Lu Gia, Child Protection Manager
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RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on learning from the country project stories of what has worked well in their context, some suggestions have been extracted below for future projects that aim to promote non-discrimination and inclusion of Children with Disabilities and most deprived children in education.

Reach out and widen access to mainstream education and promote full participation of all learners vulnerable to exclusion to realise their potential

- Identification process should consider all children at risk of exclusion from mainstream education.
- Creating public awareness about children excluded from access, participation and learning creates supportive community environment.
- Establishing family, community and school networks that promote and support inclusion.
- Supporting the participation of learners and their parents in educational decision-making.
- Develop personalised education approaches and plans for learners with more complex learning needs in collaboration with parents and other professionals as needed.
- Demonstrate how teachers can work together and support each other for improved inclusive classroom practices.
- Encourage the views of children and showcase how their engagement can further promote and implement inclusion.
- Promote and model collaborative problem solving involving positive discipline approaches to classroom management.
- Showcase cooperative learning where children help each other in different ways – including peer tutoring.

Provide education and training in inclusive education for all teachers

- Develop and demonstrate use of inclusive education quality indicators and teaching standards.
- Mainstream and institutionalise inclusive education in existing pre-service and in-service teacher education/training programs.
- Promote and model positive attitudes and respectful language in schools/classrooms for also social-emotional inclusion.
- Ensure that all teachers feel able to teach and manage all learners whatever their individual needs, including disability knowledge.
- For teachers to work effectively in inclusive settings, they need to have the appropriate values and attitudes, skills and competences, knowledge and understanding.
- Promote and use inclusive education teacher champions to talk about how and why they changed their classroom practices.
- Demonstrate and promote the use of many different teaching approaches such as differentiation, Universal Design for Learning, supportive learning, team-teaching, and formative assessment to meet the diverse needs in a classroom.
- Model and show-case how special needs education schools may change into resource centres that can provide support to schools/teachers in regular education system in the process of transformation into inclusive schools.

Inclusive education is when all students, regardless of any challenges they may have, are placed in age-appropriate general education classes that are in their own neighborhood schools to receive high quality instruction, interventions and support that enable them to meet success in the core curriculum

Bui, Quirk, Almazan & Valenti, 2010;
Alquraini & Gut, 2012



Advocate for policies, legislation and funding that promotes and monitors inclusion

- Share good practices and support research and development for new educational approaches, methods and tools.
- Lobby for decentralised funding models, which are likely to be more cost-effective and more responsive to local needs.
- Communicate policies effectively to national, regional, district and community level education actors and stakeholders.
- Promote partnerships between local education authority, schools and parents to ensure greater accountability for the services provided.
- Establish systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of provisions for all learners in the education system.
- Advocate for one legal framework covering inclusion in education in all education (sub-)sectors and at all levels, aligned with international commitments (UNCRC; CRPD; SDG4).

Inclusive education ideally refers to the capacity of an education system to accommodate all children, without exception, within the formal education process and promote their learning and full development. Inclusive education should not be limited to a teacher training subject or programme, but it is an approach that should be mainstreamed throughout existing teacher training programmes and throughout school curricula at all levels.

It is important to recognise that achieving inclusive education is a long, complex process of behaviour change, capacity building, inter departmental coordination and transformation of education system. Success will require working to change policies, systems, practices and cultures within the home, communities, schools and with governments. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that good quality teaching and inclusive education are two sides of the same coin. Education cannot be inclusive of all learners unless it is of good quality, and education cannot be considered of good quality if it is not inclusive of all learners.

The documented inclusive education projects, supported by the IKEA Foundation, have clearly initiated the shift in attitudes and abilities of government and other partners, especially among teachers and parents in the countries where these projects have been implemented. However, the projects have only initiated the process and there is a long way ahead to transform education systems completely in these countries.

SDG4 requires countries to reform their education systems into “inclusive and equitable quality systems”. Therefore, the efforts of promoting inclusive education are in line with SDG4 planning in all countries and Save the Children teams in these countries and at global level will continue to play a strategic and influential role in sharing examples of good practice and evidence from these projects to contribute to the implementation of SDG4.

INTERESTING READING AND FURTHER LEARNING

Enabling Education Network (EENET) – 2018 – Young Voices in Inclusive Education:
A guide to help young researchers conduct action research with peers and younger children

Tips, Tricks and Tools to build your inclusive classroom through UDL

UNICEF (2016) CHILD FUNCTIONING – A new way to measure child functioning

International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health – Children and Youth

EENET (Enabling Education Network) (2018) An inclusive Day – a video-based teacher training resource

Abt Associates (2016) A summary of the evidence on inclusive education

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Save the Children Sweden (2018) Inclusive Education Cross-Country Peer-Review (Final Report)

Save the Children International (2015) Building a better world for and with children (Global Strategy: Ambition for Children 2030 and 2016-2018 Strategic Plan)

European Union, GanaUnnayan Kendra (GUK), Leonard Cheshire Disability (2014) Inclusive Education in Bangladesh: a learning brief

UNICEF (2012) Position Paper on Education for Children with Disabilities

Do you still have questions?

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