



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

UNESCO Bangkok

Office of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics  
Regional Advisor - Assessment,  
Information Systems, Monitoring  
and Statistics (AIMS) Unit



Education for All  
Asia and the Pacific



# Towards Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities: A Guideline





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# Towards Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities: A Guideline

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# Foreword

How close are countries to achieving the six EFA goals agreed to in the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000? The EFA world programme has had a significant impact in increasing the number of children in school in many countries in the Asia-Pacific region, but in many cases improvement has been rapid to the point where perhaps 90 per cent of children are included but improvement beyond that point has been difficult to achieve. Implementing more of the strategies which achieved the initial improvement does not appear to work.

The Dakar Framework for Action makes reference to the groups of children who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged and calls for inclusive education practices to ensure that they are included in the education process and have access to schools. However, in pursuing the six goals, national governments have not focused extensively on these groups of children who are widely excluded from school and the education system. Focus has been more on increasing the provision of free and compulsory primary education, achieving gender equality and adult literacy. There has been an increase in the provision of expanded and improved comprehensive early childhood care and education but this has not always been achieved with special consideration for the children who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged, as is laid out in the first of the six Dakar goals. Where children with disabilities and other disadvantages have been included in schools there has been an improvement in the quality of education as it becomes more child-centred and focused on achieving good learning outcomes for all children, including those with a diverse range of abilities.

Throughout the Decade of the EFA programme the UNESCO Bangkok Office has taken action in many ways to ensure that the right to education of all children, including those with disabilities and other disadvantages, have been addressed. In the early stages of the decade the regional meetings of the EFA Coordinators were focused on the development of national EFA plans. This planning process included the presentation of draft plans and a critique and review process which increased the awareness and understanding of the national planners with regard to the importance of including those groups of vulnerable children who had by tradition been excluded. Planning required that strategies for their inclusion and for modification to the school system to ensure that their learning needs were effectively met must be developed. The planning process is flexible and on-going so that national plans once formulated can be modified on an on-going basis to meet the changing needs of the nations.

In the Mid-Decade Assessment process undertaken from 2005 to 2007, the theme was "Reaching the Unreached". For the first time information on the educational provisions for children with disabilities was sought by means of questionnaire, and information included in the country assessments. UNESCO Bangkok has promoted the development of inclusive education practices throughout the Asia-Pacific region, through workshops and publications such as "Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Learning-Friendly Environments. The Manual on Guidelines for Action to Include Children with Disabilities in School Systems and the EFA Process will be an additional resource to be used for guidance when national education systems move to ensure that *all* children have access to education.



Sheldon Shaeffer

Director, UNESCO Asia and Pacific  
Regional Bureau for Education  
December 2008

# Preface

The UNESCO global programme to promote Education for All, EFA, was initiated in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand when UNESCO hosted the first World Conference on Education for All. A decade later the World Education Forum was held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000. This meeting provided the first opportunity to present the results of the global EFA 2000 Assessment involving more than 180 countries. The results of what was arguably the biggest review on education in history were mixed. The numbers of children in school had risen dramatically and many countries were approaching full primary school enrolment for the first time. But the number of children out-of-school was cited as 113 million, and was in fact probably much higher, given that data on many excluded groups of children, including children with disabilities, is not routinely collected. The outlook for the achievement of full access to primary education by 2015, and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal targets to eradicate poverty by the same date looked set to fail unless significant attention was placed on getting children currently not receiving any education into school.

The Dakar Framework for Action, under its section on “Challenges and Opportunities”, called for more inclusive approaches that must address “the needs of the poor and the most disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health, and those with special learning needs”.

But these groups, with the exception of children from ethnic groups, did not receive attention in the six key goals of the decade with the consequence that they did not form part of the national EFA plans required under the Dakar Framework for Action. Their needs were not addressed in the national plans of action until specific action was taken requiring that information was provided on children who were excluded from school.

Further progress towards full primary school enrolment cannot be made until the focus is changed from those who are attending school to those who have habitually been excluded from school. This conclusion was reached by the Assessment, Information Systems, Monitoring and Statistics (AIMS) Unit of UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), located in UNESCO Bangkok. The realization was confirmed at a series of workshops conducted by UNESCAP investigating the extent to which countries in the Asia-Pacific region collected data on persons with disabilities. The initial finding was that data collection was so limited that it was obvious that this was a minority group in society which remained hidden. In terms of children with disabilities and their access to education, they remained unknown, uncounted and unserved in countries which laid claim to uphold education as a basic human right for all children.

In 2004 the UIS-AIMS Unit of UNESCO Bangkok developed a project to address this issue. The goal of the UNESCO project was, firstly, to analyze the complex interplay of factors which result in exclusion and secondly, to obtain detailed information about education systems in selected countries where a specific commitment has been made to include children with disabilities in schools, in the national education process, and in the monitoring process. The outcome of the project is the “Towards Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities: A Guideline”. It is hoped that this manual will provide helpful guidance to all the countries in the region as they move to include *all* children, including those with disabilities and other disadvantaged situations, in their national education plans and implementation. When this is achieved the goal of full enrolment in education will be closer to becoming a reality.

The drafting of the *Guideline* started in 2005 and was completed in the last quarter of 2008. Publication of the *Guideline* comes with the acknowledgment of possible new developments in the area of inclusive education for children with disabilities after this report was printed.



Ko-Chih Tung,  
UIS Regional Advisor for Asia-Pacific and Head, UIS-AIMS Unit  
December 2008

# Acknowledgements

This manual contains guidelines for action to include children with disabilities in school systems and the EFA monitoring process. The project which resulted in these recommendations was initiated by Ko-Chih Tung, UIS Regional Adviser for Asia-Pacific. We highly commend his far-sightedness and determination in taking these steps to ensure that children from this most excluded and vulnerable group are included in schools and in the EFA process.

We wish to thank the staff in the UIS-AIMS Unit who worked with Ko-Chih to make this project a reality. Key members of the team were Jon Kapp, Leotes Lugo-Helin, Diah Yulianti, Ann Wittayathawornwong, and Malisa Santigul.

The first stage of the project involved carrying out case studies in four countries of the region. These were Brunei Darussalam, Samoa, Thailand and Viet Nam. We would like to thank all the people in these countries who contributed information on the steps being taken in their education systems to include children with disabilities.

Following the case study data collection process, the UIS-AIMS Unit held a writer's workshop in Bangkok in June 2005, which was attended by stakeholders from all four countries and other interested participants from Thailand. The purpose of this event was to review the findings from the country studies and to draft recommendations for action. These recommendations were made in three categories: Actions required by government; actions required at the level of the school; and actions to be taken at the community level with particular emphasis on action by organizations of persons with disabilities and NGOs. We would like to thank all participants at the workshop for their enthusiasm and hard work in generating a series of recommendations which have the capacity to alter national education systems and to make them more inclusive and more welcoming of children with diverse abilities. Particular thanks go to Dr. Benja Chonlatanon, Executive Adviser in Special Education and Education for the Disadvantaged, Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC), Ministry of Education in the Royal Kingdom of Thailand, who opened the workshop.

We would also like to thank the consultants who collected the information, analyzed the findings, assisted in the running of the writer's workshop which followed the case study collection process, and produced the project documents. Rebecca McCullough provided the information for the case study in Samoa and Penelope Price and Julie De Rouville were responsible for the other three case studies, for the documentation used in the writer's workshop and for producing the draft manual on "Towards Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities: A Guideline".

We would particularly like to thank the children who participated in the project. These included children with disabilities who were interviewed as part of the case study process, but also two groups of children in Thailand and Viet Nam who took part in focus groups to provide their views on what governments, schools and the community should be doing to help their families to send them to school. One of their most significant recommendations was that families may need to be educated and informed on the rights of their disabled children to education and equal opportunities in all aspects of community life. This recommendation could be extended to the entire society which has until recently been responsible for the barriers which have prevented children with disabilities from enjoying their rights to education.

Above all, Penelope Price merits our utmost tribute for her excellent work in putting together and distilling all the valuable lessons in writing this manual. We deeply appreciate her exemplary devotion and motivation that inspired us all.

# Out-of-school children and the UNESCO Project

## Out-of-school children

Progress toward the goal of achieving Education For All has progressed steadily in most countries until the enrolment rate approaches 90-95 per cent of primary school children. At this point progress appears to stall. It seems that “more of the same” will not work and that a different and more concentrated approach is needed to find the children who have never been enrolled in the school system. It is necessary to find out who these children are and why they are not attending school. It is also necessary to make changes to the school system to ensure that they not only have access to, but are welcomed in schools where diversity is expected and valued, and their needs are met in appropriate, flexible teaching and learning environments. The UNESCO project which has resulted in these guidelines was a response to the concern for children who remain systematically excluded from school.

Out-of-school children have suffered from a lack of differentiation and are frequently referred to collectively as “disadvantaged” or “marginalized”. These terms mask their individuality, particular contexts, characteristics and needs. Inadequate information frustrates attempts to take steps to identify them and to design strategies to include them meaningfully in education policy and implementation. The result is that they remain excluded, illiterate, uneducated and above all, “invisible”.

Global statistics on the number of out-of-school or excluded children vary with the source, but evidence would suggest that the number is increasing. In the 2004 UNICEF report on the *State of the World's Children*<sup>1</sup> it was stated that there were 140 million children out of school, the majority being girls and children with disabilities.

This exceeds an earlier World Bank estimate of 113 million, of whom 30-40 per cent were estimated to be children with disabilities. Tomasevski<sup>2</sup> has commented that although these figures are supposed to be galvanizing, their most likely effect is numbing and that what is needed is to create the kinds of information which will generate action.

## National data limited

Reports obtained from country assessments in the EFA monitoring process have confirmed that national data on out-of-school children are limited, especially for children with disabilities. The assessment process in the Asian and Pacific region was conducted by the Assessment, Information, Monitoring and Statistics Unit (AIMS) of the UNESCO Bangkok Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education. The results prompted Mr. Ko-Chih Tung, head of the UIS-AIMS Unit, and Regional Adviser of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (Asia Pacific), to say that what was needed was not more information about children who *are* in school, but more information about those who are *not*.

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1 *The State of the World's Children*. UNICEF, 2004.

2 Tomasevski, K. *Education Denied*, p 125, Zed Books, NY, 2003.

## Inclusive education

Although the concept of inclusive education has been promoted internationally for more than a decade, multiple barriers remain to the full participation of children with disabilities in education. Lack of information, combined with discriminatory attitudes towards persons with disabilities at all levels of society, contributes to the continued neglect of their right to education. This partly explains the minimal rate of progress that has been made towards the enrolment and participation in the education process of children with disabilities. The factors are complex and extend beyond the boundaries of the school and classroom. It is conservatively estimated that less than 10 per cent of children with disabilities in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region are in school.<sup>3</sup>

## The UNESCO project

In 2004, the UIS-AIMS Unit of UNESCO Bangkok developed a project to identify the necessary and effective steps for including children with disabilities in national EFA action plans and strategies and to develop guidelines for action for use in regional and national capacity building to promote the goal of full inclusion of children with disabilities in the EFA process, including the monitoring process. The goal of the UNESCO project was, firstly, to analyse the complex inter-play of factors which result in exclusion and, secondly, to obtain detailed information about education systems in selected countries where a specific commitment has been made to include children with disabilities in schools, in the national education process and in the monitoring process.

Case studies were conducted in four countries to document and analyse the processes, problems, solutions and outcomes of effective education policies and practices. A review process was then undertaken, with more than 50 stakeholders participating in a writers review meeting, which enabled country level verification of the results. Stakeholders included representatives of parent organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities, teachers from regular and special schools and special education units, head teachers and principals, Ministry of Education officials and administrators, officials of educational statistics and monitoring sections, university lecturers engaged in teacher education, representatives of regional and local NGOs engaged in promoting and providing inclusive education, and community members. Discussion groups were held on a range of topics which had been the subject of investigation during the in-country process. These were held on the basis of country level, as well as professional and other primary affiliations. The outcome was a series of recommendations for actions considered necessary to improve the opportunity and quality of education for children with disabilities in the educational systems of the region. The recommendations addressed every level of the educational systems and highlighted the importance of collaboration and inter-dependence between school systems, parents, disability advocates and communities.

The four countries selected for study were Brunei, Samoa, Thailand and Viet Nam.

## Manual on Guidelines for Action to Include Children with Disabilities in School Systems and the EFA Monitoring Process

The lessons learned from the Case Studies and the recommendations from the Review Meeting of stakeholders have been transferred into this Manual on Guidelines for Action to Include Children with Disabilities in School Systems and in the EFA Monitoring Process. The Manual begins by identifying the problem and setting out the rationale for the focus on the education of children with disabilities. This is followed by a detailed analysis of eight aspects of the education system and the ways in which it must change to allow the full inclusion of children with disabilities. Each aspect has a critical role to play in transforming the education system.

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3 UNESCO. *Biwako Millennium Framework for Action: towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific*. 2002. [www.unescap.org/esid/psis/disability/bmf/bmf/html](http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/disability/bmf/bmf/html)

The eight topics are:

- ▶ Creating change in national education systems – what are the catalysts?;
- ▶ Laying the foundations for including children with disabilities in national education systems: Policy, legislation and budgetary resources;
- ▶ Providing education, administering and implementing policy and collaborating with partners;
- ▶ Structuring and re-structuring the school system;
- ▶ Training teachers: pre-and in-service training and education for regular and specialist teachers;
- ▶ Designing data collection processes; monitoring and evaluating progress;
- ▶ Participating in the education process: The collaborative role of organizations of people with disabilities, families and community members;
- ▶ Listening to children.

Each topic is discussed in terms of:

- ▶ The challenge to the national education system of providing education to children with disabilities;
- ▶ The barriers faced by children with disabilities;
- ▶ Experiences from case study countries;
- ▶ Recommendations for action at the level of government, school and community;
- ▶ Lessons learned, with examples of good practice and illustrations drawn both from countries in which case studies were conducted and from others in the region engaged in implementing inclusive education;
- ▶ Checklist of questions for use in assessing progress towards developing a school system which fully includes children with disabilities.

The final section summarizes the way forward, with an emphasis on a rights-based approach to providing education of good quality for children with disabilities in the region.

## Who will use the manual?

The manual is intended as a resource for all those concerned with the issue of upholding the rights and improving the educational opportunities for children with disabilities. This can include those engaged in advocacy, as well as those engaged in teaching and other aspects of the education system. It will include policy makers and administrators, statisticians, teacher educators, parents, organizations of persons with disabilities and communities. The recommendations are not intended to be taken as a “recipe” for action, but rather to be considered for their relevance to each situation, in the context of the current stage of development in each school or school system. It is hoped that it will provide ideas for action from the lessons learned and shared by those who participated in the project process and that it will act as a catalyst for change where children with disabilities are still not fully included in schools and the national education system.

# Rationale for the focus on children with disabilities

The issue of discrimination and exclusion from education is not exclusive to children with disabilities. In addition to children who never attend school, there are large numbers of children who drop out early and fail to complete basic primary education. A recent UNESCO publication<sup>4</sup> lists the following groups of children at risk for exclusion and acknowledges that it may not be comprehensive: Children from ethnic minorities, language minorities, refugees or displaced children, child workers, domestic workers, children who have HIV/AIDS or are HIV/AIDS orphans, children who are abused, migrant children, children from religious minorities, poverty-stricken children, street children, children in conflict zones and child soldiers, nomadic children and children with disabilities.

The numbers of children with disabilities is grossly underestimated, particularly in developing countries. Children with severe and moderate disabilities may be acknowledged, but children with mild or hidden disabilities are ignored. So too is the large population of children with learning disabilities or difficulties. These children account for a large proportion of children who drop out and do not complete primary education. They have no obvious disability but may experience extreme difficulty with learning in one or more areas. Children with “hidden” disabilities may include those with intellectual disabilities and mental health problems, but may also include children with unidentified disabilities such as hearing loss. Children from many of the groups listed above may fall into any of these categories.

Most of the initial action and advocacy for the right to education of these groups of children has traditionally been taken by non-government agencies. This is again particularly true in developing countries. Experience from countries which participated in the UNESCO project suggest that until governments accept responsibility and mandate their education within the national education system, progress will be limited and on a very small scale.

## Children with disabilities

Children with disabilities arguably form the largest group of readily identifiable children who have been and continue to be persistently excluded from education. The World Bank estimates that of the 115 million children worldwide who are not in school, 30-40 per cent are children with disabilities.<sup>5</sup> Evidence from 43 governments in the review of national progress in the implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002) indicated that less than 10 per cent of children and youth with disabilities had access to any form of education.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics indicated that for many countries in the region, including Cambodia, Samoa, Thailand and Viet Nam, net enrolment ratios for non-disabled children ranged from 85-95 per cent.<sup>7</sup> In a UNESCO status report to the United Nations Development Group on progress toward achieving the second Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education for all boys and girls by 2015, the Director General stated that 98 per cent of children with

4 UNESCO. *Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education For All*. UNESCO, Paris, 2005, p. 11.

5 World bank. *The Education for All: Including Children with Disabilities*. Education Notes. August 2003.

6 ESCAP Review of national progress in the implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002. GENERAL E/ESCAP/APPDDP/1, 7 August 2002.

7 UNESCO UIS. [http://www.uis.org/TEMPLATE/Exceltables/education/gernier\\_primary.xls](http://www.uis.org/TEMPLATE/Exceltables/education/gernier_primary.xls). Note: data from Brunei were not available from UIS.

disabilities in developing countries do not attend school.<sup>8</sup> Few countries collect comprehensive data on persons with disabilities or data on children with disabilities in school systems. The EFA Global Monitoring Report has no indicators on the participation of children with disabilities in education.

This discrimination in education needs to be understood within a broader context. Globally, children with disabilities are part of a population of 600 million people with disabilities. This is approximately 10 per cent of the World's population, two thirds of whom live in the Asia-Pacific region. Discrimination against people with disabilities has been long-term and widespread with a number of significant effects. Persons with disabilities have been prevented from accessing rights that are freely available to other members of society in such areas as health, education, employment, community participation and other basic social and political rights. They have also been denied access to the disability-specific services that they need in areas such as early intervention and rehabilitation. Failure to access these services, combined with prejudice and rejection, has resulted in economic and social exclusion for children and adults with disabilities and their families. This marginalization has meant that their needs have not been considered in the development of basic mainstream services such as education and health. Where services have been provided, it has usually been in the context of welfare or charity, often initiated by non-governmental organizations, with responsibility less likely to be taken by the government. Education has most commonly been provided in segregated special schools, to a minority of children in urban areas. This helps to explain the extremely low enrolment rates cited above.

Pressure for change to these discriminatory attitudes and practices has been extremely slow but consistent. In 1981 the United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) focused global attention on disability issues for the first time. The World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (1983-1992)<sup>9</sup> which followed IYDP began the process of transforming the disability issue from one of "social welfare" to that of integrating the issues of persons with disabilities into all aspects of the development process. Concern with the rights of persons with disabilities has increased throughout the intervening period and the blueprint for action for the second Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (2003-2012) proclaims this goal in its title, "Biwako Millennium Framework for Action: Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (BMF)."<sup>10</sup> The focus on rights has been accompanied by the growth of strong advocacy from persons with disabilities and the development of Self-Help Organizations (SHO) at the local, national and international level.

*Persons with disabilities are the most qualified and best equipped to support, inform and advocate for themselves and other persons with disabilities. Evidence suggests that the quality of life of persons with disabilities, and of the broader community, improves when disabled people themselves actively voice their concerns and participate in decision-making. Self-help organizations are the most qualified, best informed and most motivated to speak on their own behalf concerning the proper design and implementation of policy, legislation and strategies which will ensure their full participation in social, economic, cultural and political life and enable them to contribute to the development of their communities.*

*Biwako Millennium Framework, Priority Area A. Self-help organizations of persons with disabilities and related family and parent association. Article 16.*

8 UNESCO. *UNDG: Director General assesses status of Universal Primary Education*. Flash Info no 247. 2003.

9 <http://esa.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/diswpa00.htm>

10 <http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/disability/bmf/bmf.html>

Achievements in some areas of development for persons with disabilities have been significant but progress towards gaining equal access to quality education for children with disabilities has remained unacceptably slow. Some of the reasons for this include:

- ▶ Governments have been slow to change attitudes which have viewed disability as a welfare issue and have been reluctant to acknowledge the equal right to education of children with disabilities, preferring to continue their reliance on non-government organizations for responsibility in this area;
- ▶ Governments have failed to comply with international mandates to which they are signatories, in respect of the right to education of children with disabilities;
- ▶ Some international frameworks on education have failed to place any specific emphasis on the rights of children with disabilities to education, referring to them only indirectly within such terms as “disadvantaged”, “marginalized” or “children in difficult circumstances”. This begs the question of whether the disadvantage, marginalization or difficult circumstances may be the *result* of exclusion from education, rather than an inherent characteristic of their disability. The terminology has the effect of minimizing the attention of governments to this large and identifiable minority of children as a specific target for inclusion in educational policy and provision;
- ▶ Until recently education for children with disabilities has not been a high priority issue for advocacy to governments by organizations of persons with disabilities. This is partly because there have been many critical issues competing for their attention. Members of these organizations may not have been disabled as children, and may not have experienced exclusion or disadvantage in their own education. In addition, parents’ groups have sometimes been denied a voice in these groups, and seldom have the power to advocate directly to government on behalf of their children. Education is now becoming a critical issue in disability advocacy and is the third priority area in the Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF).<sup>11</sup>

Irrespective of the barriers faced, and the slow progress made in achieving access to education, it is important that it is increasingly clearly understood by governments, schools, and the wider community, that children with disabilities, together with all children, have a basic right to education. It is the responsibility of the government of the respective country to fulfil this right for all children, including children with disabilities.

## The right to education – international mandates

The first international mandate on the right to education for *all* children was pronounced 60 years ago. Since that time the right to education has been repeatedly endorsed and expanded by the international community. Response by national governments has varied, but overall has moved in a direction towards fulfilling this right for the majority of children, but not for “all”. Interpretation of the word *all* has reflected the values and attitudes of the times. Only relatively recently has there been the beginnings of a shift towards including the right to education of children with disabilities within the commonly accepted understanding of the right to “Education for All”.

### UNESCO Constitution, 1945

In 1945 UNESCO was founded with a constitution expressing a belief, “in full and equal opportunities for education for all”.<sup>12</sup> Since that time, UNESCO has been working to make these opportunities a reality, but the realization of “full and equal” opportunities is still proving elusive.

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<sup>11</sup> BMF, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> UNESCO celebrates 60 years of education.  
[http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URLID=41591&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URLID=41591&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC)

## United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights

In 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Article 26 proclaimed that *everyone* has the right to education, free and compulsory at the “elementary” stages, with technical and professional education made generally available and higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. Article 2 affirmed that everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, “without distinction of any kind”.<sup>13</sup>

## The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and A World Fit For Children (2002)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989)<sup>14</sup> was the first treaty developed specifically to uphold the rights of children. Ratified by more states than any other convention, it was followed a little more than a decade later by the United Nations General Assembly’s Special Session on Children (2002). “A World Fit for Children”, the outcome document, extended and expanded the rights covered in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with increased concern for the specific rights of a wide range of minority groups, including children with disabilities. Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention state that all rights apply “to every human being” under the age of 18 years, and prohibits discrimination on a number of grounds including that of disability. A World Fit For Children expands the proscription on discrimination, with a specific article on children with disabilities.

Article 3: “Leave no child behind”. Each girl and boy is born free and equal in dignity and rights; therefore all forms of discrimination affecting children must end.

Article 20: “Discrimination gives rise to a self-perpetuating cycle of social and economic exclusion and undermines children’s ability to develop to the fullest potential. We will make every effort to eliminate discrimination against children whether rooted in the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, *disability*, birth or other status.”

Article 21: “We will take all measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including equal access to health, *education*, and recreational services, *by children with disabilities and children with special needs*; to ensure the recognition of their dignity; to promote their self-reliance; and to facilitate their active participation in the community.”

Under the section on General Protection, article 3 mandates the adoption of *special measures to eliminate discrimination against children on a number of grounds which include disability*, and also ensures their equal access to education, health and basic social services. Article 1 calls for the registration of every child at birth or soon after.

The right to education is further strengthened in “A World Fit for Children” and supports the goals and targets of the UNESCO Dakar Framework for Action, (see below), but makes explicit reference to children with disabilities.

Article 5: “Educate every child.” All girls and boys must have access to and complete primary education that is free, compulsory and of good quality as a cornerstone of an inclusive basic education.”

This incorporates the second Millennium Development Goal, one of a series of eight development goals adopted in 2000 by the world community to reduce poverty by half, by the year 2015.<sup>15</sup>

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13 <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights/html>.

14 <http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>.

15 <http://un.org/millennium goals/>.

Strategies to achieve the goal and targets on education include:

Article 2: Promote innovative programmes that encourage schools and communities to search more actively for children who have dropped out of, or are excluded from school and from learning, especially girls and working children, children with special needs and *children with disabilities*, and help them enrol, attend, and successfully complete their education, involving governments as well as families, communities and non-governmental organizations as partners in the educational process.

Article 4: Ensure that all basic education programmes are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to children with special learning *needs and for children with various forms of disabilities*.

Article 6: Develop and implement special strategies for improving the quality of education and meeting the learning needs of all.

To understand the critical importance of measures which support the families of children with disabilities and the development of the disabled child in the early years, the following strategies were adopted:

Article 10: Strengthen early childhood development by providing appropriate services and support to parents, *including parents with disabilities*, families, legal guardians and caregivers, especially during pregnancy, birth, infancy and early childhood, so as to ensure children's physical, psychological, social, spiritual and cognitive development.

Article 17: Ensure effective access by children with disabilities and children with special needs to integrated services, including rehabilitation and health care, and promote family-based care and appropriate support systems for parents, families, legal guardians and caregivers of these children.

## **1990 World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand**

In 1990, UNESCO hosted the first World Conference on Education for All, in Jomtien, Thailand. The World Declaration on Education For All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs had as its goal universal primary education, but with a major focus on providing educational opportunities designed to meet basic learning needs in a more flexible manner, responding to the needs, culture and circumstances of learners. Article 3, Clause 5 contained the only reference to children with disabilities, and intense advocacy by three international disability organizations resulted in the text being changed from: "The learning needs of the disabled demand special attention" to: "Steps need to be taken to provide equal access to education for every category of disabled persons as an integral part of the education system".<sup>16</sup> A decision was made to review progress in 2000.

In the years following the Jomtien conference, two significant events for persons with disabilities took place. The first was an initiative of the United Nations, focused on providing a set of norms and standards to guide the action of governments and civil society to promote full participation and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in all aspects of life. Although not mandatory, states would be monitored and guided on their progressive implementation of the standard rules. The second was a response by UNESCO to the call at Jomtien to provide equal access to children with disabilities within the mainstream education system. This resulted in the development of the far-reaching strategy of inclusive education.

## **1993 The standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities**

Rule 6 on Education requires states to recognize the principle of equal primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities. It should be provided in integrated settings and as an integral part of the national educational system, included in planning, curriculum and school organization. Where education is compulsory it should be provided to all children

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<sup>16</sup> Brohier, W. *Adapting to Changing Times and Needs for Persons with Disabilities*. SEAMEO-UNESCO Education Congress and Expo, Bangkok, Thailand, 27-29 May, 2004. p. 6.

with all kinds of disabilities. Parent groups and organizations of persons with disabilities should be involved in the education process at all levels. Special attention should be given to very young children and pre-school children with disabilities, as well as adults and particularly women with disabilities.

To accommodate educational provisions for persons with disabilities in the national education system, states should have a clearly stated policy, understood and accepted at the school level and by the wider community; allow for curriculum flexibility, addition and adaptation; and provide for quality materials, on-going teacher training and support to teachers. Adequate, accessible and appropriate support services should be provided to meet the needs of persons with different disabilities in mainstream schools.

In situations where the general school system does not yet adequately meet the needs of all persons with disabilities, special education may be considered, but it should be aimed at preparing students for education in the general school system. States should aim for the gradual integration of special education services into mainstream education. Integrated education and community-based programmes should be seen as complementary approaches in providing cost-effective training for persons with disabilities.

## 1994 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education

The focus on educating all children in the mainstream education system received strong support at the UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality, held in Spain in 1994. The conference adopted the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework for Action. The Salamanca Statement called for a policy shift which would require all schools in the regular school system to become inclusive schools and serve all children, “particularly those with special educational needs”.<sup>17</sup> It stated that special needs education for children with disabilities and those with learning difficulties could not advance in isolation but must form part of an overall educational strategy which would call for major reform of the regular school. This approach was seen as necessary to advance the commitment to Education for All, by ensuring that it effectively means all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. Article 2 affirms the right to education of all children with their diverse characteristics and abilities and demands that education systems and programmes be designed to take into account this wide diversity. Regular schools must provide an appropriate child-centred teaching and learning environment that can accommodate these special educational needs. The article concludes with the statement that:

*“Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, create welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.”<sup>18</sup>*

The statement called on governments to take policy, legislative and implementation measures to transform national education and develop a system of inclusive schools. Clear guidelines are provided for action needed to ensure changes at the level of school management, appropriate training of personnel, curriculum flexibility, and the development of support services. In addition partnerships with parents and the role of the community are emphasized.

The Salamanca Framework for Action received strong reinforcement from Bengt Lindquist, Special Rapporteur for the Standard Rules. He emphasized that it is *all* children, with their individual strengths and weaknesses, hopes and expectations, who have a right to education, not our education systems that have a right to certain types of children. It is school systems that must change to meet the needs of all children. The move towards inclusive education has been in the process of development for the past decade. More rapid progress has been made in developed than developing countries.

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17 [http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA\\_E.PDF](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF)

18 Ibid, Article 2.

## World Education Forum and the Dakar Framework for Action (2000)<sup>19</sup>

The World Education Forum in Dakar provided the first opportunity to present the results of the global EFA 2000 Assessment involving more than 180 countries. After conducting the “biggest review on education in history” the results were mixed. Numbers of children in school rose with many countries reporting that they were approaching full primary school enrolment for the first time. At the same time the number of out-of-school children was cited as 113 million but given that data on many groups of excluded children, including children with disabilities, is not collected the numbers may well be higher. It was concluded that without accelerated progress towards Education for All, national and internationally agreed targets for poverty reduction will be missed, and inequalities within and between countries will widen. Six goals were set for the achievement of Education for All by 2015. (See Annex 1).

Under “Challenges and Opportunities” a call was made for inclusive approaches to ensure a broad vision for EFA, encompassing early childhood education, literacy and life-skills programmes as well as primary education. It must address the “needs of the poor and the most disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health; and those with special learning needs.”<sup>20</sup> Children with disabilities were not explicitly mentioned in the framework, although presumably implicitly included in references to most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, children in difficult circumstances, the poor and excluded, and children who are not enrolled. In terms of the need for high quality education starting from early childhood, the call for educational opportunities that are equitable, responsive to the needs of learners and that neither exclude nor discriminate has obvious, if not explicit, reference to children with disabilities.<sup>21</sup>

Governments were required to develop or strengthen national EFA plans of action, reflecting a commitment to the achievement of the goals and targets of the Framework for Action by 2015 at the latest. There was a requirement “to set out clear strategies to overcome the special problems facing those currently excluded from educational opportunities, with a clear commitment to girls’ education and gender equity.”<sup>22</sup>

The Dakar Framework has re-stated a global commitment to the achievement of Education for All as a fundamental right for all children, but the lack of reference to particular minority groups by name, and the articulation of strategies most appropriate for their inclusion, may have led to a lesser response by governments than has been the case when addressing the needs of more clearly stated target groups, such as children from ethnic minorities and children with HIV/AIDS. Stimulating government action towards the achievement of the right to education for children with disabilities may require a combined approach, utilizing the strength of mandates such as the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All and the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action, which has been adopted by governments of the region as a framework to guide action to achieve the specific rights of people with disabilities. These rights include the right to education.

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19 <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/en-conf/dakframeng.shtml>

20 Ibid, Article 19.

21 Ibid, Article 8, Expanded commentary.

22 Ibid, Article 9.

## Regional mandates

### **Biwako Millennium Framework for Action: Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-Based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (2003-2012)<sup>23</sup>**

Mandates which focus exclusively on the rights of persons with disabilities are a response to a situation in which the rights of this group of people have been systematically ignored or denied by the societies in which they live. Global mandates which implicitly, but not explicitly, include their rights often do not achieve the same results for disabled people as they do for non-disabled people. Relentless and continuing advocacy at every level is necessary to reach a point where disability issues are included and addressed as a natural part of the mainstream national development agenda. Attitude change is a slow process and a culture of prejudice, discrimination and exclusion takes time to transform.

The Biwako Millennium Framework was adopted at a UNESCAP high-level meeting, to conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, held in Otsu, Japan, in 2002. It was developed in response to the evaluation of the achievements of governments in the region to the Agenda for Action of the first decade. With regard to achievements in the area of education it was noted that:

*“With lack of access to education, equality is denied to children and youth with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific region. Excluded from education, they are excluded from opportunity and development, condemned to live in poverty, in what can become a self-perpetuating, inter-generational cycle.”<sup>24</sup>*

The Biwako Millennium Framework is a policy blueprint for action by governments to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities to live in inclusive and barrier-free societies. It establishes principles and policy directions necessary for the achievement of this goal and identifies seven priority areas for action. Priority Area 3 is: “Early detection, early intervention and education”. Time-bound targets have been set, with a list of actions required to achieve the targets. (See Annex 2). The targets and policy directions for action have been incorporated into the relevant sections of this document. They provide a series of specific recommendations which will inform government policy, legislation, and implementation at all levels of the system, with particular reference to the importance of partnership with organizations of persons with disabilities, families and the community. They make explicit some of the steps it is necessary for governments to take as they address the issue of including children with disabilities in regular schools in the national education system. To this extent, the Biwako Millennium Framework complements the Dakar Framework for Action and re-focuses attention on some aspects of the Salamanca Statement.

The Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons has been a catalyst for similar initiatives in the African and Arab regions. At the global level, the United Nations has established an Ad Hoc Committee to draft a comprehensive and integral international convention to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. Article 24 addresses the right to education. This draft Convention, when completed and ratified, will provide the strongest mandate for the rights of people with disabilities across all areas of development, including education.<sup>25</sup>

Following the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, a Flagship programme was initiated. The Flagships provide focused attention on particular challenges concerned with specific aspects of the Education for All goals, and work towards the achievement of their goals by means of partnerships between United Nations organizations, multi and bilateral agencies, non-government organizations and civil society organizations such as universities. The last flagship to be formed was the Flagship on the Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion. UNESCO is the lead agency, initially, in partnership with the University of Oslo. Other members include UNICEF, World Bank, OECD, international disability alliance organizations (IDA), non-governmental organizations, governments and donor countries, as well as the national UNESCO Commissions of the Nordic countries.

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23 BMF, op. cit.

24 UNESCAP Review of national progress in the implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002. E/ESCAP/APDDP/1, 2002. p. 13.

25 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted by the general Assembly in New York on 13 December 2006, and was opened for signing on 30 March 2007.

The objective of the Flagship is to unite all partners in its efforts to provide access to education and to promote completion of quality education for all children and adults with disabilities. Strategies include:

- ▶ Encouraging policy-makers and managers to look at the barriers within the education system, how they arise and how they can be removed;
- ▶ Working to ensure that the right to education for all persons with disabilities is incorporated in National Education Plans;
- ▶ Stimulating and monitoring development in the field of awareness raising and advocacy for the right to education;
- ▶ Ensuring that EFA monitoring processes include data and documentation of resources allocated to persons with disabilities;
- ▶ Encouraging parental involvement in the classroom, teacher problem-solving and mutual support, and having non-disabled students work with their disabled peers to support them in their learning.

Working groups have been established in two key areas. The first is data and statistics, critical for monitoring and evaluating progress on the inclusion of people with disabilities in the education system. The second is professional development of teachers. The quality of education available to children with disabilities, and all children, is dependent on the knowledge, skills and active commitment of teachers in regular inclusive classrooms, working in supportive teaching and learning environments.

## **Inclusive education and children with disabilities**

The title of the flagship, the “Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities Towards Inclusion” reflects the current situation in which there is a movement towards inclusive education throughout the world. All children have the right to education. The equal right for children with disabilities has been clearly mandated but the right is not being comprehensively upheld. The growing trend towards more flexible, relevant and responsive education has been promoted since the Jomtien conference in 1990. The Salamanca Statement provided a vision of an inclusive system of education which would play a role beyond the school and would contribute to the building of inclusive and non-discriminatory societies. Inclusive schools would benefit all children as they developed ways of teaching that respond to individual differences and diverse abilities. In addition, they would be cost-effective, removing the need for separate schools systems for children with disabilities. In spite of the clear advantages of inclusive education, the data on the number of children with disabilities not in school suggests that the process is unacceptably slow and many of the most significant barriers that remain are not able to be solved at the level of the individual teacher or the individual school.

There is evidence of a growth in the development of inclusive education practices at the local level in many countries. This has been strongly supported by UNESCO with the development of a series of technical materials and publications aimed at teachers, teacher trainers, educational administrators and managers. (See Annex 3). Many have been translated into a number of languages and widely disseminated at the local, national and regional levels. Strong promotion and support for inclusive education has come from other United Nations agencies and particularly from international non-governmental agencies such as Save the Children Alliance<sup>26</sup> and others working at regional and local levels, sometimes in partnership with governments, as in the case of Viet Nam.<sup>27</sup> Some of these initiatives explicitly address the needs of children with disabilities and others focus on a wider group of children at risk for exclusion. The role of donors and development agencies and institutions is of critical importance in this regard, working with governments on the inclusion of children with disabilities, and other excluded groups, in national education systems. Measurement indicators must be developed to reflect progress.

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26 SCF. [www.savethechildren.net](http://www.savethechildren.net)

27 Save the Children. *On the Road to Education For All*. National Political Publisher, Hanoi. 2002.

The barriers which keep children with disabilities out-of-school in such disproportionately large numbers is attributed to negative attitudes and systems, and societies that discriminate against them. For real change to take place, governments need to take seriously their obligations under the many education and disability mandates which they have signed or adopted. National policies and practices in education need to be based on a commitment to these global human rights principles. The Manual on Rights-based Education<sup>28</sup> outlines the following rights, among many. Children with disabilities have the same right to education as all other children. They have the right to be educated in regular inclusive schools and not in separate segregated systems. Within regular inclusive schools, they have the right to an education that responds to the diversity of their abilities and is adapted to their particular needs, with support as it is needed.

It is only when a national commitment is made to include children with disabilities in the education system that any real progress is made towards achieving the goal of full enrolment for children with disabilities. The reforms that will need to take place in the education system will affect all areas, starting with policy, legislation and the commitment of budgetary and other resources. Administrative procedures need to be effective from central to local school levels. The focus in the early stages must be on building support and creating positive attitudes, and preparing the school for the necessary changes. Another focus must be on establishing methods of finding children who are out-of-school, and encouraging them to attend. One of the most important keys to success is the preparation of teachers so that they have the skills necessary to teach children with a wide range of abilities. A further critically important area is to establish effective systems for collecting data, so that the progress of children with disabilities can be monitored and evaluated, and included in the EFA process. The role of parents, organizations of persons with disabilities and the community must be considered and their expertise harnessed.

## The challenge

Discussion of the challenges faced by national governments in implementing rights-based education and recommendations for overcoming them are presented in the chapters which follow. Examples are presented of strategies that have been used in the four countries where case studies were conducted. One fact that becomes very clear is that even after a commitment has been made to fully include children with disabilities in the national education system, it takes time for the results to be seen. The pace of change will be determined by many factors, some of which include the population and size of the education system, the level of resources, the extent to which a system of separate schools for children with disabilities already exists, the level of partnership that exists with non-government organizations and the strength of advocacy and involvement in decision-making of organizations of persons with disabilities. Above all it depends on the commitment of governments.

The case study countries provide examples of education systems at different stages of development, after a decision has been made to address the right to education of children with disabilities. Brunei has a net enrolment ratio of 98 per cent, with almost full inclusion of children with disabilities achieved over a ten year period. Only children with severe disabilities are not yet included in regular schools. Thailand has increased the number of children with disabilities enrolled in school over a five year period, from four per cent attending special segregated schools in 1999, to an estimated 23 per cent in integrated schools within the national education system in 2004, the majority of whom attend their local regular community school. In 1999 Thailand passed legislation which mandated the right to education of all children with disabilities, and the obligation of all schools to accept them. They also set in place a very detailed set of administrative and school support procedures to make sure the policy was implemented. It is hoped that the examples presented and the lessons learned from them will be helpful to guide other countries as they move towards more inclusive systems of education.

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28 Tomasevski, K. *Manual on Rights-based Education*. UNESCO Bangkok, Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education. 2004. pp. 53-54.

# Creating Change in National Education Systems – What Are the Catalysts?

## The challenge

Creating change in education systems is not an easy task. Traditionally education is a conservative institution designed to pass on cultural knowledge and values. Pressures for change are complex and can come from many sources. The movement towards including children with disabilities in national education systems is gaining pace in many countries of the region, and indeed, worldwide. Some of the factors which have influenced these decisions include:

- ▶ Global initiatives and response by governments to the adoption of international and regional mandates;
- ▶ Successful programmes initiated by international or national non-governmental organizations aimed at including children with disabilities in regular community schools;
- ▶ Advocacy by disabled peoples' organizations, parents of disabled children and community groups.

## Global initiatives

The Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All, which is linked to the Millennium Development Goal of ensuring that all children have access to primary education by 2015, has required that governments look at the issue of children who are currently not in school. Although children with disabilities are not specifically named in the six Education For All goals, they are clearly part of the groups described as the “most vulnerable and disadvantaged” and “children in difficult circumstances” (EFA Goals 1 and 2).<sup>29</sup>

It is often not until governments have achieved a primary school enrolment rate of 90-95 per cent that attention is focused on out-of-school children in general and children with disabilities in particular. Children with disabilities form the largest group of out-of-school children.

The first and second Asian and Pacific Decades of Disabled Persons, promoted by UNESCAP, and adopted by all governments in the Asian and Pacific region, have had a significant effect in raising awareness of the rights and needs of persons with disabilities. The right to education is the third priority area of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action: Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (BMF).<sup>30</sup>

In addition to these catalysts the international mandates outlined in an earlier section have all played a part in motivating governments to change their education policies to be more inclusive of children with disabilities. Foremost among these were the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) and the Salamanca Statement and Framework (1994).

29 The Dakar framework for Action. <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/en-conf/dakframeng.shtm>

30 BMF. [www.unescap.org/esid/psis/disability/bmf/bmf.html](http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/disability/bmf/bmf.html)

## Non-Governmental Organization initiatives

Initiatives for inclusive education and particularly the inclusion of children with disabilities have often started with concern from non-governmental organizations, resulting in action to include these children in local community schools. Save the Children (UK) and (Sweden), Plan International, Christian Blind Mission (CBM) and many other organizations have been particularly active in the region in the past decade. Small scale grass-roots projects and pilot projects have many benefits. They:

- ▶ Help to change attitudes and to create a more favourable environment for children with disabilities to be accepted in both schools and in the community;
- ▶ Support local communities and schools where children with disabilities are beginning to be included;
- ▶ Increase the level of expertise at the school level, by providing training on how to develop an inclusive school community, as well as training teachers in strategies which will help them teach children with a wide range of abilities in their classes;
- ▶ Teach teachers how to become “trainers” of other teachers, so that their expertise and experience can be transferred within their school and to neighbouring schools;
- ▶ Develop and maintain good communication with ministry of education officials so that awareness is created within the ministry of examples of successful inclusion of children with disabilities in regular community schools;
- ▶ Can engage local, provincial and national education ministry officials in decision-making with a view to transferring “ownership” of the programme to the ministry in the long term, thus ensuring that it will be sustainable;
- ▶ Can work in partnership with ministry officials to expand the programme to other schools and provinces.

## Advocacy

Advocacy by organizations of parents of children with disabilities, and by organizations of people with disabilities is a very important mechanism for changing the education system to make it more willing and more capable of including children with disabilities in schools and making sure that the schools meet their educational needs. In many countries where special schools have been established, they were started by organizations of parents working in partnership with non-governmental organizations. In other countries they have been instrumental in encouraging governments to include children with disabilities in regular pre-schools, primary schools, secondary schools and universities.

The Biwako Millennium Framework has identified the strengthening of self-help organizations of persons with disabilities and related family and parent associations as the first priority for the second decade of disabled persons. It states that they are the “most qualified and best equipped to support, inform and advocate for themselves and other persons with disabilities.”<sup>31</sup> This includes children with disabilities.

## Barriers for children with disabilities

- ▶ Governments often ratify international conventions and global initiatives but fail to conform to their goals and requirements. Many signatories of such treaties and agreements as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All have failed to modify their educational policies and practices in relation to the right to education of children with disabilities.
- ▶ Governments may not see it as their responsibility to provide education to children with disabilities, believing that people with disabilities are subjects for charity rather than services. They may see this as the domain of non-governmental organizations, which have in many countries been the first

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31 BMF, p. 5.

to try and provide some form of education or training to children with disabilities, often in small separate schools or centres.

- ▶ Governments may fail to take action to include children with disabilities in national education systems because they assume that extensive resources are needed to achieve this.
- ▶ Non-governmental organizations may work in isolation, with limited contact or communication with ministry of education officials, thus losing the opportunity to demonstrate the good practices they may have developed at the grass roots level for including children with disabilities in community schools.
- ▶ In many countries negative attitudes towards people with disabilities are widely held. These attitudes can include the belief that disability is visited on a family as a punishment for past misdeeds. This may result in the exclusion of the family and children from social services and community activities.
- ▶ Rejection of families of children with disabilities, and of the children themselves, by the community can result in low self-esteem and a sense of shame. Parents may be ignorant of the rights of their children to education and may accept the community view that these children cannot learn.
- ▶ Some countries do not have strong organizations of persons with disabilities, or any mechanism for their voices to be heard by government.
- ▶ Where organizations of persons with disabilities do exist, they may focus on issues of concern to adults with disabilities, such as physical access and access to jobs and employment. They may fail to realize that if they do not advocate for children with disabilities their voice will never be heard – and another generation of children with disabilities will grow up without access to education and opportunity.

## Catalysts for change in case study countries

### Brunei

Ministry of Education officials from Brunei attended the Salamanca Conference (1994) and in 1995 started the formal process of including children with disabilities in the national education system. A Special Education Unit was established within the Ministry and the first Special Education conference was held in 1996. At this conference the Minister of Education stated: "We must look at how the system can better serve all children, including children with special needs who require special education and related services if they are to realize their full potential."<sup>32</sup>

### Samoa

Change in Samoa has been a gradual process with non-governmental organization influence playing an important role. Two non-governmental organizations had been providing education to children with disabilities for more than 25 years. Compulsory education was made mandatory for all children aged five to 14 years in 1992, but in practice this did not include children with disabilities. It was the result of advocacy from the non-governmental organization service providers to government, urging them to take some responsibility for the education of children with disabilities that led to recognition of this as an issue in the 1995-2005 Policy and Strategy document. It was agreed that a strategy should be developed whereby government would take full responsibility "over time".<sup>33</sup> On-going advocacy from these non-government schools, parents groups, and a recently formed organization of persons with disabilities has led to their representation on the Special Needs Education Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Education.

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32 SEU, *Special Education Handbook for Teachers*, p. i.

33 Western Samoa Education Policies & Education Strategies 1995-2005.

## Thailand

The right to education for children with disabilities is enshrined in both the 1997 Constitution and in the 1999 National Education Act. The key catalysts for these achievements have been sustained advocacy by leaders of strong disability organizations, and their historical involvement in the establishment of non-governmental organization educational programmes for children with disabilities, before government accepted responsibility for this task. The disability organizations have worked in partnership with parent organizations over a long period of time. Ministry of Education officials also cited the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002), the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action, policy guideline for the second Asian and Pacific Decade, 2003-2012, and UNESCO guidelines on inclusive education as significant influences on policy development and implementation.

## Viet Nam

For more than a decade a partnership between Save the Children (Sweden) and the National Institute of Educational Sciences (NIES), of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), Viet Nam, has resulted in “a workable strategy for inclusive education in Viet Nam”.<sup>34</sup> This long-term commitment by an international non-government organization, working in close cooperation with national Ministry of Education counterparts, has seen the development of inclusive education projects in more than six provinces. Strong emphasis was placed on training at all levels of the system and the community, and on ensuring local “ownership” and sustainability of the project.

A second catalyst has been the engagement of the ministry in a World Bank project on Primary Education for Disadvantaged Children. Viet Nam has taken seriously its commitments under the Education for All programme and has received World Bank Fast Track funding for its progress towards full enrolment of children in primary education. Realization that an enrolment of 100 per cent cannot be achieved without attention to children currently excluded from school has led to a focus on the inclusion of children with disabilities in current policy and action plans. Viet Nam has also been strongly influenced by its participation in the first and second Asian and Pacific Decades for Persons with Disabilities and has worked to meet the goals and targets of the Agenda for Action and the Biwako Millennium Framework.

## Recommendations for action by stakeholders

### Government

Governments should take action to fulfil their obligations after they ratify and adopt international conventions and frameworks such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Dakar Framework for Action and regional commitments such as the Biwako Millennium Framework. All of these initiatives mandate the education of children with disabilities.

Governments should work in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations which are providing education to children with disabilities and developing strategies to include them in regular community schools, with a view to learning from these processes and including them in the national education system.

Governments should consult with organizations of persons with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities, in the development of policies and changes to the school system, to ensure that these children are included in regular community schools and that their needs met.

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34 Save the Children. *On the Road to Education For All. Lessons Learnt from Inclusive Education in Vietnam*. National Political Publisher 2002.

*Goals and targets of Priority Area 3, Early detection, Early Intervention and Education, Biwako Millennium Framework*

### **Millennium Development Goal**

In this priority area the Millennium Development Goal is to ensure that by the year 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education.

### **Targets**

*Target 6.* Children and youth with disabilities will be an integral part of the population targeted by the Millennium Development Goal of ensuring that by 2015 all boys and girls will complete a full course of primary schooling.

*Target 7.* At least 75 per cent of children and youth with disabilities will, by 2010, be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

*Target 8.* By 2012, all infants and young children (birth to four years old) will have access to, and receive community-based early intervention services, with support and training for their families.

## **School and community**

Non-governmental organizations should engage with ministry of education officials to ensure that they are aware of, and participating in, the non-government projects on including children with disabilities in education.

Disabled peoples' organizations should advocate to ministry of education officials to fulfil the right to the education of children with disabilities by including them in national education policies and schools.

Parents should advocate for the inclusion of their children in local community schools within the national education system.

## **Lessons learned: Moving forward towards inclusive education for children with disabilities**

International and regional mandates such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All and the Biwako Millennium Framework are important catalysts for change. For their benefits to be maximized they should be implemented and monitored at the regional level within a framework of capacity building and support to governments by the respective United Nations and other development agencies, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNESCAP and the World Bank.

Good examples from the UNESCO Bangkok office have included awareness training for EFA coordinators and UNESCO country officers on the importance of including children with disabilities in Education For All and national education planning, monitoring and evaluation processes. In 2004 and 2005, EFA coordinators attended UNESCO Regional Workshops on Inclusive Education in Asia and the Pacific.

Advocacy to government by organizations of persons with disabilities, and parent groups, has been effective in influencing policies on education to make them more inclusive. Non-governmental organizations working to include children with disabilities in community schools can also play an important role in advocating for change and demonstrating strategies that are effective.

The Cook Islands government ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1999 and as a direct result of signing this convention in 2000 appointed a Special Needs Education Adviser to develop a national policy and action plan for special needs education. The policy established closer links between the special classes and the regular schools to encourage the placement of children with disabilities in regular schools, with support to the classroom teachers provided by teachers with special training. A programme of in-service training was set up to prepare teachers in regular classes to teach children with different abilities. The pre-service teacher training curriculum for regular teachers was modified to include the teaching strategies needed for teaching children with a wider range of abilities.

## Checklist

1. Has the government of your country signed or adopted any of the following mandates or agreements?
  - Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
  - UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993)
  - Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994)
  - Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons and the Agenda for Action (1993-2002), with its targets on education
  - Biwako Millennium Framework targets on education in the second Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (2003-2012).
  - Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (2000)
2. Can you summarize the rights to education contained in these mandates?
3. Has your government taken any action to include children with disabilities in the national education system and regular community schools as a direct result of adopting these agreements?
4. What organizations have been engaged in advocacy to government on the issue of the right to education of children with disabilities?
5. How can these organizations work together to advocate more effectively for change that will lead to more children with disabilities attending regular schools on the same basis as non-disabled children attend?
6. What forms of advocacy would be effective to encourage government to move towards adopting a policy of inclusive education, with particular focus on the inclusion of children with disabilities?
7. Are there any non-government initiated pilot projects to implement inclusive education? Does the ministry of education work in partnership on these projects?
8. Is there a mechanism within government to consult with organizations of persons with disabilities on issues concerning children with disabilities?

# Formulating Policy, Enacting Legislation and Allocating Budgetary Resources

## A. Formulating policy

### The challenge

The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) has required all countries to develop national EFA policy and action plans, responding to the six EFA goals. (Annex 1). Although none of the goals refer specifically to children with disabilities, they are included implicitly in the second goal. This states that countries should ensure that *all* children have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality. If children with disabilities, and other out-of-school children from disadvantaged groups, are not included in national policies and action plans then this goal, and the Millennium Development Goal on education, will never be achieved. For countries with enrolment rates of 90 per cent and higher, this can be a motivating force for educational reform, as governments realize that “more of the same” strategies will not help them reach full enrolment.

For these goals to be achieved, considerable reform of national education policy is going to be necessary. Educational reform is most easily carried out where there is broad agreement about the need for change, clear understanding of the principles upon which it is based, and willingness by those required to carry out the actions necessary to achieve the change. The national social, political, economic and educational context will determine the ease with which it is possible to adapt to changing times and adopt principles of equity to underpin education policy.

Important factors for consideration in policy development will include:

- ▶ The need to be increasingly responsive to the issue of human rights in education, acceptance that every child has a right to education and that exclusion from school raises concerns about equity and discrimination;
- ▶ The current educational provision for children with disabilities; the extent to which education is provided by government or an NGO, and whether it is in a system of separate schools, or moving towards a system of inclusive education in regular classes; familiarity with the principles and practice of including children with a wide range of abilities in regular classes;
- ▶ The attitudes to persons with disabilities in the wider community and in school communities; the preparedness of schools to undertake the changes that are necessary to make schools inclusive and capable of providing quality education that enables all students to achieve good learning outcomes, and the articulation of strategies to achieve this;
- ▶ The strength of organizations of persons with disabilities and parent organizations, and the willingness of governments to consult widely with them, and with other concerned community agencies and organizations, harnessing their expertise to guide the development of strategies to achieve inclusive schools.

## Barriers for children with disabilities

- ▶ The use of the blanket terms “vulnerable”, “disadvantaged” and “children in difficult circumstances” in the six EFA goals of the Dakar Framework make it difficult for policy-makers to respond to the needs of the hidden children in these diverse groups.
- ▶ The right to education is accepted in principle, but the rights are clearly viewed as hierarchical. Steps to address the right to education for children with disabilities are seldom taken until all non-disabled children are enrolled in school. Children with disabilities are not viewed as having equal rights.
- ▶ Although governments are moving to address the issue of the education of children with disabilities, there is in some contexts a view of disability as being a “charity and welfare” issue. Advocacy by parents and organizations of people with disabilities is not welcomed. In this situation, the inclusion of children with disabilities will remain superficial, outside the national system and lacking full commitment to making the necessary changes.
- ▶ Children with disabilities are frequently not included in national policies, and where they are identified as a target group, it may be in relation to a limited aspect of education such as early childhood education or education in special schools.
- ▶ National plans are often prepared by governments without proper consultation with non-governmental organizations and community groups, including organizations of persons with disabilities and parent groups. This is most likely to happen when there is no representative National Coordinating Council or body set up to form the focal point for all matters related to disability. A coordinating body should encourage community-wide debate on the issues, and have input into policy and implementation strategy development.
- ▶ National plans may be prepared without action plans setting out the detail of the strategies needed to provide the modifications that will enable children with disabilities to benefit from education.
- ▶ The national policy action plans are not funded or implemented.
- ▶ Where provisions for children with disabilities are included in national policies and action plans the terms “special education” and “inclusive education” may not be used clearly, and the links between the two systems may be confusing.
- ▶ Policy on the education of children with disabilities may be developed quite separately from the national policy on education, sometimes in a ministry other than the ministry of education, and is not considered part of national education policy. This situation can apply to teacher education as well, which may be placed in a ministry of higher education which does not necessarily work in close collaboration with the ministry of education responsible for national education planning.

## Policy development in Case Study countries

**Table 1.** Summary: Status of Case Study countries on Compulsory Education and EFA Monitoring Plans

	Years of compulsory education	Ages for compulsory education	Mention of children with disabilities in policy or EFA plans	EFA Plan/ Years
Brunei Darussalam	12	6-18 years	"National Education Policy Statement, that all children of school age be provided with 12 years of education, includes children with special needs who can become contributing members of society if an appropriate educational programme is offered." --SEU Special Education Policy Guidelines booklet from 1997	No
Samoa	9	5-14 years	Current education policy included the aim of a database of children with special needs, training and support for SNE teachers, development of SNE units and grants to NGOs.	Yes 1995-2005
Thailand	12	Between 3-17 years	"EFA must cover all target groups including the special needs groups in society, such as those with physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, communication and learning disabilities, as well as all disadvantaged groups."	Yes Phase 1: 2002-2006 Phase 2: 2007-2016
Viet Nam	5	6 to 10 or 11 years	EFA Plan includes one brief mention of children with disabilities as a component of other disadvantaged groups that need to be included in the school system.	Yes 2003-2015

All four case study countries are signatories to or have adopted and are responding to the following international and regional mandates:

- ▶ The Asian & Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons with Disabilities (1993-2002);
- ▶ The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994);
- ▶ The Biwako Millennium Framework For Action (2002).

Samoa, Thailand, and Viet Nam have all been engaged with the UNESCO Education For All global initiative, are implementing the UNESCO Framework for Action on Education For All, and have developed national EFA policies and action plans.

- ▶ Jomtien Conference on Education For All (1990)
- ▶ UNESCO Dakar Framework on Education For All (2000)

## Brunei

Since 1995, Brunei has taken steps to embrace the recommendations of the Salamanca Framework to promote inclusive learning environments. In 1996, Brunei developed a national policy and action plan on education, with the following provisions:

- ▶ Education will be based on a philosophy of equal opportunity;
- ▶ The policy supports inclusive education, with schools responsive to the needs of all children;
- ▶ All children of school age will receive 12 years of compulsory education, including “children with special needs who can become contributing members of society if an appropriate education is offered”,<sup>35</sup>
- ▶ Establishment of a Special Education Unit to work closely with the Ministry of Education for setting standards and developing and implementing policies. The Unit assists in developing guidelines, reviews and evaluates programmes, provides direct assistance to students, training for in-service teachers and supports educational research and information sharing;
- ▶ Modifications to cater for special needs include a focus on curriculum, staffing, instructional and evaluation strategies, materials, resources, facilitators and equipment;
- ▶ Quality is underpinned by modifying and strengthening teacher training to prepare teachers to teach in inclusive schools, with a focus on learners, content, the learning process and environment and educational outcomes. The goal was to produce “reflective” teachers in ‘thoughtful’ schools;
- ▶ Funding is allocated from the mainstream education budget.

## Samoa

Samoa adopted a policy of compulsory education for all children in 1992. This policy has completed a first cycle of implementation (1995-2005) and is now under review and revision. The key stated concepts of this policy are equity, quality, relevancy and efficiency. The policy implicitly, but not explicitly, supports the inclusion of children with disabilities.

Samoa completed the EFA Assessment 2000 and the EFA National Action Plan to achieve EFA goals by 2015, as required by the Dakar Framework for Action on EFA (2000). The EFA plan in Samoa was developed through a consultative process based on previous educational policies and plans. The first key theme of Samoa’s EFA National Plan was:

- ▶ To review and amend existing Education Acts and policies to reflect inclusion of Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Special Needs Education (SNE).

In regard to the Special Education component of the current education policy, strategies were developed to ensure that a database was established to identify all children with special needs, to provide training and support of Special Needs Education teachers, to develop Special Needs Education Units and provide grants to non-governmental organizations until responsibility for the education of this group of children was fully assumed within the national education system. Most of these activities have been achieved, although not all are currently sustained.

A Special Needs Education Advisory Committee (SNEAC) was created in 1999 and included representation from non-governmental organizations, parents, organizations of people with disabilities and other relevant ministries who are consulted in the development of policies and practices. The most recent development is the agreement of the prime minister to consider the incorporation of a “Disability Action Task Force” under the auspices of the Prime Minister’s Department.

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35 Special Education Unit, Policy Guidelines, p. 3.

## Thailand

The education policy of the Kingdom of Thailand is based on EFA principles and the goals and targets of the Biwako Millennium Framework, but policies to include children with disabilities in the national education system began more than a decade ago:

- ▶ 1994 Special Development Plan for persons with disabilities;
- ▶ 1997 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand upholds the right of all Thai citizens to at least 12 years of free, compulsory education provided by the government. The provision of EFA must cover all target groups, including those with physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, communication and learning disabilities, as well as all other disadvantaged groups;<sup>36</sup>
- ▶ 1998 A public forum was organized in order to identify problems, needs, and suggestions of persons with disabilities;
- ▶ 1999 was proclaimed the “Year of Education for Persons with Disabilities” and the National Education Act, which mandates the policy that all persons with disabilities must have the same educational opportunities as others, was passed. It required schools to place public notices stating “Any disabled person who wishes to go to school may do so”.<sup>37</sup>

### ***National EFA Action Plan***

The EFA Plan was formulated by an EFA technical team, comprising government agencies, non-governmental organizations, including organizations of persons with disabilities and concerned foundations, by means of a series of focused consultative workshops. The EFA Plan has two phases:

- Phase 1: Operational goals for the period 2002-2006;
- Phase 2: Operational goals for the period 2007-2016.

Key features of the EFA Plan include:

- ▶ Prioritization of marginalized groups, particularly persons with disabilities;
- ▶ Increased access to appropriate compulsory basic education with the necessary aid and support;
- ▶ Provision of early intervention from 0-five years for infants and young children with disabilities.

Additional features of the education policy of the Kingdom of Thailand include:

- ▶ A strategy for finding out of school children;
- ▶ Drafting of Ministerial Regulations (2002) to guide implementation and ensure quality of educational services for persons with disabilities;
- ▶ Establishment of a Committee for the Educational Reform for Persons with Disabilities, the Underprivileged, and the Gifted;
- ▶ Support for a system of integrated education moving towards inclusive education;
- ▶ The long term goal of providing education from birth for all children with disabilities.

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36 National Education For All Plan of Action for Thailand (2002-2015), 2002, p. 11.

37 APCD, 2003.

## Viet Nam

Viet Nam was the first Asian country to receive Fast Track Funding from the World Bank in response to its development actions towards achieving universal primary education, its credible national EFA plan and poverty reduction strategies.

In Viet Nam, the education of children with disabilities has received attention for more than a decade. This has been stimulated by programmes of inclusive education developed in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Training by Save the Children (Sweden)<sup>38</sup>. Children with disabilities were also included as a subgroup in the World Bank Primary Education for Disadvantaged Children programme, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Training.

Specific actions:

- ▶ In 1995, responsibility for policy for the education of children with disabilities was transferred from the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Training, urging 100 per cent enrolment of children with disabilities and urging teacher training for inclusive education, especially in rural areas without special schools;
- ▶ Government has developed Strategies for Educational Development (2001-2010), with the goal of providing access to 50 per cent of disabled children by 2005 and 70 per cent by 2010;
- ▶ The government of Vietnam has established a National Coordinating Committee on Disability (NCCD) led by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs;
- ▶ There are also plans to develop a nationwide policy on inclusive education that could be in place by 2005 or soon after;
- ▶ A Steering Committee on Inclusive Education at the National Level on disability education policy is also in the planning stages and could be approved in the near term.

The National Education For All (EFA) Action Plan (2003-2015) identifies the need to “bring disadvantaged children into school” and recognizes the need for “radical and overall changes in education” to make it more effective and more inclusive.<sup>39</sup>

The six priority areas of the Education Plan for Children with Disabilities from 2003-2015 include:

- ▶ The promotion of widespread awareness raising and communication of information at the community level concerning activities related to education for children with disabilities;
- ▶ To develop statistics on children with disabilities;
- ▶ To train teachers regarding inclusive education;
- ▶ To renovate infrastructure and build resources for education of children with disabilities;
- ▶ To increase the percentage enrolment of children with disabilities in primary schools to 70 per cent;
- ▶ To develop comprehensive policies and legislation on education for children with disabilities, including regulation of objectives, content, methods and evaluation of education for children with disabilities; training programmes and plans for teachers and inter-ministry circulars providing guidance of schemes, policies, infrastructure and equipment for the education of children with disabilities.

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38 Save the Children, op. cit.

39 National Education For All (EFA) Action Plan, 2003-2015, Hanoi, 2003.

## Recommendations for action by stakeholders

### Government

The underlying philosophy for the policy on inclusive education should be to move the school system from a separated system to one which includes all children. The goal should be the development of schools which have teachers competent to adapt their teaching to cater for the diverse abilities and disabilities of students. A flexible school should adapt to the needs of the child rather than insisting that the child must fit into the pre-existing school structure with minimum modifications.

Ministries of education should formulate educational policy and planning in consultation with families and organizations of persons with disabilities and develop programmes of education which enable children with disabilities to attend their local pre-school, primary, or secondary schools. Policy implementation needs to prepare the school system for inclusive education, with the clear understanding that all children have the right to attend school and that it is the responsibility of the school to accommodate differences in learners.

Policy for the education of children with disabilities should be part of mainstream national education policy and children with disabilities should be specifically named in policy documents. The EFA action plan should include specific objectives for the inclusion of children with disabilities, as well as strategies to make sure that policy becomes practice at the level of the school, with effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Any pre-existing strategic plans for children with disabilities should be incorporated into national EFA action plans.

Clarification of the concepts of “inclusive education” need to be more fully explored during the consultation process, leading up to policy development so that misconceptions are not accidentally promoted, and the meaning is clearly understood.

Planning should be long-term, in a series of five year plans with specific systematic action-oriented implementation strategies for each time period. The long-term time-frame is necessary to make structural changes to the system, and to achieve adequate levels of teacher training to make sure that children included in regular schools receive quality education that is appropriate to their particular needs. The time frame will allow stakeholders to understand that the changes will be made on a progressive basis and will reduce anxiety by those working in the schools.

Policy should emphasize and promote effective partnership between ministries of education and other education providers, such as non-governmental organizations, parents and organizations of people with disabilities, while acknowledging that the primary responsibility for the education of *all* children lies with government.

Educational outcomes should focus on life-skills and education for life, as well as academic skills, with teachers trained to use child-centred approaches and flexible teaching methods. There should be a focus on quality education with support systems for teachers and appropriate and accessible teaching materials, equipment and devices so that children with disabilities can achieve positive learning outcomes.

National policy should make choices available for parents of children with severe disabilities to enable their children to follow a home-based education programme until a suitable programme is available within the structure of the school system. This would be viewed as a transition measure, acknowledging the right of all children to education, and should be reviewed before the next stage of the five-year government plan.

National policy should include strategies for finding out-of-school children, but should also pay due attention to the reasons why these children are not in school, and should have strategies to overcome some of the barriers which may include a sense of shame and embarrassment, financial constraints and difficulty with transport, among others.

## Schools

Decisions on policy and practices for the education of children with disabilities should be made in collaboration with education officials, schools, parents, communities, families and organizations of people with disabilities.

The school should be fully accessible for children with disabilities, all learning materials should be accessible for the specific needs of each individual, and the curriculum must be flexible to ensure that all children can participate in all activities.

## The Community

At all stages of policy development, but especially when the review process in preparation for the next five year plan is taking place, there should be wide consultations with all “stakeholders” but particularly with families and organizations of persons with disabilities. This should result in an “education/information” model that presents clearly the various options being considered, and their implications for all concerned. It should be responsive to the practical experiences and insights gained by parents on the ways in which schools need to change to meet the needs of their children.

Governments, working with organizations of people with disabilities and the NGO community, must make sure that awareness activities reach all influential groups in the community so that “inclusion” is well understood and not seen as a threat, or as something that is only appropriate for a few children. The education and development of a society and culture that appreciates and supports human rights for all will contribute greatly to the development of inclusive education policies and practices. This must be acknowledged and methods for assisting in changing attitudes should be part of educational policy.

### ***Recommendations from Biwako Millennium Framework, Priority Area 3, early detection, early intervention and Education:***

- Children with disabilities need to be explicitly included in all national plans for education, including national plans on education for all of the Dakar Framework for Action;
- Ministries of Education need to formulate educational policy and planning in consultation with families and organizations of persons with disabilities and develop programmes of education which enable children with disabilities to attend their local primary schools. Policy implementation needs to prepare the school system for inclusive education, where appropriate, with the clear understanding that all children have the right to attend school and that it is the responsibility of the school to accommodate differences in learners.

## **Lessons learned: Moving forward towards inclusive education for children with disabilities**

### **Focus on the right to education and equity issues in the statement of policy principles**

All case study countries and all stakeholders acknowledged the right to education of children with disabilities and believed that they must be identified specifically in all policy documents and action plans, with measures to make sure that they have access to education of good quality that is appropriate to their differing needs. This step may be unnecessary when education systems are fully inclusive, with all children in schools and where teachers have the capability to teach any child. At the moment, Brunei is the only country with nearly full enrolment, and able to turn its attention to providing appropriate educational opportunities to children with severe disabilities.

### **Focus on finding out-of-school children**

There is evidence from many countries that the majority of children with disabilities continue to be systematically excluded from the regular local community schools unless a real commitment is made to include them in formal national policy, with strategies and action plans specifically designed to find and include them. A strategy for finding out-of-school children should be part of national policy. A close relationship with NGO partners and the community will facilitate this process. In Viet Nam an international NGO has significantly helped government and school communities to find and include children with disabilities in community schools. The process of consultation is very important if the steps toward change are to be widely supported by schools, teachers and the community. Government should seek the opinion of parents and families, and organizations of persons with disabilities, who may be considered experts in this area. They will benefit by developing a formal consultative mechanism to harness this expertise and advice on an on-going basis. Some of the frustration experienced in Samoa during the review process at the end of the 2000-2005 action plan has been due to lack of consultation by the government, not only with the disability community and NGO providers, but also in the regular schools where the changes should take place.

### **Gradual shift from separate schools to inclusive schools**

Experiences in Thailand illustrated the length of time it may take from earliest attention to the rights and education of children with disabilities, to the point where they are formally included in national policy, under the Ministry of Education and not under the Ministry of Social Welfare. Stakeholders made the point that policy for the education of children with disabilities should be part of mainstream national education policy.

### **Consultation process – organizations of people with disabilities and parent groups**

The success of inclusive education depends on positive attitudes and willingness to accept change on the part of all stakeholders. Wide community consultation processes were carried out in three of the case study countries. In Thailand, highly organized disability advocates have become respected advisers to the government on a range of disability related issues, including the development of policy and estimates of the number of disabled children not in school.

### **Need for progressive five year action plans**

It is very important that national policy has clearly defined five year action plans that progressively move towards the goal of full inclusion to avoid a situation where schools and others feel overwhelmed by the tasks. In Lao PDR a decision was made to enrol only children with relatively mild disabilities in the early stages of the inclusive education programme, whereas in Brunei the only children now excluded

are children with severe disabilities. It is important to proceed slowly, taking into account the current situation and the readiness of the school system for change, but with very clear guidelines for action at each stage of the process.

## Role of regional and international agencies

The United Nations, the World Bank and other international and donor agencies can assist in the process of reforming national education systems to make them more inclusive by providing support, expertise and assistance, and by helping countries share information and experiences. The UNESCO Regional Workshop on Inclusive Education, held in conjunction with the sixth EFA Coordinators Meeting, held in Bangkok in 2004 was an excellent example of this support.

### *Action Plan for Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities, India, April 2005*

#### **Arjun Singh announces plan to make education disabled-friendly by 2020**

*Disability News and Information Service (<http://www.dnis.org/>); New Delhi; April 2005*

"It should, and will be our objective, to make mainstream education not just available but accessible, affordable and appropriate for students with disabilities," promises Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh.

In a comprehensive 'Action Plan for the Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities' formulated by his Ministry, HRD Minister Arjun Singh has committed that the government will provide education through mainstream schools for children with disabilities, in accordance with the provisions of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995. Singh revealed this ambitious plan on 21st March in the Rajya Sabha.

Some of the main objectives of the Action Plan are:

- No child is denied admission in mainstream education;
- No child would be turned back on grounds of disability;
- Mainstream and specialist training institutions will facilitate the growth of a cadre of teachers trained to work within the principles of inclusion;
- Facilitate access of girls with disabilities and disabled students from rural and remote to government hostels;
- Provide for home-based learning for persons with severe, multiple and intellectual disabilities;
- Emphasise job training and job-oriented vocational training;
- Promote an understanding of the paradigm shift from charity to development through a massive awareness, motivation and sensitization campaign;
- Modify existing physical infrastructure and teaching methodologies to meet the needs of all children, including children with special needs;
- All universities will have a Disability Coordinator to act as a "one-stop shop" to assist disabled students in their needs
- All universities will be assisted by U.G.C. in setting up a separate Department of Disability Studies including modules of inclusion;
- A Chair of Disability Studies will be set up in central universities;
- Universities will be encouraged to introduce special shuttle services for disabled students.

Under this plan, the first level of intervention will be through the Integrated Child Development Services (I.C.D.S.) Programme. This reaches out to all children aged zero-to-six years, and *anganwadi* workers are trained to detect disabilities at an early stage. I.C.D.S. workers will also be trained to motivate parents of children with disabilities.

The plan envisages that all disabled children will be part of mainstream schools, which will be fully equipped to cater to their needs by 2020. Singh's Action Plan also includes provisions for barrier-free access, Braille books, Talking Text Books, Reading Machines and computers with speech software. In addition, every school will have adequate number of sign language interpreters, transcription services and a loop induction system for hearing impaired students. The idea is to ensure that every child has access to mainstream education and no child is turned down on grounds of disability.

Singh stated that a group has been set up under the National Curriculum Framework Review to examine the requirements to educate children with special needs. To ensure sensitization of teachers to the requirements of disabled students, regular in-service training will be provided. A disability element in the syllabus of B.Ed. and M.Ed. courses will be strengthened. A Memorandum of Understanding has also been signed between the National Council for Teachers' Education and the Rehabilitation Council of India to ensure that all teachers and other resource persons will be able to address the diversity of children in the classroom to ensure enrolment and retention.

Taking into account the special transportation needs of disabled college students, Universities will be encouraged to introduce Special Shuttle Services for disabled students. The minister added that selected schools will be converted into Model Inclusive Schools in order to demonstrate "what is necessary and more importantly, what is possible".

As for higher education, all universities will have a Disability Coordinator to act as a "one-stop shop" for disabled students and assist them in their needs. All universities will be assisted by U.G.C. in setting up a separate Department of Disability Studies including modules on inclusion. The Minister also mentioned a proposal to set up a Chair of Disability Studies in Central Universities.

In August 2004, a "Research Study on Present Education Scenario" revealed that only 0.1 per cent disabled students are in mainstream educational institutions at the university level and 0.51 per cent at the school level. It was pointed out in the study that mere reservations will not help. A disabled-friendly environment in educational institutions is crucial for disabled students to not only get admission but sustain their studies in schools/colleges across India. Taking serious note of the findings the minister had set up a meeting under his chairmanship; he then constituted a committee which included senior officials from the Human Resources Development Ministry as well as the Social Justice Ministry, with representatives from the disability sector on the Committee.

## Checklist

1. What are the key features of your national policy on education?
2. Does the government have a policy of compulsory education for all children?  
Is there specific reference to children with disabilities or children from other disadvantaged groups?
3. Is there a specific policy for the implementation of education for children with disabilities within your national education policy? What do they say?
4. Is the policy on education for children with disabilities under the ministry of education or alternative ministries?
5. Do you have a policy commitment to inclusive education? If so, how is this linked to any policy or provisions on special education?
6. Is there a wide community consultation process connected with the development of national education policy? Who is involved?
7. Has any action been taken in your country to find and include disadvantaged children, including children with disabilities, into the national school system?
8. Are parents and families of children with disabilities, and organizations of persons with disabilities members of any consultative committee with the role of advising government on national policy, particularly in the area of education?
9. What actions would you prioritize in a first five-year plan to include children with disabilities in the national school system? What aspects would you leave for later stage development? Give reasons for your decisions.

Discuss in the context of the policy statement from India in the Box above.

## B. Enacting legislation

### The Challenge

Legislation is an important step in the process of turning educational policy into mandated provisions which must be carried out within the school system. The extent to which children with disabilities are covered by legislation will determine their ability to access the education system. It requires particular attention during a period where both the education system and the status of children with disabilities are perceived to be in a state of transition. The move towards inclusive education has developed in response to a rights-based approach to education. Removing the barriers which prevent a wide variety of children from attending schools is accepted as the responsibility of the national education system and is achieved by reorganizing the way in which schools are operated so that every child is welcome and can learn. Children with disabilities are the largest group of children who have been excluded, or restricted to a separate system of education and their right to an equal education denied.

The shift from persons with disabilities being viewed as “objects of charity” to becoming “the subject of rights” is clearly seen in international law and is beginning to be reflected in national law. The mandates have been described in an earlier section and reference made to the drafting of a new convention designed to specifically protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities. It is now widely accepted that the rights of persons with disabilities should be protected and promoted through general, as well as specially designed, laws, policies and programmes.<sup>40</sup>

This transition has implications for national governments, in terms of new and old legislation. The right to education is enshrined in most constitutions. In countries which have re-written their Constitutions within the last decade it is more common to find concepts of “equality of rights” and “non-discrimination” on grounds which may include disability as well as gender, race and others. This is the case in South Africa (1996) and Fiji (1997). In the Constitution of Thailand the right to education and other services provided by the State is specifically guaranteed to persons with disabilities (1997).

In the “Review Study of EFA National Action Plans” conducted for UNESCO by Anupam,<sup>41</sup> it was reported that not all countries surveyed had passed legislation on education after preparing post-Dakar 2000 National EFA plans. Where reference was made to the right to education of children with disabilities, it was sometimes contained in separate disability legislation such as the Bangladesh Disability Welfare Act 2001 and the Persons with Disabilities on Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation Act 1995 of India. However in the Philippines, the Governance Act for Basic Education 2001 stipulated a mechanism to provide for out-of-school children.

The example from Thailand will be presented in the section on “Legislation in Case Study” countries below. Anupam noted that inclusive education was not seen as an integral component of EFA in most policies and not reflected in legislation. When children with disabilities were identified as a specific target group, legislation did not articulate the particular provisions necessary to achieve quality educational outcomes for them.

### Barriers for children with disabilities

- ▶ Children with disabilities have been, and still are, widely excluded from accessing education in many developing countries of the region, in spite of constitutional provisions and education acts which guarantee the rights of *all* children. In these contexts “all” has not meant *all* and discrimination against this minority group has continued unchallenged.
- ▶ Even when legislation does specifically cover the right to education for children with disabilities, the right is often not enforced. The education acts are not passed with enforcement mechanisms in place, with a system of incentives, and consequences for non-compliance.

40 ILO. Achieving Equal Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities through Legislation.

41 Anupam, op. cit., p. 8.

- ▶ Legislation guaranteeing the right to education for children with disabilities is often not contained in mainstream education legislation, but in separate Acts, frequently under ministries other than education, commonly ministries of social welfare. This sends a clear message that disability is a “welfare” issue, and the rights – and perhaps the services – are not mainstream issues. The education provided may be different from that provided in regular schools and of a lesser quality.
- ▶ When anti-discrimination legislation is passed, persons with disabilities may not have the necessary knowledge and skills to take action to have cases of discrimination addressed by the courts. Many families of children with disabilities do not know that their children are entitled to go to school. This may be more common in rural, rather than urban areas.
- ▶ Standards in such areas as building codes and public access may not be enforced, so that roads and school buildings remain inaccessible to students with physical disabilities.
- ▶ Pre-existing legislation may be discriminatory. In Cambodia persons with disabilities are prevented by law from becoming school teachers.
- ▶ Education Acts, even when they guarantee the right to education of children with disabilities, and other excluded groups, often fail to articulate the principles on which the rights are based, or to specify the removal of barriers, and mandate the fundamental practices and procedures which must be established throughout the system if the inclusion of these children is to result in positive educational outcomes.

## Legislation in case study countries

### Brunei

In Brunei, the Education Order, dated 31 December 2003 outlines the formal legislative framework of the educational system under the Constitution of Brunei. According to this legislation: “Subject to any requirements of the National Education Policy, the Minister shall ensure that a child of school-going age is given the opportunity to attend primary school and secondary school and complete the course of study provided therein.” The right to education for children with disabilities is covered in a section of the legislation entitled ‘Special Education’, even though provision is mandated in regular schools.

### Samoa

Samoa’s Constitution declares all persons to be equal before the law but although disability is mentioned it is not cited as a ground for discrimination. While the first education legislation, the Education Ordinance of 1959, exempted children from school on the basis of physical or mental handicap, the Education Amendment act of 1991-1992, mandated compulsory education for all children from five-14 years of age. The Education Ordinance is currently under revision to include Early Childhood and Second Chance Learning into the National EFA plan and is reviewing building codes for accessibility. It is widely acknowledged that there is very little enforcement of compulsory education, as evidenced by the numbers of children with disabilities that were identified in a survey undertaken in 2000 who were not in any educational setting.

### Thailand

The main legal instruments for persons with disabilities in Thailand are:

- The Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act (1991);
- The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand (1997).

Legal instruments on education with specific provisions for persons with disabilities:

- The National Education Act (1999);
- The 2002 Ministerial Regulations.

The Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act (1991) is the first Thai law specifically targeting the rights of persons with disabilities and was the result of a cooperative effort involving government, private sector, academics, and organizations of persons with disabilities. The Act includes provisions for the establishment of an advisory committee within the Department of Public Welfare, the Committee for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons. The duties included data collection and dissemination within the Department of Public Welfare; registration of persons who wish to apply for services, including education provided through special or mainstream schools; and the Establishment of a Fund for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons with the aim of granting loans to persons with disabilities.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand (1997) states that:

- ▶ All persons are equal before the law and that all discrimination is prohibited based on physical or health conditions (Section 30);
- ▶ The Disabled or Handicapped shall have the right to receive public conveniences and other aids from the State (Section 55), including education;
- ▶ The State shall also guarantee a good life for persons with disabilities and improve upon their ability to depend upon themselves for health protection and quality of life.

The National Education Act of 1999 mandates compulsory education for all children and makes explicit reference to persons with disabilities; protecting their rights as stated in the Constitution. It has the following provisions:

- ▶ Disabled persons have the same right to 12 years of free, compulsory basic education;
- ▶ Early intervention services are provided from birth;
- ▶ Provision of educational materials, facilities and assistive devices;
- ▶ Flexibility in educational management as well as home schooling supported by the government;
- ▶ Children must be registered, and assessed by teachers at Special Education Centres to develop an Individualised Education Plan (IEP) which forms the basis for allocation of resources for individual support;
- ▶ It is illegal for children with disabilities to be out of school.

The 2002 Ministerial Regulations lay down the conditions for the operationalization of the 1999 Education Act. They determine the allocation of a budget for special education, set minimum standards for teacher training, mandate the provision of early intervention and an individualized plan for each disabled child, the provision of assistive devices, technology, Braille and appropriate teaching materials. They also stipulate that Thai teachers cannot refuse to teach a child with a disability.

## Viet Nam

The Law on Protection, Care and Education of Children (1991) places the impetus for the care of children on all of society and affirms the principle of non-discrimination on grounds which include “physical endowment”.

The 1992 Constitution of Viet Nam, Article 35 states that education is the first priority in national policy.

Decrees, Directives and Circulars issued in 1995 declared the following:<sup>42</sup>

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42 Cao, Manh Thang. *Children with Disabilities in Viet Nam: A Situational Analysis and Proposed Activities*, UNICEF, Hanoi, Viet Nam, 1997.

- ▶ The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) should replace the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) as the lead agency to provide education for children with disabilities;
- ▶ Urged 100 per cent enrolment in primary school, with the establishment of special schools and classes for children with disabilities;
- ▶ Transfer of schools for children with disabilities from the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Training to be speeded up, with more training for teachers in inclusive education, especially in areas where special schools are unavailable.

The Law on Universal Primary Education (1998) makes school compulsory for children from first-to-fifth grade. This general legislation contains no specific reference to children with disabilities. Provisions exist to exempt families of disabled children from school fees and to increase the pay of special education teachers.<sup>43</sup>

The Disability Ordinance of 1998 supports education for children with disabilities: “Education for disabled children shall be organized and carried out in the forms of integration schooling at general schools or specialized schools for the disabled, nursing homes for the disabled and at the family.”

## Recommendations for action by stakeholders

### Governments

The Ministry of Education must ensure that education policy is based in legislation, with clearly articulated principles, implementation strategies and enforcement mechanisms. All measures included in education legislation and regulations must be enforced at all levels of the education system, by all stakeholders, with incentives for compliance and penalties for non-compliance.

The Education Law should have a provision for the right of parents to claim the right to education for their child in the case that a school denies access;

The right to education for children with disabilities must also be included in the national education legislation.

The right to education for children with disabilities must also be addressed within disability or anti-discrimination legislation.

Where there are multiple laws addressing the rights and protection of children, such as the Education Law, the Law on the Protection and Care of Children, and the Law on the Universalisation of Primary Education, in Viet Nam, the clauses on the rights, implementation and enforcement of compulsory education for children with disabilities must be specifically and clearly stated.

Education laws should be screened to identify aspects that might limit access to education for children with disabilities and measures should be proposed to address them.

Governments should establish a National Coordination Council on Disability (NCCD) or a Disability Task Force, with multi-sectoral representation of government ministries and full representation of civil society, particularly organizations of disabled people, parents’ organizations, and NGOs engaged in the disability sector.

All government ministries, including ministries of education, should ensure that policies, structures and processes are inclusive, both in philosophy and in practice, to children and young people with disabilities and their families.

Anti-discrimination legislation or measures should protect the rights of persons with disabilities to be trained and employed as teachers, or in other positions within the education sector.

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43 Smith, Stanford. *Inclusive Education Initiatives for Children with Disabilities: A Desk review*. EAPRO UNICEF, 2002, p. 5.

Building standards for schools should include accessibility and health and safety considerations, and these standards should be enforced.

All existing laws should be reviewed and modified to remove any provisions that are discriminatory for persons with disabilities.

#### ***Recommendations from the Biwako Millennium Framework, Principles and policy directions***

Principles and policy directions to guide the promotion of the goals of an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for persons with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific region, the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action:

- Enact and /or enforce legislation and policies related to equal opportunities and treatment of persons with disabilities and their rights to *equity in education*, health, information and communications, training and employment, social services and other areas. Such legislation and policies should include persons with all types of disabilities, women and men, (*and children*) and people in urban and remote and rural areas. (*Principles and policies*) should be rights-based and promote inclusive and multisectoral approaches;
- Include disability dimensions in all new and existing laws, policies, plans, programmes and schemes. Establish or strengthen national coordinating committees on disability which will develop and coordinate the implementation of monitoring of the policies concerning disability, with effective participation from organizations of, and for persons with disabilities;
- Establish or strengthen national coordinating committees on disability which will develop and coordinate the implementation of monitoring of the policies concerning disability, with effective participation from organizations of, and for persons with disabilities.

#### ***Priority areas for action: Early detection, early intervention and education***

Governments should enact legislation, with enforcement mechanisms, to mandate education for all children, including children with disabilities, to meet the goals of the Dakar Framework for Action and the millennium development goal of primary education for all children by 2015.

## **Lessons learned: Moving forward towards inclusive education for children with disabilities**

### **Twin-track approach to the rights of children with disabilities**

Persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, still face rejection and discrimination in most aspects of their daily lives. They experience difficulty in accessing services, including education, and participating in community life. The data on the numbers of children with disabilities estimated to be in school bear witness to this fact.

At the same time there is a growing awareness that a human rights-based approach must be adopted when national governments address the issues of persons with disabilities. Many countries are still in very early stages of making this transition and patterns of legislation in different countries reflect the uneven provisions. During this period of transition it may be necessary to adopt what is commonly referred to as a “twin track” approach to ensuring the rights of persons – and children – with disabilities. This approach calls for both general and specific legislation to recognize, protect and promote the rights of such persons.

## National Education Acts

In relation to education, this would mean that the right to education of children with disabilities, and the special provisions necessary for their full and successful participation, would be contained in national education policy documents and in education legislation. It would not be prepared as a “special” education policy for children with disabilities, but would form part of the mainstream national policy and legislation, which would contain sections on any particular provisions for other groups which may require special attention, such as children from ethnic and language minorities, nomadic, or street children.

The Education Act from Thailand illustrates examples of the principles and special provisions that apply to the education of children with disabilities in the national education school system and which are specified in the legislation. They include the equal right of children with disabilities to free and compulsory education, and confirm that it is illegal for them to be out-of-school, or for a teacher to refuse to teach them.

## General Disability Acts and Disability Discrimination Acts

General Disability Acts cover the rights of persons with disabilities to all areas of government service provision and to equal treatment and full participation in all areas of national development, and in social, cultural political, economic and community activities. This would include such services as health, education, vocational training, employment, information and technology, physical access, poverty reduction, political processes and many more. Disability Discrimination Acts have been passed in some countries to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability<sup>44</sup> and have been used by families and disability activists to gain the right for children with disabilities to be accepted in school. The right to education and the provisions governing it form a section within the general Disability Act, or Disability Discrimination Acts.

### *The Disability Discrimination Act of Australia*

In Australia, the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was passed in 1992 and has been successfully used to gain admission to school for students who had initially been refused admission on the basis of their disability.

In 2005 the DDA was strengthened by the development of Disability Standards for Education. The primary purpose of the Standards is to make more explicit the rights of people with disabilities, and the obligations of education and training service providers, in relation to participation in education and training by people with disabilities.

They set out how education and training are to be made accessible to students with disabilities in the areas of:

- Enrolment;
- Participation;
- Curriculum development;
- Student support services;
- Elimination of harassment and victimization.

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44 UNESCAP. *Review of National Progress in the Implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons*. E/ESCAP/APDDP/1, August 2002, p. 3.

Each section states *the rights* of the student with disabilities, *the obligations* of the school or service provider, and *measures taken* to meet the needs of the student.

Measures for *enrolment* and *participation* may be ensuring there is physical access for a student in a wheel-chair, or who uses crutches.

Measures for *curriculum development* and *support services* may be ensuring that there are Braille writing devices available, or access to a sign-language interpreter.

A clear and comprehensive statement of policy, with provisions specified in the Education Law would provide a framework for developing minimum national standards for the inclusion of children with disabilities in national education systems. These could be amended as the capabilities of the system expanded.

### **Enforcement of legislation**

If children with disabilities are to receive their entitlement to education, equally with all other children, then active enforcement of legislation, with penalties for non-compliance is necessary. Enforcement should be undertaken by means of encouragement, with awareness raising activities and providing information rather than by punitive penalties. This applies to parents and families, who need to be informed of their children's right to attend school, and of their obligation to give them this opportunity. Schools too should be encouraged to work with students and community leaders and groups to find children who are not going to school, and to encourage them to attend. Incentives in terms of extra resources or community awards may be effective.

### **Regional support**

International and regional agencies can play an important role in assisting governments to develop comprehensive policies and action plans, and then draft and enact strong and effective legislation to promote increasingly inclusive education for *all* children.

## Checklist

1. Does your country have an education law mandating compulsory education for all children? Is there any specific reference to the rights of children with disabilities?
2. Has any legislation been passed mandating education for children with disabilities?
3. What provisions do you think should be included in legislation to make sure that children with disabilities have access to school and can participate fully in all school activities, including the curriculum and learning?
4. How can the legislation making school compulsory for children with disabilities be enforced? What strategies would encourage people in the schools and the community to comply with the law?
5. How can organizations of people with disabilities and parents' organizations advocate to government for the changes that they would like to see in education policy and legislation?
6. What steps has your country taken to implement the education targets of the Biwako Millennium Framework? (Annex II)
7. What priority areas should be covered in the development of *Standards* to ensure non-discrimination against children with disabilities in the education system?
8. Discuss Article 24, on Education, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Are there any changes you would make to the text?

This text is the final version adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 13 December 2006. As countries sign and ratify the Convention they will need to develop policies, progressive action plans and legislation to realize the rights contained in Article 24 for all persons with disabilities.

9. Discuss the implications of the UN Convention Article 24 on education at country level.

## *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

### **Article 24: Education**

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels, and life-long learning, directed to:
  - (a) The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
  - (b) The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
  - (c) Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.
2. In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:
  - (a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary and secondary education on the basis of disability;
  - (b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
  - (c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
  - (d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
  - (e) Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.
3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:
  - (a) Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;
  - (b) Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;
  - (c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deaf/blind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.
4. In order to help ensure the realization of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.
5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.

## C. Allocating budgetary resources

### The challenge

One of the greatest challenges faced by government is to find funding resources to enable the implementation of educational policy. The cost of education is a critical issue for all governments and ministries of education, but particularly in developing countries where they may be striving for full enrolment in primary education at the same time as a reform of the system is being undertaken to allow expansion at other levels, such as pre-school or vocational training. Education often receives the highest proportion of the national budget and reform of the system can demand annual increases in allocations over a period of years.

Addressing the issue of equity in education often requires serious change to the system, with administrative reorganization, as well as some additional costs and resources in most contexts. The most common pattern of educational service provision for children with disabilities in developing countries includes the following elements:

- ▶ The majority of children with disabilities not attending school;
- ▶ Small minority of children with disabilities attending special schools, usually funded by NGO agencies with varying degrees of government support, usually in urban areas and usually at the primary school level;
- ▶ Special schools and centres may be administered by ministries other than the ministry of education, most commonly under social welfare, in addition to service provision by NGOs;
- ▶ A small minority of children with disabilities attending regular community schools, either with or without suitably trained teachers, support teachers and appropriate assistive materials and devices.

A commitment by government to a system which will proactively include all children in school, including children with disabilities, may involve some of the following steps, taken over a period of time, many of which will have some resource implications:

- ▶ Reorganization of administrative structures, with increased responsibility by the ministry of education for all children, and for finding and including out-of-school children;
- ▶ Reorganization of pre-service teacher training, and extensive programmes of in-service training for regular school teachers, and specialist support teachers. Training will need to include orientation and awareness training for administrative and school personnel;
- ▶ Establishing a system to ensure that the curriculum, assistive devices, materials and technologies necessary to enable children with particular disabilities to learn, are available;
- ▶ Moving towards a situation where schools are accessible.

Clearly educating children with disabilities in the regular school system in inclusive schools is the only choice for developing countries which are committed to educating *all* children. At present special schools cater for a small minority. The cost of providing for all children with disabilities, including those in remote rural communities, in special schools, would be prohibitive. It is not an option either on financial grounds, or more importantly on the grounds of equity and rights, and is in conflict with the philosophical principles of building more, rather than less inclusive communities. Strong research-based arguments have been made suggesting that inclusive education is both cost-efficient and cost-effective.<sup>45</sup> It can lead to increased achievement and performance for all learners and has been shown to result in fewer children dropping out of school early.<sup>46</sup> There are examples of low-cost models in some of the least developed countries, and many resource neutral strategies.

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45 Peters, S. *Inclusive Education: Achieving Education for All by Including those with Disabilities and Special Education Needs*. World Bank, 2003. p. 47.

46 Holdsworth, J. C. *Seeking a Fine balance: Lessons from Inclusive Education in Lao PDR*. Save the Children, UK, 2002. p. 54.

The challenge for each country is to find the most appropriate and economical administrative structure and to allocate resources progressively, utilizing partnerships and harnessing non-financial resources to support the transition towards an inclusive system which requires and expects all children to attend and achieve good learning outcomes. Partnerships with donor agencies such as the World Bank and other global and regional donors can play an important role in making systematic progress towards achieving an inclusive education system.

## Barriers for children with disabilities

- ▶ Education policy is often designed with a view to economic return on investment in education, in the form of productive citizens, and persons with disabilities are not perceived to have the potential for economic productivity. The link between having access to education and the opportunity to learn the skills which make it possible to work is often ignored.
- ▶ Educating children with disabilities is considered to be expensive. A separate education in special schools has only ever been provided to a small number of children with disabilities, mostly those living in urban areas, in most developing countries. There has been little concern for the fact that more than 80 per cent of people with disabilities live in rural areas. Unless these children can attend their local community school they will continue to be permanently excluded from education.
- ▶ The fact that education is a fundamental right, a force for good, the foundation for development, personal and national, and a key mechanism for preventing poverty is often overlooked.
- ▶ Governments may hold the view that the education of children with disabilities is the domain of NGOs and voluntary organizations.
- ▶ National policy may also be formulated without an adequate budget to fund some of the changes that are needed to support children with disabilities in school.
- ▶ National policy may be formulated without an adequate budget to fund reform in teacher education, one of the most critical areas for the success of education reform towards more inclusive education systems.
- ▶ Disbursement of the budget may be at different levels of the system, and without clear administrative guidelines and close monitoring of the procedures. In a decentralized system, funding may not be used for its intended purposes.
- ▶ Governments may lack awareness of the many available resources and strategies that can be used to achieve change within their country's schools, by changing teaching procedures and encouraging community support and involvement.

## Resource allocation in case study countries

Budgeting for the education of children with disabilities varies considerably across the countries studied. None of the case study countries has an integrated source of funding for all components of the system which are involved in educating this group of children.

### Brunei

In Brunei the Ministry of Education takes responsibility for the budget allocated to regular inclusive schools, which cater for the majority of children with disabilities, and are funded by the general education budget. The Special Education Unit, which is responsible for support to children with disabilities in regular schools, and some aspects of training for teachers and head teachers from regular inclusive schools has a specially designated budget from within the ministry. This is for administrative purposes, with access to a separate budget for special resources for use by children with special needs and the Special Educational Needs Teachers in the regular schools. Schools can make requests from this budget

on an annual basis for equipment and additional teachers. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports provides a budget for Centres which are attended by children with severe disabilities as well as by adults with disabilities. These may be run by NGOs with funding support from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports.

## Samoa

The Ministry of Education provides a budget for the inclusion of some children in Special Education Units attached to local primary schools. This is a relatively new initiative. The Ministry of Education budget incorporates expenses for additional special needs teachers within the standard allocations for teaching staff. The Ministry of Education provides a separate special education budget to cover additional costs such as school visits and special teaching materials. Budgeting for other Special Needs Education Units will be included in the future in the Corporate Services Division budget when the currently operating Special Needs Education Units are functioning well and others are opened. Additional funds for accessibility will be included in the next ten-year plan. School fees can also be used for this purpose. The Ministry of Education provides support to NGO special schools by means of annual grants on the basis of the number of children enrolled.

## Thailand

Thailand spent 15 per cent of its national budget on education in 2002-3, and increased funding was approved for 2004-2006. The policy priority was to support and promote basic education, *especially for children in difficult circumstances and in inaccessible and disadvantaged groups*. Within the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) there is a Special Education Division responsible for Special Schools, Special Education Centres and students with disabilities in regular schools in grades one-to-nine, and a Division for Disadvantaged Children which caters for children from poor families.

The defined regular budget for the education of children with disabilities, allocated since 2000, comes from several sources. The regular Ministry of Education budget supports Special Schools, Special Education Centres, and teachers and children with disabilities in regular schools. A Special Government Lotteries Fund supplements the Ministry of Education allocation. This fund covers the costs of Support teachers stationed at provincial Special Education Centres and the support needs, devices and materials identified for children who have been assessed and have an Individualized Education Plan developed either in a Special Education Centre, or in a regular school. A coupon scheme entitles each child with an Individualized Education Plan to special support of 2,000 baht, five times the allocation given for each non-disabled child. It is planned to extend this scheme throughout the country. There is a budget allocation for special high-support programmes for children with severe disabilities. A budget allocation to make schools accessible was awaiting ministerial regulation. The NGO sector supports schools for the blind, deaf and intellectually impaired, and receives some Ministry of Education support.

## Viet Nam

The Central Ministry of Education and Training funding has no separate budgetary allocation for the education of children with disabilities in inclusive schools. The majority, 70 per cent, of Ministry funding is decentralized and administered at provincial level, with delegation to districts and communes. Eighty per cent of this budget is allocated for teacher's salaries. School fees were introduced in 1990, placing a heavy burden on many families. Exemptions can be granted for poor families and families of children with disabilities. Children with severe disabilities receive a 100 per cent reduction and other children with disabilities a 50 per cent reduction. Fees are a strong disincentive for school attendance.

*Many children with disabilities are from poor families. In Vinc Tuong district near Hanoi it is estimated that 38 per cent of children with disabilities are from poor families, whereas only 2.7 per cent of all children are from poor families.*

Viet Nam has received World Bank funding for the Fast Track Initiative established under the Dakar Framework for Action. This does not include funding for disadvantaged children, or children with disabilities. Additional sources of funding include NGO partnerships for pilot programmes on inclusive education, with international and regional partners such as Save the Children, Sweden, Plan International and others. Community level funding consists of some small charities that provide protection for children with disabilities at commune level and pre-schools are financed at community level. In July 2004 barrier-free access codes were included in legislation on accessibility. There is no specific funding to make schools accessible but the law stipulates that newly built facilities should be built with accessible design.

## Recommendations for action by stakeholders

### Government

Education policy for inclusive education should reflect an increased budget to include the actual costs of supporting the essential conditions which ensure quality education for all children. This would include teacher training, staffing, maintenance and operational and support costs and accessibility.

Ministries of education should identify inclusive education as a priority activity and it should be included in submissions to government for funding. There should be an increased budgetary allocation when the education system is committed to progressively including all out of school children, including children with disabilities.

Ministries of education should have a specific budget to address the needs of children with disabilities as a priority area, possibly under a broader budget for inclusive education generally.

Governments should define essential budgetary requirements for the education of children with disabilities. A budget should be allocated for making schools accessible for children with all kinds of disabilities, for teaching and learning aids, and for pre- and in-service training and on the job support.

Budget allocation should be based on accurate data on the number of children with disabilities, taking into account the type and severity of disability, and implications for the necessary support resources.

Financial support from the ministry to support the education of children with disabilities could be in coupon form for equipment and materials for each individual child.

The Ministry of Education budget should be formulated in coordination with the budget for the Ministry of Higher Education, to ensure adequate resources for teacher education and training.

Ministries of education and the relevant ministry concerned with finance should acknowledge qualifications in the area of special needs, inclusive education and education for children with disabilities for the purposes of promotion and financial remuneration.

Governments and ministries of education must work to ensure that teachers are paid an adequate salary. Ministries of education must work to address the basic personal and professional needs of teachers, thereby enabling them to focus adequately on the significant task of being a teacher of an inclusive class.

The government should provide sponsorship and or scholarships to increase the number of teacher trainees to undertake specialist study to provide special needs support and education.

Governments in countries with international donor engagement in education should negotiate with donors to include funding to make projects disability-friendly and disability inclusive. Donor activities should be coordinated with educational priorities and governments should advocate for funding for the inclusion of children with disabilities.

Government policy should include funds to ensure new school construction is in accordance with building codes on accessibility.

A coordinated approach to resource allocation is needed, where funding comes from more than one source or multiple ministry budget lines.

## School

Schools should form close links with the community and encourage community participation in school and classroom activities.

## The community

Education policy should support the formation of parent support groups and encourage their participation in school activities and programmes.

Programmes funded by international donors and agencies should include technical assistance in the resource package to strengthen local expertise and ensure sustainability of changes. This allows reinforcement of new behaviour and provides a support structure in early stages of transition to an inclusive system.

*Recommendations from Biwako Millennium Framework, Priority Area 3, early detection, early intervention and Education.*

*Adequate public budgetary allocation specifically for the education of children with disabilities should be provided within the education budget.*

## Lessons learned: Moving forward towards inclusive education for children with disabilities

It is clear that there is no one obvious funding formula for countries to follow in order to implement education policy that is seeking to achieve education for all children, including those with disabilities.

Recommendations from stakeholders, including government representatives themselves, called for:

- ▶ Dedicated budget for Inclusive Education with a specific allocation for children with disabilities;
- ▶ An increased budget in the early stages of starting an Inclusive Education approach, so that necessary supports could be put in place to make sure the outcomes are positive and the learning experiences are successful;
- ▶ Included in the budget should be an allocation dedicated to developing a system of support and resource facilities for the teachers;
- ▶ Strong focus on teacher training, which builds the capacity for long term benefit and sustainability. Pre-service training is not necessarily an extra cost but will require change in content and some specialization within regular training, to prepare all teachers in regular schools with the skills and

expertise to teach children with diverse abilities in any class. More specialized training for teachers who will act in support roles will be necessary, and increased in-service training will prepare schools and teachers for the changes needed to effectively include children with disabilities. Training must include methods needed to change the tasks and role of special school teachers.

Countries in the region differ in their capacity to fully fund their education services. Some are capable of doing this independently, such as Thailand and Brunei, and others work in partnership with international donors. Viet Nam has developed its expanding education system in partnership with the World Bank, and has carried out pilot studies on including children with disabilities in inclusive schools in partnership with Save the Children (Sweden).

Innovative approaches to funding may be necessary in all countries and Thailand provides a good example, with supplementary funding for providing support to children with disabilities coming from a Special Government Fund. Where funding is provided to support development in education by international donors it is important to advocate for funding to include disadvantaged children and children with disabilities. A World Bank Fast Track Initiative that provided additional funding to countries with comprehensive national policy and action plans that included out-of-school groups would make a difference to the pace and quality of reform in many countries. When pilot programmes are conducted, it is important that close collaboration between NGO and government leads to an increased likelihood that government will assume responsibility for the programmes and expand and incorporate them within the national action plans. The inclusive education programme in Lao PDR is an excellent example, and Cambodia, in partnership with UNICEF, is evaluating a pilot programme with a view to expanding provision for children with disabilities in the future.

Many complex decisions about the way in which children with disabilities will be included in schools all have resource implications. These include such issues as whether children with disabilities must be individually identified, assessed, and their support needs determined, with a specific budget allocated for this purpose, as in the Thailand model. Separate data, monitoring and evaluation enables government to know what progress they are making towards getting children with disabilities into school.

A coherent and coordinated system of funding and resource allocation is necessary, with administrative safeguards to ensure that resources are used for the purposes for which they were intended, particularly in decentralized systems.

A grass roots model may avoid expenses incurred in assessment and the provision of specific support, but may focus on in-service training of teachers and other school personnel, developing close relationships with the community, and encouraging them and family members of children with disabilities to act as resources in the classroom and in school activities. Teachers may focus on making low-cost teaching aids and resources, and may act as trainers-of-trainers as they share their experience and expertise with neighbouring schools. These were some of the strategies used in the low-cost development of inclusive education in Lao PDR. This has taken place over a period of 10 years and has spread to every province, including thousands of previously excluded children with disabilities in local community schools.

Each country needs to determine the model most appropriate for moving towards the goal of having all children in school and learning, in classrooms with teachers who have the skills to teach them, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities. Funding constraints may mean that implementation is progressive, but clearly articulated five year plans should be funded to move towards quality education for all children. It may be better to have progressive implementation, well-funded and successful, than failure due to inadequate resources and poor administration and implementation.

## Checklist

1. Is there a defined budget allocation for the education of children with disabilities, or disadvantaged children?
2. Is there a separate allocation specific to the education of children with disabilities?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having the budget allocation for the inclusion of children with disabilities as part of the mainstream budget allocation?
4. Or should the budget be allocated separately to be administered by a dedicated section within the ministry of education?
5. Is the money allocated as part of the regular budget, or is it from different special sources?
6. What forms of specific support should be nominated in the budget to support the education of children with disabilities? For example, support teachers, special teaching devices, materials. List other specific needs.
7. How can the budget be monitored to make sure that it is spent on support for children with disabilities?
8. What steps are necessary to engage the World Bank and other relevant regional donors in partnerships to develop inclusive education systems?
9. Is the detailed budget allocation contained in the national education policy document, with clear guidelines for its disbursement and use?
10. Is there a specific budget allocation to make schools accessible for children with physical disabilities? Is this within the education budget or another ministry?

# Providing education: administration, implementation and collaboration across sectors

## A. Providing education – and collaborating across sectors

### The challenge

#### *Providing education*

In most countries, both developed and developing, the steps towards achieving the right to education for children with disabilities have followed a common pattern, with some local variations. Progress has tended to follow the pattern of steps outlined below:

- ▶ **Exclusion** from school, based on negative attitudes, and a denial of rights, justified by the belief that children with disabilities cannot learn or benefit from education.
- ▶ **Segregation**, reflecting the emphasis on “difference”, combined with a charity-based approach, where separate education centres and schools were and are still provided by local, regional and international charitable NGOs, and more recently, by development-focused, NGOs.
- ▶ **Integration**, reflecting some degree of acceptance for some disabled children, depending on their degree of disability, allowing them to attend local regular national schools, as long as they can fit in to the school and the school does not have to make significant adjustments for them.
- ▶ **Inclusion** in education, acknowledging the fact that *all* children, including those with disabilities, have the right to education, and that *all schools* have the responsibility to teach every child, and that it is the responsibility of the school to make the adjustments that may be necessary to make sure that all children can learn.<sup>47</sup>

### Expanding the national education system

The challenge for governments when they make a commitment to providing education for *all* children, on an equitable basis, is how to expand the national education system, so that it can cater for the large number of previously out-of-school children. It may also be necessary to work with NGO partners in special schools which may have been providing education to small numbers of mostly urban children with disabilities. NGOs are also providers of pre-school education. Some special schools may be under the responsibility of ministries other than the ministry of education, such as ministries of social welfare. ministries of health and community may provide early identification and intervention services for infants and young children with disabilities. Community-based programmes may play a role in finding out-of-school children and helping families place them in special, or regular schools.

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<sup>47</sup> Acknowledging UNESCO, Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education For All, Paris, UNESCO, 2005, p. 24.

The expertise of NGO providers and special school personnel and teachers should be used during the process of developing more inclusive schools. They can act as advisers to the ministry and as resource teachers and support personnel in the regular school system. They can also play a role in on-the-job training for teachers in regular classrooms, providing experience in special classes and advising in regular classes.

## Non-formal education

In addition, both government and NGOs may be involved in providing education through non-formal schools. These schools do not follow the curriculum and requirements of the national school system, focusing more commonly on life-skills, skills of functional daily living, vocational and work skills. They sometimes also teach functional literacy and numeracy skills. They are more common in rural than urban areas. For many children, youth and adults with disabilities, and for other excluded groups, non-formal schools have often been the only option for receiving any education. Again, NGO expertise should be used to improve the quality of teaching and also in attitude development and commitment to teaching children with disabilities.

## Collaborating across sectors

In many developing countries there are a number of partners engaged in providing some aspect of education. Services grow at different speeds in response to need and to changes in attitudes, both internally and externally. Until government, through the ministries of education, takes responsibility for the education of all children these different services can, and often do, operate without any overall coordination. This can result in gaps in services, duplication, wastefulness of resources, and frustration for many who may be trying to access some form of education.

Once a national goal for the inclusion of all children in education has been adopted, coordination and collaboration across all sectors becomes essential if an effective school system is to be developed to implement national policy and action plans. The collaboration needs to include all relevant government ministries and NGO agencies engaged in delivering services, plus all stakeholders with a vital interest in who will have access to different levels of education, and how the services will be made available. Foremost among these groups are parents and families of children with disabilities, their organizations, and organizations of persons with disabilities.

## Barriers for children with disabilities

- ▶ In many countries the majority of children with disabilities, particularly children living in rural areas and poor urban areas, do not have access to any schools, whether provided by government or NGOs because there are no schools in these areas willing to accept children with disabilities.
- ▶ Many children with disabilities do not have the choice to attend their local community school, and may have to attend residential special schools far from their families and local community in order to receive any education because the local community school does not accept children with disabilities.
- ▶ Some children with disabilities may attend regular local schools, but be prevented from learning by hostile attitudes and failure on the part of the school and teachers to understand how to make the small adaptations to the way the school programme is organized and the curriculum is taught.
- ▶ Children may be denied the opportunity to learn because teachers lack adequate competency and traditional teaching methods are not suitable or accessible to many children with disabilities.
- ▶ Even when a policy of inclusion has been adopted some schools may refuse to comply with the regulations and may refuse entry to children with disabilities. Others may try to refer all children with disabilities to special schools.

- ▶ Schools may only accept a limited number of children with disabilities, and may refuse entry to older children and those with more significant disabilities.
- ▶ Well developed systems of special schools may be resistant to inclusive education and may feel threatened by the proposed changes.
- ▶ Families may not know where to go to get help for children at different stages of their development, particularly in the early years of a child's life, to find early intervention services. This can happen through lack of coordination and readily accessible information. Doctors or health workers often do not know what services are available.
- ▶ Some governments consider that children with disabilities should have access only to non-formal education, and deny them the right to attend regular schools.
- ▶ Some governments consider that they are fulfilling their obligation to the right to education of children with disabilities by providing financial support to special schools run by the NGO sector.
- ▶ Lack of coordination across all education providers reduces the opportunities for children with disabilities to attend school and wastes valuable financial and human resources.

## Providing education and collaborating across sectors in case study countries

### Brunei

The government is the main provider of formal schooling to children with disabilities. NGO providers help with non-formal programmes for children with high-support needs, children with autism, and vocational training for older children with disabilities. Early intervention services are also provided by the Child Development Centre of the Ministry of Health. Some children may attend both NGO programmes and formal schooling. Services are coordinated by the Special Education Unit, within the Ministry of Education.

### Samoa

In Samoa, NGOs are the main providers of education, with grants provided by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture. The ministry has begun the establishment of Special Needs Units (SNU) within primary schools. Currently there are six special needs units within national primary schools, six NGO special schools and a small number of private or religious schools. Ninety seven per cent of primary schools have no provision for any type of support to children with special needs. The NGO administered special schools are hoping that mainstreaming will increase in the future, are open to cooperation with mainstream schools and outplacement when appropriate. The establishment of Special Needs Units in primary schools will eventually address needs for the majority of children with disabilities who are not in school. These Units are not yet efficiently using teaching and other resources and some students still prefer the NGO schooling. There is an NGO funded early intervention programme, started in 2004, operating on a community-based field-worker model, and there is an NGO outreach programme to blind and visually impaired children and adults. Some private schools, with high fees, also exist and offer special educational services. There is a Special Needs Coordinator within the ministry, and the Special Needs Education Advisory Committee is trying to play a coordinating role.

### Thailand

Historically, schooling for children with disabilities in Thailand was provided by NGOs and blind children were well catered for in a network of NGO-funded special schools. Most other categories of children were largely excluded. A system of government-funded special schools has grown over the past decades, to 43 in 2004. The main provider is the Ministry of Education through the Special Education Programmes in the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC). The policy is one of integration, moving towards inclusion, within a system offering a range of options:

- ▶ Special Education Schools (of the 43 government schools, 20 are for the deaf, 19 for children with intellectual disability, two for children with physical handicaps and two for blind children);
- ▶ Special Education Centres which support the integration of children into regular schools;
- ▶ Regular integrated primary schools;
- ▶ Regular integrated secondary schools;
- ▶ Hospital schools.

In 2004, there were 349 integrated schools. By 2005 it is hoped there could be as many as 2000. Most provinces have at least one integrated school and many have two located in different towns. While definitive numbers are not available, estimates by various informants, both ministry and non-governmental, suggest that the numbers of children with disabilities attending integrated schools is growing at an exceptional rate.

Other education providers include the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the municipal system of local government, the private sector and NGOs. NGOs run 12 special schools, seven for blind children, one for physically handicapped children and four for children with intellectual disabilities. Some government funding is provided to these schools. A non-formal system of education is run by NGOs and community groups, with funding support from government, but is not available to school-age children.

## Viet Nam

Children with disabilities in Viet Nam are primarily educated in a system of special schools throughout the country, approximately one per province, some run by the Ministry of Education and Training and some by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs. This latter Ministry has not conceded all schools to the Ministry of Education in spite of formal transfer of the mandate for education in 1995. There has clearly been no enforcement of the mandate. The inclusive education system has been in development, through international NGO projects, for over ten years now. Recent advances in policy may allow for inclusion to become more widespread. Viet Nam still depends on outside funding for a great deal of support in the area of education and has a strong primary education development programme with the World Bank. The government may provide support through materials or staffing but less so financially. There is not a common policy framework at present, though this could be put into place in the near future. There is also no common database about students with disabilities.

Communication is facilitated by the existence of the National Council on Disability Development (NCCD), to which all concerned ministries, NGOs and organizations of disabled people belong, but there is not yet a coordinated system to manage the range of activities which provide education for children with disabilities. Some schools, both formal and non-formal, are run by provincial and district level authorities. Local NGOs have only recently been allowed to form in Viet Nam and do not provide schools for children with disabilities in the same manner as in many other countries in the region.

## Recommendations for action by stakeholders

### *Providing education*

#### **Governments**

Government should provide education for all categories of children with disabilities who should be able to attend any regular school, and be accepted in the regular school, no matter what disability they have. Resources to support the level and degree of need of children with disabilities are necessary and include appropriately trained teachers, support teachers, assistive materials and devices.

Government must provide a comprehensive and high quality teacher education programme to ensure that teachers at all levels have the commitment, skills and competencies to teach children with a diverse range of abilities. This must include pre- and in-service training, short and long-term courses to develop appropriate skill levels in the shortest time possible to facilitate the transition to an inclusive education system.

Ministries must address the issue of educational provision for children with disabilities in remote and rural areas, where provision is currently most limited. Policy and resources should promote the development of creative and diverse practices to meet the educational needs of children with disabilities to ensure that all children access education regardless of their individual, family or other circumstances. The option of home schooling could be used for children with more severe disabilities as a transition measure.

During stages of transition from limited NGO provision to full government responsibility for the education of children with disabilities, education should be provided by both government and NGOs, with coordination of services under the Ministry of Education.

Government should ensure well-planned and continuous services for children with disabilities from early intervention level through all levels of the school system, with resource support on a sustainable basis.

Government should provide Early Intervention and family support services for young children with disabilities from birth (birth-six years). This support should be available for the family or other caretakers.

Ministries and schools should seek to capitalize upon the input of parents and strengthen their capacity so that they can effectively collaborate in the formal and informal education of their children.

## **Schools, parents and community**

Schools should work with parents of children with disabilities as partners in providing education and should involve them closely in the development and implementation of their children's learning programmes, including individualized education plans where appropriate.

School administrators should welcome parents, volunteers and community members as active helpers in the classroom.

Parents can play a significant role in assisting and helping teachers to prepare materials and perform many other functions involved in teaching all children, including teaching their own children who have a disability.

## ***Collaborating across sectors***

### **Government**

There should be close collaboration and a cooperative coordinated approach between the ministries of education, other relevant ministries, and other service providers such as NGOs, organizations of people with disabilities, local authorities, universities, teacher education colleges and all others. Supportive and effective working relationships should be fostered. This will enable greater sharing of resources, skills and experience and will ultimately hasten the development of education opportunities for children with disabilities. This task should be the responsibility of a designated office within the ministry of education and should work closely with national coordination councils on disability, where they have been formed.

Ministries of education should disseminate relevant information on children with disabilities to all key stakeholders involved in providing education to them.

Education authorities at all levels should collaborate with all other authorities to ensure successful transition from early intervention to pre-school, pre-school to primary education, primary to secondary, secondary to tertiary or vocational training, and from training to employment.

### **Community**

NGOs should continue to provide education services to children with disabilities until government services are sufficiently developed as to make this unnecessary. Government and NGOs can coordinate

to meet demands together and can modify the services provided, and the way they are provided, as the inclusive education system develops and children move from special schools to regular classes.

There should be agreement on the mechanism for procedures to identify and refer and provide education services for children with disabilities. This should be determined by a multi-sectoral body representing all stakeholders at a national level.

***Recommendations from BMF, Priority Arte 3, Early detection, Early Intervention and Education***

A range of educational options should be available to allow the selection of a school that will best cater for individual learning needs.

## **Lessons learned: moving forward towards inclusive education for children with disabilities**

A decision to provide education to all children, including children with disabilities, requires a commitment from government to accept that all children have an equal right to education. Unless the commitment is made explicit, this particular group of children are at a very high risk for continued exclusion.

When education is provided by more than one ministry, and by NGOs as well as government, it is important that a coordination mechanism be established within the ministry of education. This mechanism needs to coordinate the administration and implementation of education policy for all children with disabilities. In Thailand, this function is carried out by the Special Education Programme in the Office of Basic Education Commission. The policy is one of integration, moving towards inclusion, within a system offering a range of options. In addition to the Special Education Programme there is a Programme for Disadvantaged Children covering other groups of children at high risk for exclusion, including children living in extreme poverty. In Brunei, the Special Education Unit carries out this coordinating function within the ministry.

An action plan will need to be in place to determine how and when responsibility for schools that have been run by other ministries, and NGOs, will be shifted to the Ministry of Education. This has clearly not been the case in Viet Nam. In some cases partnerships may be maintained, with clear guidelines for operational roles and functions. Transfer of responsibility may be accompanied by increased regulation and funding support to NGO schools, but with closer relationships formed and gradual transfer of students from NGO special schools to regular schools within the national education system.

In almost all cases this will need to be done on a progressive basis. In the case of Thailand an increasing number of schools are accepting children with disabilities each year. In Lao PDR, the expansion has been planned to establish one inclusive school in each province over a period of years. In Thailand, schools are required by law to accept any child with a disability that seeks entry to school, whereas in Lao PDR the number of children accepted in the early stages of the programme could be limited to no more than three in any class.

An important early consideration should be given to ensuring that children with disabilities from rural areas have access to local community schools. Partnerships can be formed with non-formal education provision, but this should not be a substitute for access to local formal community schools at the primary school level.

The pattern of provision will depend on the local context, and available resources. Decisions will need to be made on guidelines for admitting children with disabilities to regular schools, the changing role of special schools, and providing necessary support to regular schools, teachers and students in the early stages of the transition process.

## Checklist

### Education providers

1. Who are the main providers of education to children and youth with disabilities? For example, ministries of education, other ministries, international agencies, NGOs.
2. List each main provider and briefly describe its role and the extent of provision, with particular reference to rural areas?
3. Are the roles of the various providers coordinated in some way? Who is responsible for the coordination?
4. Is there a coordination mechanism within the ministry of education, overseeing the work of all education providers to children with disabilities?
5. What may be the changing role of NGOs as responsibility for the education of all children is assumed by government?
6. How can the process of amalgamating the various types of educational provision for children with disabilities be facilitated?
7. How can the process of coordination of education for children with disabilities be undertaken and who should be responsible for this process?
8. Is there a formal and a non-formal system of education for persons with disabilities?
9. Are children with disabilities included in both systems or only in the non-formal system?
10. Does the non-formal system provide basic education to primary school age children?
11. Who is responsible for the non-formal system? Who provides the financial resources?

### Collaboration

1. Does your country have a national coordination mechanism or National Coordination Council on Disability (NCCD)?
2. Does the national council have inter-sectoral representation? Please specify who is represented. Does it include organizations of people with disabilities?
3. Is there any multi-sectoral collaboration in the provision of education to children with disabilities? Who has primary responsibility for the coordination mechanism and which ministries and non-government and community agencies and organizations are involved?
4. What is the nature of the collaboration and the responsibilities of the Member agencies?

## B. Administering and implementing policy – making it happen

### The challenge

Good administration is the key to the successful achievement of educational goals and objectives laid out in the national education policy. It is the means by which policy is translated into action to ensure that children throughout a country are getting into school and receiving an education of a good quality.

When dramatic changes to policy take place, such as the Thailand Education Act of 1999, mandating the right of all children with disabilities to nine years compulsory education, and the requirement that all schools must accept children with disabilities, it is important that the system is prepared for the changes. An education and awareness raising campaign is necessary at all levels of the system to overcome resistance and negative attitudes. These are usually based on ignorance and lack of familiarity with the issue. Full commitment is needed at the top of the administrative system if implementation measures are to be put in place with energy and enthusiasm.

Administrative structures and lines of responsibility need to be clear. Policy needs to be clearly stated and communicated from central to the decentralized level, so that parents of children with disabilities understand what their rights are and schools understand their obligations. The detailed implementation measures and the role of the support systems and obligations of teacher education colleges must be clearly articulated and understood by all concerned and widely understood by the community.

### Barriers for children with disabilities

- ▶ Policy may not be clearly stated and terms such as inclusive education not clearly defined.
- ▶ Policy may not be implemented, either through lack of commitment on the part of government, or through lack of preparation and ineffective administrative procedures.
- ▶ Failure to conduct awareness training at all levels of the system may result in negative attitudes and rejection of the proposed changes.
- ▶ Poor communication between the bureaucracy and the school level may result in confusion about what schools are expected to do.
- ▶ Support systems may be established but not given the resources to carry out the tasks for which they have responsibility. This leads to frustration for families, schools and the support centres.
- ▶ Lack of preparation and training of district supervisors or inspectors, school principals and teachers in the schools may result in negative experiences which reduce motivation and lead to hostility to the changes.
- ▶ Families of children with disabilities may not expect their children to benefit from attending school.
- ▶ Families of children with disabilities may be unaware of the policy and the rights of their children to attend school, unless awareness-raising is carried out in rural and isolated communities.
- ▶ School uniforms, fees and cost of meals may prevent some families from sending their children to school.
- ▶ Problems with transport may prevent children with disabilities from actually accessing school in spite of the policy.
- ▶ Inaccessible physical environments, including toilet facilities, may prevent access and learning for children with physical disabilities. Environments with inadequate light, or noisy environments may prevent children with visual or hearing impairments from learning.
- ▶ Rigid curriculum and rigid exam systems combined with inappropriate teaching methods prevent many children with disabilities from learning and achievement in school.

- ▶ Pressure to work at home for the family or in harvesting or other work related activities will result in children dropping out of school, or attending on a very irregular basis.
- ▶ Pregnancy in young girls will cause them to drop out of school.

## Educational administration and implementation in case study countries.

### Brunei

Brunei has established an impressive and effective centralized system over the past ten years, based within the Ministry of Education at the Special Education Unit, which has a staff of practically trained experts in special education who have responsibilities for both policy and practice. The Special Education Unit oversees implementation at the school level through the development of individual education plans (IEPs) and by coordinating meetings with teachers. It also interacts with experts within the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Health. Experts at the Special Education Unit do, at times, interact directly with students, certainly for assessment and in terms of consulting and advice for parents, but also through certain special services such as early intervention, speech and language therapy.

### Samoa

The administration of Samoa's special education system is the responsibility of the Special Needs Coordinator at the central level, within the Ministry of Education. There exists a small budget for implementation. The special education system relies on the Special Education Units throughout the country, of which there are six. However, implementation in all six has significant difficulties and only one is currently functioning. This is in part due to a teacher shortage that drew away special education teachers from their special education duties and assigned them to regular classrooms. This is a difficulty in terms of both resource-limitation and ineffective enforcement. There is lack of clarity as to whether children with disabilities who enter the school should be placed in regular classes and supported by the resource teacher in the Special Education Unit, or whether they should be placed full-time in the resource setting. Principals were not consulted or prepared for the changes when the units were opened. A manual that should help to educate teachers on their various responsibilities has not been widely disseminated. There are no formal guidelines stating which children can and cannot attend school. A draft policy on special needs education has been developed to mixed reviews. It promotes specific "eligibility criteria" and uses the medical model to introduce a disability and impairment programme. The Special Needs Education Advisory Committee is currently debating this new policy proposal.

### Thailand

Responsibility for the education of children with disabilities is vested in the Office of Special Education within the Office for Basic Education. The Office of Special Education is responsible for 76 Special Education Centres. Special Education Centres are the implementing and support mechanism. They implement the policy of providing education to all disabled children and form the link between the Office of Special Education, families and children with disabilities, regular schools integrating the children and other related agencies within the Office for Basic Education Commission. These other agencies may include the Ministry of Health, NGOs, communities, special schools and organizations of people with disabilities. They carry out the coordination between mainstream schools and all related agencies at the regional, provincial and district levels. The Office for Basic Education was responsible for 390 registered integrated schools in 2004, with the expectation that this number would rise to more than 2,000 in 2005, as well as 43 special schools throughout the country. A separate Division for Disadvantaged Children oversees 42 boarding schools which provide education to children from families living in poverty in isolated and remote regions. The educational reform of 2003 resulted in a reduction of overall numbers of departments within the OBEC from 14 to four and also promoted increased decentralization.

Education Service Area Offices in the 175 school districts are responsible for increasing awareness among parents, community members and authorities in relation to the right to education for all children, including children with disabilities, and of the obligations of schools to accept them. Awareness training is conducted jointly by the personnel of the Office of Special Education and the Special Education Centres, working in partnership with board members from organizations of people with disabilities. Awareness-raising efforts for administrators at the Area Offices has been conducted with the 'SEAT' strategy for including children with disabilities: 'S'-for students; 'E'-for the physical and attitudinal environment, 'A'-for activities, from IEP development to teaching strategies; and 'T'-for tools, including policies for integration and legislation for the right to education, as well as budget allocation, devices and materials and support services. Schools can apply to become 'SEAT' schools and training is provided to staff.

In Thailand, the Special Education Centres are implementing mechanisms, with roles in identifying out-of-school children, conducting assessments, developing individualized education plans, providing services and material provision and on-going support to the child and the family. Special Education Centres should also facilitate the process of education for children with disabilities in both mainstream and special schools. By law, all schools should be willing to integrate students with special needs. Efforts to find out-of-school children are encouraged by the Special Education Centre personnel working with the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. An incentive payment of 50 baht is paid to the Special Education Centre from either the Rehabilitation or the Education Funds, for each child registered with a completed IEP. At times contact between the Education Area Offices and the Special Education Centres is limited and Special Education Centres may not have the resources to provide the level of support to schools that they would like.

## **Viet Nam**

In Viet Nam, the central Special Education Unit within the Ministry of Education and Training, the Centre for Education of Children with Exceptionalities, does not have a role in practical implementation. This Unit includes all children with special educational needs, such as gifted and talented children. Sections exist for strategic planning for the education of people with hearing difficulties, vision impairment, intellectual disability, for disadvantaged children and for minority education. Inclusive education is in practice primarily in pilot projects in specific geographic regions. A law had not been passed mandating inclusive education. The focal point did not have an implementing budget. A Steering Committee on Education for Children with Disabilities, which may be called a Steering Committee on Inclusive Education was approved. It may have local counterparts throughout the country. Changes are underway therefore that may affect implementation and policy. The Vietnamese government still has a parallel structure of the Communist Party from central to provincial, district and commune levels. The chairperson at the provincial level of the People's Committee can have a positive catalytic role on policy implementation, as the committee is responsible for educational policy. Some efforts to find out-of-school children exist, such as those undertaken by the Women's Union, a national government-supported civil society organization. No guidelines exist on inclusive education implementation and much confusion reigns concerning the concept. Teachers would like to see real policy directives as well as financial support to help them include and teach children with disabilities in their local schools.

## **Recommendations for action by stakeholders**

### ***Administrative Procedures***

#### **Governments**

Administrative guidelines must clearly state that all schools must accept all children with disabilities.

Administrative procedures for disadvantaged groups, including children with disabilities, need to be institutionalized within all aspects of ministries of education. This would include enrolment, school statistics, target setting, assessment, record keeping, curriculum, materials, teacher training indicators and any others. In this regard, the issue of children with disabilities should be mainstreamed into every aspect of the functioning of every department of the respective ministry of education, including

planning departments. Where appropriate, relevant aspects related to the education of children with disabilities should also be mainstreamed within other relevant ministries such as ministries of health, ministries of social affairs and others.

Administrative procedures need to be laid down to guide teacher education and training, with a dual track system of pre-service and in-service training.

The administrative structures and links between central policy related to children with disabilities and practice in schools need to be very clearly established. There is a need for an effective structure within the ministry of education which takes responsibility for this implementation, such as a special education office or unit. There must be structures at the provincial, district and school level, which may take the form of provincial or district special education centres or support centres, which work directly with local regular community schools.

The government should conduct detailed surveys to determine numbers of children with disabilities in order to plan a budget and support for their education. Surveys should be conducted in partnership with organizations of people with disabilities, particularly in rural areas.

The ministry of education, in close cooperation with the general statistical office, should develop and put in place a standard nationwide information system starting at school level, to be able to follow up enrolment of children with disabilities, their progress, and the incidence of dropping out. Reasons for non-attendance should be documented and addressed.

Ministries of education at all levels, from central, provincial, district to school level should maintain appropriate records, data and statistics on children with disabilities.

Specific targets and indicators for including children with disabilities in schools must be set and monitored at all levels.

Government ministries of health and education should work in partnership to establish procedures for the identification of children with disabilities, and referral mechanisms to appropriate educational services.

Ministries of education should ensure flexibility within the national curriculum so that it is appropriate and sensitive to the needs of children with disabilities, with modifications made where necessary to assessment and other procedures.

Governments should ensure that there are sufficient well-trained personnel in all aspects of the delivery of education to children with disabilities, from early intervention to tertiary level, with particular attention to trained teachers, teacher assistants, and ancillary support professionals. This may involve close coordination with other ministries, NGOs, DPOs, other agencies and organizations.

## **Special education centres or school support centres**

Every province or district should have a “support centre” that is responsible for providing support to children and their families and on the job support to regular schools and classroom teachers, in addition to other tasks.

Governments should ensure that school support centres or special education centres or units are well resourced with trained personnel, capable of promoting and supporting inclusive education. The range of personnel must be capable of supporting children both in the centres and in the regular schools, as needed, as well as conducting in-service and informal training for teachers both in the centres and in the regular classroom.

The responsibilities of principals of inclusive schools in the implementation of inclusive education should be clearly defined and the ministry of education and education authorities at all levels should ensure that the principals are continuously trained, guided, informed and involved in the implementation process.

Guidelines for teaching should require that teaching methods and curriculum are adapted according to individual needs. Teachers should receive training to make this possible.

## **Community/NGOs**

Information on the options available to families of children with disabilities for the education of their children at different life stages must be made easily available at the community level, with clear information about how to access support and advice when they need it. There should be programmes for family education and empowerment, including advice on how to seek help if they do not feel that the needs of their child are being met. This could be provided at special education centres, school support centres, community health and other community-based programmes.

The ministry of education should work in close partnership and collaboration with related ministries and agencies responsible for early intervention, health, and rehabilitation so that it is well coordinated with education provision. These comprehensive needs should be met by coordinated service providers for children with disabilities.

Transportation should be provided where necessary, particularly for students with mobility needs in both urban and rural areas.

## **Implementation strategies**

### **Government**

The ministry of education must conduct awareness and training for administrators and teachers to improve their knowledge about disability and to develop positive attitudes to educating children with disabilities in regular schools. Inclusive education should be introduced into schools only after the administrators and teachers are adequately exposed to the concepts and have received appropriate training. Awareness training and readiness should be created at all levels for parents, teachers, administrators and the community.

The ministry of education should provide specific awareness training to ensure that all personnel involved in any aspect of education and support to children with disabilities and their families are well informed of educational policy and practices, have a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, and are strongly committed to their work with children with disabilities and their families.

There needs to be extensive support and advice from the central level to decentralized offices, and particularly to special education centres and school support centres in the early stages of implementation. It is also necessary to have a mechanism to identify problems and generate solutions quickly at the support centre and school level.

### **School support centres, special education centres or special education units**

Schools and school support centres should play an active role in promoting awareness at the community level of the right to education of children with disabilities. They should also mobilize the community to find out-of-school children with disabilities and to encourage their families to send them to school. They should also encourage communities to accept them fully and ensure that they are able to participate in all community activities.

Head teachers or principals should receive awareness training to develop expertise to transform their schools into inclusive schools and should be required to conduct training within the school to prepare teachers and students for the changes that may be necessary when children with disabilities are attending schools for the first time.

Support services should be family-centred, child-centred and holistic. All support centres should provide, or have access to all necessary forms of expertise and resources and coordinate support services from all relevant ministries and service providers. This is particularly relevant in providing early

intervention services which may involve ministries of Health, NGOs, Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR) programmes and others.

Information systems should be maintained at support centres and at schools, regularly updated and shared appropriately, particularly during transition of the child from one setting, class or school to the next.

In-service training should be held on a regular basis, both in schools and in support centres, for regular school teachers to increase their expertise in teaching children with disabilities in their classes and to trouble-shoot problem areas and to develop and share problem solving strategies.

Schools should offer an appropriate orientation process for children with disabilities and their families, with opportunities for school and teacher meetings, to familiarize students with the school. This should be part of a planned transition process and could be facilitated by support centre personnel.

Clear guidelines should be provided for each period of transition from pre-school to primary school, primary to secondary and beyond.

Individualised education programmes should be developed with the participation of family members, classroom teachers and support centre personnel where appropriate.

Schools and authorities should encourage persons with disabilities to play an active role in the provision of education, as supporters, assistants, interpreters, as well as in awareness building activities and advocacy.

## **Community**

Community networks should be effectively used to identify out-of-school children. Strategies should be developed to mobilize this group of children into the education system and their attendance should be monitored regularly. This work should take place in partnership with special education centres, CBR programmes, ministries of health and others charged with this task.

Local authorities should ensure that community networks are effectively involved in the identification of children with disabilities, raise awareness of their right to education and support their access to education in the local community.

Organizations of people with disabilities and parent groups should offer to educate ministries about their experiences, conduct awareness training for administrators and act in an advisory capacity to the Ministry of Education on a regular and on-going basis.

Development of CBR programmes is one of the most effective strategies for supporting and empowering persons with disabilities in their communities and encouraging their full inclusion in all aspects of community life, including education. This strategy will result in increased willingness of the community to accept children with disabilities on the same basis as other children are accepted and will lead to increased willingness of parents to enrol their children in local community schools.

Parents and families must be involved in the development and monitoring of the individualised education plan for their child, both at support centres and at regular school.

Organizations of people with disabilities, including national associations for the blind and deaf, can assist community schools in teaching such specific skills as sign language and Braille, but these skills should also be included in teacher training courses at pre-and in-service level.

### ***Recommendations from BM, Priority Are 3, early detection, early intervention and Education***

Governments, including ministries of education, need to work in partnership with NGOs at the national and local level to conduct public awareness campaigns to inform families of children with disabilities, schools and local communities, of the right of children and youth with disabilities to participate in education at all levels, in urban and rural areas, and with particular emphasis on the inclusion of girls with disabilities where there is a gender imbalance in school attendance.

## **Lessons learned: Moving forward towards inclusive education for children with disabilities**

The first step in administration and implementation of policy to include children with disabilities is awareness training of administrators. Administrators must be positively committed to the changes necessary in the school system and determined to see them achieved. The most effective training and awareness raising may be provided by involving prominent disability advocates and organizations of persons with disabilities. Experiential training which includes simulation exercises may result in greater understanding and more sensitivity than lecturing and factual information alone. The key outcome must include the development of positive attitudes, enthusiasm and commitment.

Preparation at all levels of the system is essential when significant changes are being introduced. A large-scale programme of in-service training is desirable in situations where changes are introduced to the whole system, as was the case in Thailand after the Education Act of 1999 was passed, mandating that all regular schools must accept children with disabilities. In situations where the introduction is more gradual training can be focused on the initial schools, and gradually expanded.

One of the most important keys to successful inclusion has been preparation of school principals. Whole school support is difficult to achieve unless it is fostered from the top. Effective preparation at the school level requires a participatory approach engaging all teachers and other staff. This avoids the common problem that arises when it is assumed that the issue of including children with disabilities is only the concern of those teachers who may have such children in their classes. An inclusive school needs a dynamic on-going programme of professional development and support, which allows both problems and solutions to be seen as the responsibility of the whole staff.

Another important task in administration is making sure that the roles and responsibilities at each level of the system are clearly spelled out, widely understood and effectively implemented. This is particularly important in terms of the relationship between regular schools and the mechanisms established to provide them with support, such as special education centres in Thailand and the Special Education Unit in Brunei. Close monitoring of the functioning of the support centres, and of the schools, is critical in the early stages of the implementation of new policy. Failure to receive the level of support expected may result in the unwillingness of schools to enrol children with disabilities. The level and nature of support systems will vary across contexts, and in some cases support will be provided from within the school and without individualized assessment or programming. This was the model adopted by Lao PDR. The responsibilities of the Special Education Centres in Thailand are more extensive.

### ***Tawathburi Special Education Centre, Thailand.***

The head teacher is qualified with a degree in special education and a master's degree in psychology. The centre has nine staff. Eighty four per cent of children seen at the centre are placed in regular schools. The remaining 16 per cent are receiving early intervention or specialized programmes, designed to prepare them for entry into regular schools. The special education centre is responsible for finding out-of-school children with disabilities and working with CBR programmes, health workers and village community officials to educate families about their obligation to send their children to school. Early intervention programmes are one of the major activities of the centre and these are carried out in the home and at the Centre. The special education centre is responsible for assessment and placement decisions. Children may be placed at the centre, in a special school or in a regular integrated school. Major activities include arranging placements for children in local regular schools and providing on-going support to the child and family and to the school and classroom teacher. Individualized education plans may be developed at the centre or in the school, but always with a team of people which includes the family. A second major focus is on training activities for several target groups. Awareness training is given to all schools in the area, with the purpose of encouraging schools to accept children with disabilities. Attitudes are still negative in many schools and it will take time to break down these barriers. Regular on-going support is provided to teachers who are teaching children with disabilities in their classrooms, but broader training for all teachers in a school is carried out. Training is also provided for parents and families and for community workers and volunteers. Training teachers to make their own teaching devices and aids from local materials is also conducted. The special education centre is responsible for the budget which allocates resources to schools on a per child basis. Centre staff saw increasing numbers of children coming forward for an education. The staff would like to see full enforcement of the 1999 Education Act which made education compulsory and requires parents to send their children to school. They would also like to see compliance from more schools on their legal obligation to provide education to children with disabilities. The progress is encouraging.

Identification of out-of-school children and gaining the support of local communities for including children with disabilities in school requires close partnerships to be formed with all stakeholders. Coordination of effort needs to be part of administrative procedures at all levels. Consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities should result in advice on administrative strategies related to persuading families to send their children to school, helping to develop positive attitudes in the community as well as providing support and in some cases much needed expertise to local schools. Close collaboration with other ministries, but particularly ministries of health, is essential for the early detection and registration of infants and young children with disabilities, and making sure that the families receive the advice they need and access to early intervention programmes.

## Checklist

1. What is the process by which policy and legislation on inclusive education is implemented at the school level?
2. Is there a focal point within the ministry that is responsible for the education of children with disabilities, in special education and/or regular schools?
3. What administrative structures will be the most effective for implementing policy which mandates the right to education for children with disabilities? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a separate section charged with this responsibility within the ministry of education?
4. What are some effective steps that can be taken to ensure that schools comply with policy and legislation requiring them to accept children with disabilities?
5. Is there a policy or are there guidelines which determine which children with disabilities will be accepted into regular schools, or are all children with disabilities accepted?
6. What are the guidelines for acceptance of children with disabilities? At what level is the decision made – departmental or school level?
7. Who is responsible for finding out-of-school children with disabilities? What specific steps are taken to achieve their enrolment?
8. What specific policy directives are given to school management to implement inclusive education?
9. How are these directives implemented?
10. Is there a directive to take action at the community level to find children with disabilities who are not enrolled in school?
11. Is awareness training of educational administrators conducted on the issue of including children with disabilities in the school system?
12. Awareness raising about disability issues and the fact that children with disabilities have been largely denied their rights to education and excluded from school is important in order to change negative attitudes and create a positive climate for change. How should this awareness training be carried out at the different levels of the education system? Who should be involved?
13. How can parents and families of children with disabilities be helped to understand that their children have the right to go to school and that they are required by law to send them to school? What are some of the problems faced in remote, isolated and poor communities, and how can they be overcome?

# Structuring and re-structuring the school system: from pre-school to university

## The challenge

If children with disabilities are to be fully included in the education system then their needs must be considered at every level of the system. Many of the changes necessary to include children with disabilities will be part of the change process which is undertaken when schools move towards being more inclusive. These changes will include the commitment of schools to accept and welcome every child and a willingness to make school procedures, the curriculum, teaching and learning more child-centred and flexible.

All of these measures will contribute to the quality of education but on their own may not be sufficient to ensure good learning outcomes for children with disabilities. The challenge is to develop policy and then implementation measures which will promote the changes necessary to achieve an inclusive outcome.

## Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

It is a well accepted fact that all children will benefit from early childhood and pre-school education. The first goal of the Dakar Framework for Action calls for “expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged”<sup>48</sup> In the UNESCO review study of EFA National Action Plans<sup>49</sup> Anupam reported that nine out of 17 countries identified Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as a priority target area. Children with disabilities were one among several target groups of children from marginalized groups. Developing and expanding early childhood care and pre-school education needs to be a goal of every education system. There is a need for action in this area in most countries of the Asia- Pacific region.

## Early detection and early intervention services

For infants and young children with disabilities, early detection, identification and access to early intervention services is necessary to provide support and training to parents and families in the early stages of their child’s life. Parents and caregivers can play a crucial role in stimulating the early development of their child’s potential and preventing the onset of severe secondary disabling conditions which can affect both physical and intellectual ability. Without early intervention many disabled children will have a more limited capacity to benefit from education, if or when they have access to their local community school. At present very few countries have comprehensive national programmes of early intervention. Limited services are more commonly provided by NGOs and community-based services and reach a very small number of children and families with disabilities. The challenge is to provide these services, with close collaboration between different ministries and non-government providers. Early intervention services must provide guidance and support to parents and families.

48 Dakar Framework for Action, op. cit., p. 2.

49 UNESCO, Anupam, op. cit., p. 12.

## Pre-school

Pre-school education is not widely available in most countries of the region, but its availability is increasing. Again, it is most commonly provided by NGOs. It has a particular value for children with disabilities as it helps to develop social skills and gives them experience of being part of a group. This participation provides invaluable preparation for school. Opportunities to take part in pre-school education are extremely limited for children with disabilities and need to be extensively expanded.

## Special schools

Separate special schools have been the most common form of education available to the small percentage of children with disabilities who have any access to education. As stated earlier these schools are mostly run by NGOs in urban areas. Some governments have run special schools for some groups of disabled children, as is the case in Thailand.

As education systems have begun to change, some special classes have also been established in regular schools, and in some countries, including Brunei and Thailand, policy and practice now encourage children with disabilities to attend regular schools. During this transition period special schools still have a role to play in providing education to some children with disabilities. There is a trend for them to accept children with more severe disabilities, as is the case in Brunei. There is also a trend for special schools to be transformed into special education centres or units, recognised as centres of expertise on the needs of children with disabilities.

They can provide a variety of services and act as support systems to regular schools, assisting both children and teachers. The education system needs to harness the expertise in special schools and to use it during the gradual process of transforming the regular school system so that it is capable of including children with disabilities. The challenge is to maintain special schools where the necessary learning environment cannot yet be provided in regular schools. An example of this may be for deaf children who need a sign language environment in order to develop their language and communication skills. Flexibility is needed, with close cooperation between regular and special schools.

## Regular primary school

Few countries have such explicit policy and legislation mandating education for all children with disabilities as exists in Thailand, described in earlier sections. However many countries have begun the process of making their education systems more inclusive. In 2002, 29 countries reported in a UNESCAP survey that they provided education for children with disabilities in separate schools, but 27 stated that they were making some provision in inclusive schools as well.<sup>50</sup>

Both schools, and children with disabilities, face challenges during this transition process. Unless there is positive leadership and a commitment from the whole school community, children with disabilities may still face negative attitudes and resentment. If teachers are not well prepared and trained to teach a diverse group of children with a wide range of abilities, children with disabilities may find themselves physically included, but in practice excluded from meaningful participation in school activities and the learning process. If they do not have access to appropriate and accessible teaching materials, assistive devices and the support that they need, flexible curriculum, teaching and assessment methods, it is unlikely that they will succeed in learning.

## Systems of support to the regular school, students and teachers

Learning outcomes for children with disabilities are often at risk when teachers lack appropriate training, and access to any form of support in the classroom. Modifications to pre-service teacher training curricula and practice for all regular class teachers take time to have an effect on classroom teaching but are part of the long term solution. In-service training is an effective method of improving teaching skills, but does not provide the on-going support that makes a difference to inexperienced teachers.

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<sup>50</sup> UNESCAP, 2002. op. cit.

Different systems of support to classroom teachers have been developed in different countries. These may take the form of resource or support teachers in individual schools or teachers who may support a cluster of schools on an itinerant basis. Other models include special support centres, special education centres or units which may carry out a variety of tasks including identification and assessment of children with disabilities, organizing transitions to regular school and supporting both the child and teacher in the classroom environment. In addition they may carry out in-service training as well as in-class support, and be responsible for organizing assistive devices and materials. Support can be carried out by teachers within the school, who have received training and have gained some experience, which they can pass on, formally or informally, to other teachers in their own school or to a neighbouring school or cluster of schools. Without some system of support in the early stages there is the danger that teachers may be overwhelmed by the difficulties they experience. This can lead to feelings of failure, reduced motivation and negative attitudes to the whole concept of inclusive education and teaching children with disabilities in regular classes.

## Secondary school

Concern for the small percentage of children with disabilities attending school has naturally resulted in a focus on ensuring access to primary school. Even fewer children with disabilities attend secondary school, and preparation of secondary schools for inclusive education has received little attention, even in education systems which are moving towards inclusive education at the primary school level. Where there has been little effort to develop positive attitudes, provide focused in-service training, and organized systems of support, children with disabilities will continue to be denied access to secondary school, or face extreme barriers to gaining successful learning outcomes if they do achieve access. A further challenge is to provide a curriculum which is meaningful and relevant and includes pre-vocational skills and experience.

## Tertiary education

The problems associated with gaining access to, and benefiting from, secondary education apply equally to tertiary education. Young people with disabilities in most countries of the region are seldom accepted into mainstream vocational training programmes. Some excellent separate vocational training programmes exist, providing skill training and a high employment rate in areas such as information and communication technologies (ICT).<sup>51</sup> These training facilities are available to the fortunate few. Even this option is not available to students with disabilities who want to study at the university level – with the exception of one integrated university established in Bangkok. In the past, many universities have refused to accept students with disabilities but this is gradually changing. Students who have achieved access report that there is no system of support and no provision for making reference material available in accessible formats, such as is needed by blind students. If equity is to be achieved in the education system it needs to be achieved at all levels.

## Barriers for children with disabilities

- ▶ The right to education for children with disabilities is often only considered within the context of primary education, and not in terms of access to education at all levels.
- ▶ The particular needs of children with disabilities from a very early age are frequently not met. There may be limited coordination between ministries of health, education and NGOs who may all have some role in providing early identification and early intervention to young disabled infants and young children and their families. Where these services do exist they frequently reach only a small percentage of families, and seldom those who live in rural areas. They also frequently lack coordination.

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51 Perry, D. Ed. *Moving Forward: Toward decent Work for People with Disabilities*. ILO, ROAP. 2003. pp. 9-14.

- ▶ Failure to receive early intervention services often results in preventable secondary disabilities such as diminished mental capacity, through lack of stimulation, and irreversible physical damage, such as muscle contractures, which seriously limit the child's future potential development and ability to benefit from school at a later stage.
- ▶ Children with disabilities have very limited participation in pre-school programmes. This reduces the opportunities for young children with disabilities to gain the necessary social experiences and skills which would help them to adjust to the school and class environment on school entry.
- ▶ Special schools provide separate education for the majority of children with disabilities who attend school in most countries. They are normally placed in urban areas and provide limited access to children in rural areas. The quality of education, expertise of teachers and resources varies considerably from school to school. Most are run by NGOs but some receive government funding. There is very little opportunity to transfer from a special school to a regular school, although this is beginning to happen as regular school systems become more inclusive. It is argued that special schools provide a more accepting environment for children with disabilities and that their opportunity to learn may be greater than in a regular class without experienced teachers or any support. The fact remains that separate schools will never provide an opportunity for *all* children with disabilities, and that it perpetuates the separation of these children from their non-disabled peers and sometimes requires separation from their families and communities. Education in a separate environment does not make it easy to integrate into society after school, and does not contribute to building an inclusive society.
- ▶ Children with disabilities still have very limited access to their local community school and even where access is increasing schools are very different in terms of the extent to which children with disabilities are welcome and teachers are well prepared to teach them. In many cases teachers do not know how to adapt the curriculum and their teaching methods so that children with disabilities can participate in all the lessons and other activities. Many schools lack the assistive devices and materials, access to Braille, or large print, sign language skills and other necessary adaptations. Language acquisition and communication through sign language for deaf children may require some part of their education to be held separately from their peers, with skilled sign language teachers. When attitudes are negative children with disabilities become socially isolated and are less likely to learn.
- ▶ Regular schools may not have access to any form of support from resource or special education centres. Where these centres exist they may not have enough staff or resources to provide support to all the schools in their area, and to all the teachers who have children with disabilities in their classes. Centre staff may not follow up children that they have referred to the regular school. Resource teachers placed in schools may be deployed as class teachers or given administrative duties which prevent them from using their special expertise to strengthen the teaching of regular class teachers and to support them in problem solving situations that may arise with individual children.
- ▶ Very few children are enrolled in regular secondary schools. Those who do attend secondary school may have received special preparation in a separate special school, as is the case for many blind students in Thailand. The school seldom provides any additional support and students are expected to fit into the school routine rather than the school making any adaptations to their particular needs.
- ▶ Young people with disabilities are seldom accepted into mainstream pre-vocational or vocational training programmes. Separate or sheltered workshop alternatives seldom provide the same quality of training and seldom result in jobs in the open employment sector.
- ▶ In some countries young people with disabilities are not allowed to study at universities. Where disabled students are accepted little effort is made to create awareness of their possible needs amongst academic staff and it is unusual to find a formal system of support. Students have to rely on their peers for assistance. The environment and the teaching and learning procedures may not be accessible.
- ▶ Many schools and other educational facilities are not accessible to students with physical disabilities and access codes and standards, where they exist, are not enforced.

## Re-structuring the school system in case study countries

### *Early Intervention and Pre-school*

#### **Brunei**

Brunei has a nationwide centre-based early intervention service provided by the country's Ministry of Health. The centres operate with multi-disciplinary teams which include child development and child therapy specialists. Children and their families can attend from birth to five years or school entry, to receive advice and training and participate in individual and group sessions. There are three NGO Centres which coordinate closely with the Ministry of Health. An early identification process is in place. Children have checks at intervals from birth through the first five years of life. Children identified as being "at risk" for developmental delay or other developmental problems are followed up closely.

Children with disabilities are more likely to attend an early intervention centre than a pre-school in Brunei. Pre-schools are run both by NGOs and government, but pre-school teachers do not have any qualifications or experience for teaching children with disabilities.

#### **Samoa**

The only early intervention service in Samoa was started in 2004, funded by an international NGO, Christian Blind Mission (CBM). It operates from within one of the local NGO schools for children with disabilities. The service operates with a coordinator, fieldwork coordinators and fieldworkers. The service does not extend to all parts of Samoa yet, but does operate on both islands. It is a community-based home visiting programme, for children from birth to seven years of age. The fieldworkers also run support courses for parent groups, disability awareness training for community health workers and for teachers in the schools. The coordinator is a member of the Special Needs Education Action Council (SNEAC) and the long-term goal is for the ministries of health and education to take over responsibility for the early intervention programme.

Early childhood education in Samoa is under the control of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, but all centres are registered under the National Early Childhood Education Council. Concern with early intervention and education for children with disabilities is very new in Samoa.

#### **Thailand**

The Thai Education Act (1999) places responsibility for early intervention services to children with disabilities from birth to six years under the Ministry of Education. This was enacted with the full understanding of the critical importance of early identification and intervention to provide support to the family and to stimulate the growth of the young disabled child in all areas of development, laying the foundation from which the child will be able to benefit from formal schooling.

The Ministry of Education works in collaboration with the Ministry of Health in providing early intervention services. The Ministry of Health is responsible for identification and early diagnosis leading to registration of the child and the provision of rehabilitation services to children from birth to five years of age. The special education centres provide early intervention services and are engaged in finding infants and young children with disabilities in the villages, as well as working closely with the Ministry of Health and the hospitals. Many Early Intervention Centres are run by NGOs. There is a pilot project in Chiang Mai providing a model of good practice and there are projects working with specialist medical doctors trained in disability to work with parents and teachers. There is a model cross-disability Early Intervention Centre in Rajpat Suan Dusit providing early intervention programmes, support to families and assistance with transition to school. All staff at special education centres must have qualifications in early intervention, which is regarded as a priority area. The number of children receiving early intervention services is increasing on an annual basis.

The system of pre-school education is growing in Thailand but is not part of a fully developed formal national system. Under the national EFA Plan of Action, 2002, pre-basic education has two stages, nursery school from 0-three years and pre-school from three to five years. Pre-schools are run and funded by

government and NGOs, with an increasing number of community pre-schools established with local district funding. The special education centres are responsible for children with disabilities of pre-school age and make decisions as to placement and support. The number of disabled children attending pre-school is increasing. Pre-school teachers are university graduates, some with masters degrees in pre-school education. Some pre-school teachers undertake special training to qualify them to teach young children with disabilities.

## **Viet Nam**

Early intervention services in Viet Nam are not comprehensive and have been started by NGOs but run cooperatively with local government at the commune level, involving village health workers and the Committee for Family, Population and Children. The services are in place in most provinces but only reach a fraction of children with disabilities. There is a lack of coordination between many projects which are often not embedded in national, departmental, or local educational policies.<sup>52</sup> Intensive discussions have been held into the enlargement of these services, and how inclusive education can be implemented at the early levels, and included in well-established CBR programmes.

Pre-school education is expanding in Viet Nam but is not yet a fully developed formal system. The structure is nursery school from three months to three years, and kindergarten from three to six years. Attendance is low but increasing. Training for pre-school teachers to teach children with disabilities was started in 2004, and numbers of disabled children in pre-schools and kindergartens is low but increasing.

### ***Special schools or centres***

## **Brunei**

Brunei has 98 per cent of children in regular schools, but maintains a small number of special centres to provide basic education, life skills and job training for children and adults with high support needs. Some children attend courses at both special and regular schools. The special schools are run by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports but liaise with the Special Education Unit of the Ministry of Education and receive support and guidance from the Unit.

## **Samoa**

Samoa has four NGO run education centres for children with disabilities, three in the main urban area and one in the second island. They receive some funding from government but are mainly donor supported. They are segregated facilities and do not have the status of schools. According to the 2000 Survey, 16 per cent of children identified with disabilities in Samoa attended these four centres.

## **Thailand**

Thailand has had a long history of special schools for children with disabilities, funded by both NGOs and the government. In 2004 the MOE funded 43 special schools, including 20 for deaf students, 19 for children with intellectual disability, two for physically handicapped children and two for blind children. NGOs funded schools including seven for blind and visually impaired students, one for physically handicapped students and four for children with intellectual impairment. Government funding is provided to NGO schools and all schools operate under Ministry of Education regulations. Some schools are in rural areas, but not throughout all provinces and some provide boarding facilities. Some schools cater for children with a variety of disabilities such as deafness, intellectual impairment, autism and

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52 Bergsma Sitze. *Programme Identification Mission, Early Intervention and Inclusion for Disabled Children in Vietnam*, Kommittee Twee, June 2002. p. 5.

special needs conditions. In 1999 the percentage of disabled children registered as attending special schools was 4.8 per cent.<sup>53</sup> Since 1999 the greatest increase in school attendance has been in regular integrated schools.

## **Viet Nam**

In Viet Nam there are approximately 100 special schools, at least one per province but these are primarily located in urban areas. NGOs are not recognized in Viet Nam with the same status as in other countries and there are therefore no schools that are entirely NGO-run. International development agencies and international NGOs support pilot projects on inclusion and other forms of support for education of children with disabilities. However these projects are in partnership with government agencies, usually the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, or Ministry of Education.

### ***Regular inclusive schools and their support systems, special education centres or units.***

## **Brunei**

Brunei has developed a comprehensive system of inclusive schools that began enrolling children with disabilities in 1994. The system has been supported, first, by the establishment of the special education unit and secondly by a strong emphasis on upgrading teacher training to prepare teachers for their roles in regular classrooms which include children with a wide range of abilities and disabilities. The training qualifies teachers to become Special Education Needs Assistance (SENA) teachers who act as resource teachers to guide classroom teachers in their work teaching students with disabilities. It is estimated that 80 per cent of regular schools have at least one SENA teacher and the goal is to have one in each school. The system operates at both primary and secondary level, but at the secondary level the Special Needs teachers are called "home-room" teachers. These teachers undertake a certificate level course in special education and may complete bachelors or masters degrees. Classroom teachers may still feel frustration at their own lack of knowledge about different kinds of disability and lack of appropriate teaching skills.

The special education unit provides training to school principals and classroom teachers in the implementation of inclusive schooling, and particularly to SENA assistance teachers on a more regular basis. Special education unit staff make direct visits to both primary and secondary schools to assess children, assist in the development of appropriate programmes and support teachers in the classroom. Decisions about individual children are made at the school level but are guided by the special education unit staff. The special education unit has a budget to provide special resources, devices and materials that may be needed by students and teachers in the regular classes. It has produced a series of documents which are used for training administrators and teachers.

## **Samoa**

A system of inclusive education was outlined in the 1995-2005 education policy and strategies, which is now under review, but has not yet been fully implemented, although teacher training in special needs education has been taking place at the National University of Samoa for a number of years. Six Special Education Needs (SNE) Units were established in 2001, based on identified need from information in the survey of all children in Samoa. Only one unit was functioning as a special class for 17 children with a range of disabilities. Other SNE trained teachers were teaching in regular classes, with up to 10 children with disabilities included in their classes. There was a lack of clarity about the role and function of the SNE teachers, and the extent to which children with disabilities should be included in regular classes. It was estimated that less than one per cent of children with disabilities were attending regular schools.<sup>54</sup> Support to SNE teachers in regular schools should be provided by the SNE Coordinator, within

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53 Perry and Yoder, 2003. pp. 29-30.

54 UNESCO, UIS-AIMS Unit. Samoa Country Report, 2004.

the ministry, but has also been provided by university tutors and Peace Corps volunteers. SNE teachers expressed a need for more appropriate teaching resources and materials. Braille transcription was provided by a volunteer from the Blind Society.

## Thailand

Regular primary schools in Thailand are required by law to accept all children with disabilities, under the Education Act of 1999. Since this date there has been a dramatic increase in the number of children and youth with disabilities being educated in regular schools. Many schools integrate some disabled children and in 2002 the target was the enrolment of 25,000 children with disabilities. In 2004 there were 390 designated integrated schools of good standard. Schools have to apply to be registered as an integrated school. It is anticipated that in 2005 there will be 2,000 integrated schools.<sup>55</sup> A projected enrolment of 50,000 students in 2005 was surpassed with estimated enrolments in 2004 reaching 60,000, indicating the strong growth of the system under the 2002-2006 National Plan. Every province has two integrated schools except in the three southern provinces where there is one school. The national policy has emphasized the importance of educational provision and access in rural areas.

It is difficult to obtain information on the percentage of children with disabilities who attend primary schools. The Report of Disabled Persons Survey in 2001 provided information on the numbers of disabled persons disaggregated by age for groups from birth-14 years and from 15-24 years.<sup>56</sup> An estimate given by a Ministry of Education official suggested that 20 per cent of children and youth with disabilities attend school whereas the figure for non-disabled is 95 per cent. Estimates from leaders of the disability organizations and representatives on the advisory Committee on Disability to the Prime Minister ranged from 10-23 per cent. However it is clear that the number was increasing every year.

Special education centres have been established to provide support to regular schools as they enrol increasing numbers of children with disabilities. There are 13 District Special Education Centres, covering all provinces. Head teachers have masters degrees in special education and are experienced teachers. They receive a budget for their activities which they control at the decentralized level. The role of the Special Education Centre includes identifying children with disabilities in the community, collaborating with parents, assessing children and developing individualized educational programmes (IEP). The Individualized Education Plan specifies the educational programme, needs and resources, materials and equipment required for the individual child. The Special Education Centre also monitors progress and provides support to the child, school and family. It is their task to negotiate and facilitate entry of the child into regular schools or to provide an appropriate educational programme for the child at the Special Education Centre. This may be on a temporary basis until the child is ready to attend a regular class. Schools selected for child placement may be regular schools willing to integrate children with disabilities but sometimes placement may be in a special school. By law all regular schools must be willing to accept children with disabilities but in practice this is not yet the case. Children can be integrated into primary and secondary schools. Families may approach a regular school directly but where this occurs the school must complete an Individualized Education Plan, or request the Special Education Centre to do this. Special funding of 2,000 baht per child will only be provided to the school when the plan has been approved. The Special Education Centre also conducts training for parent and teachers in regular schools which are integrating children with disabilities, and provides awareness raising in regular schools which have not yet started integrating children. In addition, the Special Education Centre provides early intervention training at the centre and in the home.

The role of the Special Education Centre has been significant in the success of the integration strategy of the 1999 Education Act but the centres face many challenges in terms of too few staff, inadequate resources and remaining negative attitudes in some regular schools where children with disabilities are not welcome in spite of the legal requirements. The Individualized Education Plan system has proved to be problematic. It has to be approved by the Special Education Centre and some schools complain of a failure to follow-up and provide funding to the school for the additional resources that should be allocated for each child with a disability. Implementation is still recent in many areas and it is anticipated that it will take some time for attitudes to change and procedures to operate smoothly.

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55 Dr Benja, 2004, op. cit.

56 Report of Disabled Persons Survey 2001, NSO.

## **Viet Nam**

Viet Nam is in the process of developing policy on inclusive education but at present does not have a central implementing mechanism. The focal point for special education has been the National Institute of Educational Strategies and Curriculum, but the Institute is responsible for the development of policy and not its implementation. Decisions about which children may attend regular schools are made at the local level and depend on a variety of factors, one of the most important being whether there is a pilot project on inclusive education encouraging their inclusion. Support to regular community schools which are admitting children with disabilities will most frequently be provided within this context, with support from NGOs or the local people they are working with. A National Institute report claims that children with disabilities do attend inclusive kindergarten, primary and lower secondary school in the majority of provinces, but in very small numbers.<sup>57</sup> Inclusive education is highly considered as an appropriate model for educating children with disabilities, valued for its effectiveness, low cost, feasibility and applicability even in difficult areas. Factors likely to determine the possibility for many children at this stage of national development are the level of training of local teachers, the awareness of the community and local officials about inclusive education and the readiness of parents to send their children to these schools.

### ***Secondary and tertiary level education***

## **Brunei**

Children with disabilities attend secondary schools with similar levels and kinds of support that they receive in primary schools. In addition there is a pre-vocational programme at the secondary level designed for students with high-support needs, but which in fact caters for children who are “slow learners”. It enables them to comply with the requirement for all students to complete 12 years of formal schooling. Secondary schools are supported by the Special Education Unit, but Special Education Needs teachers at secondary level do not support or train other regular teachers as they do at primary schools.

Support for students with disabilities at the university level is in the process of being developed. Supports and modifications have been incorporated into the educational programme of a blind student in her third year of undergraduate studies at the University of Brunei Darussalam. The university has set up a University Board Team to oversee the special needs of disabled students.

## **Samoa**

Education policy in Samoa has not addressed the needs of secondary students with disabilities but may do so under the current review of policy. Some students with disabilities have attended secondary school but with no specific support.

At the university level, students with disabilities have tended to go overseas to New Zealand to complete degrees. On their return to Samoa they have been regarded as exemplary role models.

## **Thailand**

Students with disabilities are eligible to be integrated into secondary schools on the same basis as they are into primary and lower secondary school but in practice it is much less common. Grades 10-12 are post-compulsory education. Registration and the preparation of an individualised education plan is required for support, materials and equipment to be provided. The number of students being integrated at the secondary level is very small.

Special schools for the blind have a long tradition of integrating students into secondary schools. In 2004 the Khon Kaen Blind School integrated 29 students into four secondary schools and one vocational

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57 NIESAC, *Inclusive Education: A solution for implementing the Goal of Universalization in Vietnam*, 2004, Hanoi, p. 1.

training school. The blind school provides very strong support to integrated students and ensures that they have received adequate preparation to survive in regular schools, particularly in Braille and mobility skills, before initiating placements.

In Thailand, students now have access to tertiary education, after years of dedicated lobbying towards this goal by disability leaders. From 1970 to 2000, there have been fewer than 1,000 graduates with disabilities and before this disabled students were denied entry. Students who have persevered have done so with few support services available to them. In 1993 Rajasuda College, under Mahidol University, was established as a college for persons with disabilities, with a fully accessible campus, curriculum and support. It is an integrated college which offers a master's degree in rehabilitation counselling as well as courses offered specifically to deaf, blind and physically disabled students. Six scholarships are available annually to students with disabilities and 30 are provided for sign-language interpreters. In addition, there are 1,544 students with disabilities studying at 67 universities, but with no adequate support services available and they struggle individually to survive in the un-adapted learning environment. One of the more prestigious universities, Thammasat University, has had a special programme for three years that allows access to 11 faculties, giving 49 seats for persons with one of three different kinds of disabilities: the blind; the deaf; and the physically handicapped. Persons with visual impairments may only take the exam for entry to three faculties, such as law, media and communications and social welfare. While this is a positive example, support is insufficient and seven students dropped out before graduating.

## **Viet Nam**

Pilot projects on inclusive education have not focused on students at secondary school and there is no evidence of any support provided at this level.

Students with disabilities at universities in Viet Nam receive no systematic support and those who have graduated have done so by using their own resourcefulness and receiving help and support from fellow students, friends and family.

The experience of a group of students who graduated from Hanoi National University, Technology University and the Hanoi Foreign Language School led to the formation of the first self-help organization of persons with disabilities in Viet Nam, the Bright Future Group. Their activities have included setting up vocational training in computer technology and English language skills for persons with disabilities.

## **Recommendations for action by stakeholders**

### **Early intervention and pre-school**

All governments should prioritize early intervention and pre-school for children with disabilities as part of national health and education policy. These services should be available on a comprehensive basis and not just for a fortunate few in urban areas. Resources should be made available so that home-based services are available in the villages. Parents should play an important role in promoting the development of their children and should be given the necessary skills, such as teaching their child sign language in the case of a deaf child.

Ministries of education and health should work together, with relevant NGOs where appropriate, to develop a system for the early detection, identification and referral of infants and children with disabilities. A system of early intervention services should be established to provide support and training to families and young disabled children. This service should be available at the local community level through health services and at special education support centres, where they have been established. Services should be provided on a home visit and centre-based approach. Coordination should be established with community-based rehabilitation and health services to extend the range of ways in which early intervention can be delivered, particularly in rural and remote regions.

Pre-school teachers should be trained in early childhood disabilities, to facilitate identification and appropriate intervention strategies within the pre-school setting. Pre-school teachers should have

access to support and special expertise on the same basis that it is provided to teachers in regular classes and pre-schools should be encouraged to accept children with disabilities.

Families of children with disabilities should be encouraged to send their children to pre-school and helped to understand the importance of early learning.

Awareness campaigns and capacity building at the community level should ensure that village health workers, CBR workers, school teachers and children, parents, organizations of disabled people and other community groups can assist in identifying children with disabilities and their families, and referring them for support.

Ministries of health, hospitals and public health officials should be sure that prenatal care and regular check-ups are available after birth until school entry. Close liaison and information sharing should be established between health officials, early intervention centres, education support centres and schools.

#### ***Recommendations from BMF, Priority Area 3, Early detection, early intervention and education***

Ministries of health and other concerned ministries need to establish adequate early detection and identification services in hospitals, primary health care, centre and community-based health care services, with referral systems to early intervention services for all disabled infants and children (birth to four years old).

Ministries of health and education need to establish early intervention services, in collaboration with other concerned ministries, self-help organizations, NGO and community-based agencies, to provide early intervention, support and training to all disabled infants and children with disabilities (birth to four years old) and their families.

## **General recommendations**

### **Government**

Governments should ensure that the right to education for children and youth with disabilities includes all levels of education from early intervention to pre-school, primary school, secondary school, vocational training and university level. This should be provided in child-friendly and disability-friendly schools.

Ministries of education should develop guidelines that should be followed in all schools to ensure that schools are disability friendly.

Ministries of education and school officials should understand the specific implications and requirements of including children with disabilities in the education system and where these differ from the requirements of children from other identified disadvantaged groups.

Teachers in all regular schools should be aware of their responsibility to teach children with disabilities and of the support systems available to them, either from resource teachers within the school or from special education support centres. Ministries of education should provide on-going training for teachers in regular classes to encourage acceptance of children with disabilities and to improve their expertise.

Teachers with designated special expertise should act as resource persons for the whole school and should be available to fulfil this role even if they have responsibility for an individual class as well. They should not be deployed in administrative or other roles which make them inaccessible to class teachers who may need access to their expertise.

Governments should ensure that schools buildings and premises are made accessible to all students and all obstacles are removed.

### ***Recommendations from BMF, Priority Area 3, Early detection, early intervention and education***

The following measures need to be taken, where appropriate, by governments in the region to improve the quality of education in all schools, for all children, including children with disabilities, in special and inclusive educational contexts: (a) conduct education and training for raising the awareness of public officials, including educational and school administrators and teachers, to promote positive attitudes to the education of children with disabilities, increase sensitivity to the rights of children with disabilities to be educated in local schools and on practical strategies for including children and youth with disabilities in regular schools; (b) provide comprehensive pre- and in-service teacher training for all teachers, with methodology and techniques for teaching children with diverse abilities, the development of flexible curriculum, teaching and assessment strategies; (c) encourage suitable candidates with disabilities to enter the teaching profession; (d) establish procedures for child screening, identification and placement, child-centred and individualized teaching strategies and full systems of learning and teaching support, including resource centres and specialist teachers, in rural and urban areas; (e) ensure the availability of appropriate and accessible teaching materials, equipment and devices, unencumbered by copyright restriction; (f) ensure flexible and adaptable curriculum, appropriate to the abilities of individual children and relevant in the local context; (g) ensure assessment and monitoring procedures are appropriate for the diverse needs of learners.

Governments need to implement a progressive programme towards achieving barrier-free and accessible schools and accessible school transport by 2012.

## **Regular primary school**

Governments must ensure that all regular teachers have training to enable them to teach children with disabilities in their regular classes with appropriate knowledge of adapted and flexible curriculum and flexible teaching methods, and access to necessary resources and assistive devices.

Governments should provide assistant teachers or teaching aides to help in classes which have children with disabilities. Parents and volunteers could be encouraged to participate and a volunteer network established.

School principals should ensure that class size is manageable to enable teachers to teach children with disabilities effectively.

Governments should provide an adequate budget to ensure the necessary resources in terms of assistive devices and technologies.

Schools should develop guidelines for child-friendly and disability-friendly school environments.

Schools and teachers should be rewarded with recognition or certificates for retention of children with disabilities as an incentive during the early stages of including children with disabilities in regular schools.

Ministries of education should ensure that school systems have a flexible approach to assessment with clear understanding of achievement based on the individual strengths and capabilities of each child. This should include an on-going monitoring system to ensure that students are making progress toward the objectives on their individualized education plan.

If individualized education plans are used to determine aspects of a child's individual learning programme, the plan should be formulated in consultation with support centre personnel, school and class teachers, and the child and her family.

Schools should have regular workshops for parents of children with disabilities to help them understand how they can support their child in the regular school. They should encourage the development of formal and informal parent support groups.

Schools which educate deaf children should provide training in sign language to parents and family members of deaf children so that they can communicate with them at home. Sign language can be taught to all children, but particularly to those in classes with deaf students.

Head teachers should ensure that appropriate information about children with disabilities is shared amongst staff, parents and other relevant stakeholders, and that short-term objectives are regularly set and reviewed. A close relationship between support centre staff, the school and family is important.

School systems should conduct regular workshops to share examples of good practice at all levels from local, provincial, national and regional.

## **Education support centres**

Inclusive schools should have a support and resource system. This system should support the child with a disability and his parents or family as well as the school and the regular classroom teacher and provide advice in methods of teaching, curriculum and other adaptations when this is necessary.

Resource teachers with specialized training can be placed within individual schools or work from support centres serving clusters of schools.

Ministries of education should assume overall responsibility for special schools so that they can then develop them as tools for inclusion. As the inclusive education system is developed and children from special schools enter the regular schools the special school can be transformed into a support and resource centre for neighbouring schools.

Support centres and resource staff should provide on-going training to regular class teachers to improve their skills and capability to teach children with disabilities effectively within their own classes. This training can be carried out either in class on an individual basis, with groups of teachers within one school, or with teachers from clusters of neighbourhood schools.

Support staff should respond to requests for support from regular classroom teachers as problems arise to assist them to develop a problem-solving approach and develop confidence in their own ability. Regular follow-up support should be provided.

## **Secondary schools**

The school community should work to raise awareness and create positive attitudes to the inclusion of students with disabilities, and take positive measures to ensure that they can participate in all activities on an equal basis with other students.

Ministries of education should strengthen the life-skills component within education systems and include pre-vocational education in the secondary school curriculum in order to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities and other students.

Schools and local communities should work together to provide career planning and counselling with recommendations for employment and income generation activities.

Ministries of education and schools should ensure that assessment procedures are adapted to the needs of students with disabilities, in terms of time allotted, Braille or oral exams.

## **Secondary school and tertiary education**

Ministries of education should develop guidelines for secondary and tertiary schools and universities on implementation of education for students with disabilities that take into account the specific arrangements and accommodation needed to support these students in each level of the education system.

Ministries of education or other appropriate ministries should take measures to ensure the readiness of secondary and tertiary educational facilities to receive students with disabilities and ensure that they receive an appropriate and accessible education. Measures should include teacher training and orientation, classroom support where needed, accessible textbooks, teaching and learning materials, and physical accessibility throughout the campus.

Universities should provide support and counselling for students with disabilities at universities and all lecturers should receive awareness training on how to adapt their teaching appropriately.

Governments and universities should provide assistive technologies and all necessary resources for students with disabilities who attend universities.

Governments and universities should ensure that all aspect of the university are accessible to students with disabilities including physical access and access to all teaching modes and materials, and should include sign language interpreters.

Governments and universities should provide scholarship for students with disabilities to attend the universities. They should provide a quota of places as a proactive measure until students with disabilities are more equitably represented at the university level.

Organizations of persons with disabilities, family support groups, NGOs and the relevant government organization concerned should play an active advocacy role to promote an increase in the numbers of children and youth with disabilities gaining access to all levels of education, with appropriate support. Particular emphasis should be focused on secondary and tertiary education, including vocational training.

## **Lessons learned: Moving forward towards inclusive education for children with disabilities**

Re-structuring education so that children and youth with disabilities will have the opportunity to participate equally requires an understanding that changes must be made at all levels of the education system. Many of the barriers for children with disabilities are disability-specific and will not be solved simply by making schools more inclusive and child-friendly. Education must be accessible, which means appropriate communication modes and access to the necessary technology, such as Braille and computers for children with visual impairment. Deaf children must be enabled to develop real communication and language skills by a variety of means which may include receiving a large part of their education in sign language. Children with intellectual disabilities need the curriculum to be presented in a manner which is accessible to their level of understanding. Child-specific intervention may be needed from the earliest stage of a disabled child's life, before school entry can even be considered. Legislation may need to be reviewed and repealed in some countries to allow young people with disabilities to attend university, or enter particular professions.

### **Early intervention**

It is important for the community to understand the particular needs of young disabled children. This awareness will lead to more concern with early identification and support to families. Adequate early intervention services need careful coordination between ministries of health and education and NGO partners. The pattern of services will vary from one country to the next but in Brunei and Thailand it involved the Special Education Support Units. In Samoa a programme has been established in a local NGO school, supported by an international NGO donor, with the hope that it will be adopted by government and run on a sustainable basis in the future. Where possible there needs to be an expansion of CBR programmes, to reach families within their villages and communities and to make links with the appropriate health and education services, pre-schools, Special Education Centres, primary schools and to maintain contact with the family as the child progresses through the life-stages.

Families of young disabled children can play a critical role in the early development of their children but for this to happen they need to receive support, understanding and useful information on how they can

help their children. This information needs to be available from birth or as soon as the disability becomes evident. The type of support needed is two-fold: both professional and personal. Health and educational personnel play an important role, particularly in providing the early intervention programme, and teaching parents what to do to implement it. Equally important is support from organizations of people with disabilities and from other parents who have been through the same experience. Parents should be encouraged to form support groups, to become empowered and to understand that they can play an active role in helping their children develop and learn, not only in the pre-school years but also working in partnership with the school community.

### ***Early Intervention in Thailand***

One of the most significant features of the 1999 National Education Act for persons with disabilities was the provision of services under the Ministry of Education to children from birth. This was enacted with the full understanding of the critical importance of early identification and intervention to very young children with disabilities, from birth, or acquired in early childhood. Early intervention provides support to the family, encourages identification and assessment and the development of a programme promoting the stimulation and growth of the young disabled child in all areas of early development – physical, social, self-help, intellectual, communication and emotional. This provides the child with the optimal chance of achieving his or her full potential and limits the very real danger of the development of secondary disabling conditions which frequently occur in situations of ignorance or neglect. It also provides support and training to parents at this critical stage of their child's development. Early intervention lays the foundation from which the child will be able to benefit from formal schooling.

### ***An Early Intervention programme in Samoa***

A young mother of a child with Down's Syndrome was given information about the condition and how she could expect her child to develop. The doctor who had diagnosed her child had focused only on negative aspects of the condition and had not given her any practical help. The early intervention programme suggested activities and exercises she could do with her child to stimulate her intellectual and physical development, and prevent the muscle weakness which is common in young Down's Syndrome children if they do not receive early intervention. The early intervention fieldworkers visited her at her home on a regular basis and were planning to introduce her to other mothers with children with Down's syndrome. At this early stage she was not aware what options would be available for her daughter when it was time for her to attend school. The field workers work on a community-based approach, visiting families in their homes in urban and village areas, but not yet extending to the whole of Samoa. They also provide public awareness and disability training to community health nurses and to some schools. They run courses for parents and support the local parents groups that have been formed.

## Pre-school

Pre-school education is not yet widely available but its availability is increasing in most countries. The importance of pre-school education for young children with disabilities needs to be widely understood, and awareness of disability issues and skill in teaching young disabled children within a group situation included in teacher training for pre-school teachers. Close relationships need to be established between early intervention programmes and local community pre-schools, and assistance provided to pre-schools and families during the transition process. There is strong evidence that children with disabilities benefit from pre-school, and when they have attended pre-school are more readily accepted into their local community school.

### *A community pre-school in Tonga*

At a community pre-school run by the local Red Cross in Tonga, several deaf children were included in the class. The teacher decided that all children in her class should learn sign language so that they could communicate easily with the deaf children. Classes in sign language were also conducted for parents. Some of the children later acted as sign language interpreters for their deaf friends in social situations – but the deaf children were not allowed to attend the regular primary school.

## Special schools

As more children with disabilities are accepted into regular schools the role of special schools is changing. In many cases, as was illustrated in Brunei, the special schools began to accept children with more severe disabilities. These children were previously excluded from school. In other cases special schools become resource centres and provide expertise and assistance to less experienced teachers in regular schools, who are now faced with teaching children with disabilities. These regular teachers often lack the training, skills and confidence for their new tasks and providing support to them in the early stages is very important if their motivation to make inclusive education work is to be maintained as they gain experience.

### *In Samoa – a link between an NGO Special School and a regular primary school*

In Samoa the principal of one of the four NGO separate special schools for children with disabilities in Apia took the initiative to form a relationship with a regular primary school and have the children visit each other's school for sports and social activities. This scheme has been very successful and enjoyed by students and staff from both schools. The principal believed that her students could be included in mainstream schools provided that they had appropriate assistance and support, materials and opportunities for specialized teaching or therapy in some areas. She said children with disabilities are pushed into segregated special schools because teachers in the state school system don't know how to teach them. It is her long-term vision that her special school would merge with a regular primary school, and that Lota Taumafai would be used as a resource centre, a base for itinerant teachers and one-on-one teaching when it was necessary. She believed that the main resistance to this was the attitudes of the regular schools and teachers, but also of the parents and board of Lota Taumafai. She said current advantages of the special school were:

- A place to come as opposed to staying at home, often in a neglected situation;
- Parents feel that the child is safe;
- The teachers care and can provide options and activities for the child.

Disadvantages include:

- Lack of opportunity to learn and socialize with peers in “normal” settings;
- Misdiagnosis means that many students who may have done well with minimal help in a regular school end up in a special school;
- Students can go backwards if they are not stimulated;
- Teachers lose perspective in terms of their expectations of the child, usually expecting less than the child is capable of achieving.

A teacher in her school said that she would like to teach in a regular setting but still using her specialized skills to help children with disabilities in her classes, and other children who experienced problems in their learning.

## Regular primary school

A transition process needs to take place when a decision is made for a school to become inclusive with particular attention to encouraging the enrolment of children with disabilities. It requires a whole school commitment and the realization that everyone has a part to play. It requires leadership and capacity building. The role of the principal is important in generating enthusiasm and a sense of whole-school ownership, with open communication and opportunity for discussion, trouble-shooting and problem-solving on a regular basis. Capacity building should be an on-going process, and all staff should be engaged at some level. It is not sufficient to have one or two teachers with some experience of teaching children who may be slower to learn or have other particular learning needs. Where this happens there is a tendency for less experienced teachers to pass the responsibility for particular children to other classes, and the opportunity to gradually expand expertise in all teachers is lost. In-service training can take many forms, with short courses run within the school, particular teachers doing short-term training outside the school, transmission of newly acquired skills and knowledge on return to the school, and teachers working together to learn from and support each other. Two of the greatest fears experienced by teachers are that they don't know how to teach children with disabilities and that they are on their own without any support. When the whole school is involved and expertise is shared a supportive environment is created which encourages teachers to try creative approaches, learn from each other and gain confidence in their own ability.

### ***The story of Ha from Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam***

Ha has a physical disability and uses a wheelchair for mobility. She was 14 years old when teachers from the local school visited her grandmother to say that she would be welcome at the local primary school. Her family were reluctant at first, fearing that Ha would be ridiculed. A doctor had told them Ha should have rehabilitation but should not go to school. They had found that therapy had not improved Ha's condition.

Since she attended school, Ha no longer experienced seizures and her physical condition overall improved greatly. After starting school she became much happier. Before, she stayed in her room alone, but now communicates more freely and plays more regularly with her siblings. Overall the family was very content with her treatment by other students at school. The best outcome of inclusive education has been in providing Ha with greater experience in the community with other non-disabled students. If all students in her school were disabled, she would not have been able to advance so clearly in her skills in interacting with others. Her family is rightly very proud of Ha. They had several stories to illustrate her impressive memory and her good skills in mathematics. She is older than the other children in her class but she can read now, thanks to attending school.

## **Support systems for regular schools**

A common thread in the case studies from all countries was the importance of having a system which provides support to children and families, schools and teachers where they are including children with disabilities in their classes. Support can take many forms and different examples will suit different situations. Support from within the school can be in the form of:

- ▶ A resource teacher with additional training and expertise placed within a school, available to help any teacher or child, usually working within the classroom to upgrade the expertise of the class teacher, but may work with children on a withdrawal basis on either an individual or small group basis. If resource teachers become regular class teachers their capacity to support many teachers and children throughout the school may be diminished. If all their work with individual children is done on a withdrawal basis classroom teachers will not take responsibility for the children in their own classes, and will not improve in their skills and capacity to teach children with different needs.
- ▶ Special education centres or units are special support centres established within ministries of education to provide support to a number of schools. In the case of Brunei the special education unit was responsible for supporting all schools. In Thailand there were special education centres in each province and district to support schools in their area. The staff at special support centres will usually have a high level of expertise and may have a team of resource people, particularly if the centre is responsible for early intervention programmes as well as regular primary schools. Support and training to children and families, schools and teachers, are among their most important tasks, but they may be responsible for a wide range of tasks, ranging from finding out-of-school children, assessing them, arranging and supporting their entry into regular schools, sourcing assistive materials and devices and training teachers to make their own.
- ▶ A third model is where support is provided from within the school, as in the example of the municipal school in Thailand described above. A whole school approach is taken and as some teachers gain additional training and expertise they train others. This approach can be extended to other schools, where teachers from one school will train those at the next school, using a trainer-of-trainers model. Support will be provided to the school until the school becomes self-sufficient and may be in a position to train teachers in yet another school. This approach was used in Lao PDR when, with initiatives from Save the Children (UK), they first began their approach to inclusive education. This was a low cost approach which has grown from one school in 1993 to more than one school in every province ten years later, in an initiative that has long been adopted by the Ministry of Education.

Success was dependent on the development of capable trainers, careful monitoring and scheduling of expansion and maintaining a balance between the quality of education and the number of children benefiting.<sup>58</sup>

The provision of some form of support to regular schools and teachers will continue to be an important issue until pre-service training courses for all teachers automatically includes the knowledge and skills necessary to enable them to teach children with a wide variety of abilities in the regular school and classroom.

## Secondary education

The proposed draft United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities calls for the provision of education at all levels for children and youth with disabilities. While the percentage of children with disabilities attending any form of schooling is so low there has been little attention placed on secondary school access. However as the number of children in primary school increases it is important to plan for post-primary education. The needs for adaptation of the curriculum, assessment procedures, and support to children and teachers is as necessary at secondary level as it is at earlier levels of education. Modification to teacher training courses should be implemented. Particular attention needs to be paid to appropriate pre-vocational training courses and work experience. Schools can work in partnership with communities to foster job opportunities for young people with disabilities when they leave school.

### *An integrated primary and secondary school in Thailand*

An integrated primary and secondary school in Thailand had at least three per cent of students with disabilities, and announced to all villages in the district that it was ready to accept children with all categories of disability. Children rejected from other schools were made welcome. Teachers were sent for short-term training and vacation courses and one was sent for full-time training. Teachers who received training provide in-service training to others. Close contact is maintained with parents and support is received on an on-going basis from the local special education centre. Funding is provided for additional resources for each child.

## Tertiary education

Barriers to tertiary education, particularly universities, need to be removed and a positive and pro-active policy put in place to encourage students with disabilities to complete university and professional studies. Awareness of the needs and accommodations necessary to enable students with disabilities to access their studies effectively needs to be conducted with university personnel. Formal systems of support should be established with disability liaison officers on campus. Informal support networks should be encouraged. These are often formed spontaneously as non-disabled students assist their disabled peers to access the library and other sources of information and reference.

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58 Holdsworth, J.C. *Seeking a Fine Balance: Lessons learned from Inclusive Education in Lao PDR*. SCUK. 2003.

### ***The University of the South Pacific – a response to a student with a disability***

The first blind student to enrol at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji was admitted in 2001. To overcome university administrators' apprehensions, awareness training was conducted by the Fiji Society for the Blind, and meetings were held to outline and clarify the responsibilities and expectations of both the university and the Society supporting the student.

The student was pursuing her degree in education and language. To accommodate her needs, the university purchased a new computer and adapted speech and scanning software so that the student enjoyed the same access to technology as other students. The Fiji Society for the Blind provided advice to the university on computer and software purchases and delivered training in their use. In addition, the Society assisted the student with counselling and support services. Lecturers and administrators demonstrated resourcefulness in their efforts to meet the young woman's needs. With society's help, they recorded textbooks and resource materials onto diskettes, designed special testing procedures and translated her Braille materials into written text.

Despite some initial apprehensions, the Fiji programme has had a remarkable impact. University officials plan to ensure that courses and services are accessible to more blind and visually impaired students, and students with other disabilities in the future. For example the university will provide appropriate adaptive technology and make buildings and lecture rooms accessible. It will also formulate policies to ensure the successful placement of blind and visually impaired students in the university system.

## Checklist

### Early detection and early intervention for infants and young children with disabilities

1. Is an early detection and early intervention service provided to families of infants and young children with disabilities? Who are the service providers?  
Examples: ministry of health, ministry of education, NGO sector or any combination of these?
2. Does this service reach all families with children with disabilities?
3. What steps would you need to take to extend early intervention services?
4. What partnerships are necessary to ensure that early intervention services are provided to all young disabled children and their families, particularly in rural areas?

### Pre-school

5. Is there a system of pre-school education in your country?
6. What percentage of children attend pre-school?
7. Who provides pre-school education? Is it GO or NGO run? Is it a coordinated system?
8. Do children with disabilities attend regular pre-schools?
9. What training do pre-school teachers receive? Do any pre-school teachers have any special training to enable them to teach children with disabilities?

### Regular inclusive schools – Primary level

10. Do you have a system of regular inclusive schools which enrol children with disabilities?
11. How many, or what percentage of your regular schools are inclusive?  
What percentage of children with disabilities attend regular inclusive schools?
12. What is the educational situation for children with disabilities in rural areas?
13. What are some of the steps that regular schools need to take to transform themselves into inclusive schools with a particular commitment to providing access and quality education to children with disabilities?

### Special schools

14. Do you have a system of special schools for children with disabilities? Please describe your system.
15. What percentage of CWD attend special schools?
16. Do you have special schools in rural areas?
17. What role can Special Schools play during the transformation of the education system from a segregated to an inclusive education system?

## **Special Education Centres and Special Education Support Units**

18. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different models of providing support to teachers in regular schools?
19. Why is a support system for regular schools necessary?

## **Access to secondary school for children and youth with disabilities**

20. Do students with disabilities have access to secondary level education opportunities?
21. Is any assistance or special accommodation provided to students with disabilities in secondary schools?

## **Access to tertiary education opportunities for persons with disabilities**

22. Do students with disabilities have access to tertiary level education opportunities?
23. Is any assistance or special accommodation provided to these students in tertiary level educational institutions?
24. What measures can be taken to encourage more students with disabilities to undertake study at tertiary level, and to enter professions such as teaching?

# Training teachers: pre-and in-service training and education

## The challenge

The challenge is to promote teacher education that results in a situation where all teachers in regular schools are qualified and competent to effectively teach all children in inclusive educational settings. Teacher competence is regarded as a key factor in developing quality education for all children, but is of critical importance in the achievement of successful educational outcomes for children and youth with disabilities. For inclusive education to be effective for all children it is necessary for change to take place in teacher education programmes. All teachers need to develop a common, broad-based understanding of inclusion. Teachers must be prepared to accept all children and to expect and celebrate diversity in inclusive schools. They need the knowledge, skills and expertise that will enable them to teach children with a wide range of abilities and disabilities within the regular classroom. Teachers need to understand that all children can learn, and to understand the variety of ways in which they do so. Children drop out of school because they experience the classroom as an unfriendly environment in which they are unable to learn, do not experience success or feel valued. The expectations of the teacher will affect the outcomes for the student. Teachers' ideas, attitudes and knowledge about the impact of a disability will affect the learner's academic potential and participation. There is a need for comprehensive pre- and in-service teacher education programmes which include methodology and techniques for teaching children with diverse abilities, the development of a flexible curriculum and teaching and assessment strategies.

## Pre-service training

A focus on pre-service education will provide the greatest effect towards achieving the desired long-term change in school systems and ensuring that all teachers have the commitment and capability to teach all children. A strategy to achieve this should be planned as soon as a decision has been made to introduce inclusive education. This will involve changes to teacher education programmes. Programmes of teacher training will need to be reoriented towards inclusive education and the teaching methodology needed for this to succeed should be introduced into the training programme of all student teachers in the regular school system. This should include strategies for teaching diverse groups of students, and should contain knowledge about disabilities, and other groups of frequently excluded students. A key component of the training will involve the development of positive attitudes towards a philosophy of inclusion and a commitment to the responsibility of upholding the right to education of all children in the regular school, including children with disabilities.

## Specialist training

In the past children with disabilities and other specific learning needs have tended to be excluded from school, or taught in separate schools and settings. Teachers in regular schools and classes have considered that the responsibility for teaching children with different abilities and disabilities lies with the "special" teachers in "special" schools. In this model of education, teacher education programmes have mirrored the parallel school system. Teachers who are being prepared to teach in "special schools" have received separate training programmes. In many cases this has involved additional periods of training after completion of their "basic" teacher training. With the introduction of inclusive education

the separation is no longer appropriate or valid. *All* teachers need the skills, attitudes and knowledge to teach children with a wide range of abilities and learning characteristics. During the transition period from a separate to an inclusive education system and after an inclusive system has been established, there will be a very strong and continuing need for teachers who have additional levels of expertise in teaching children with special needs and with particular disabilities. The role of these teachers will be to advise and provide support to the teachers in the regular schools and classes as they develop their own expertise in teaching more diverse groups of children. They may work as resource teachers within a school, advising or demonstrating particular teaching strategies needed by children with more severe disabilities such as severe intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, and skills such as Braille and sign language to blind and deaf children respectively. They may also work in support centres providing expertise and assistance to a cluster of schools, and to individual children and their families in determining the most appropriate school placement and teaching programme. Specialist teacher education programmes will be necessary to develop personnel with these skills and abilities.

### **In-service training**

Widespread in-service training is essential for preparing teachers for the changes which must take place as inclusive education is introduced into school systems. This training should involve awareness raising and the development of positive attitudes and teaching strategies which are appropriate and effective for children with diverse abilities. There is also a need to generate a cooperative, problem-solving approach, which encourages teachers within a school to work together to find solutions and to share their experiences. Where some teachers in a school have received training, opportunities should be provided for in-school training of other teachers. Team teaching practices can achieve the same result with transmission of skills. In-service training can take many forms and be provided in a range of settings. These can include short-term courses in teacher training institutions, training provided in special education or support centres, or in-school training. It can extend from one school to another, as expertise is gained in one setting and then transferred to another, with supportive training networks established across school districts.

A comprehensive system of teacher education is needed to ensure the widest coverage of training to develop the enthusiasm, commitment and expertise needed to ensure positive learning outcomes for all children and a high level of satisfaction for teachers. The process and goals of inclusive education must be clear. Inclusive education may be better for the emotional and social development of the child, but if it comes at the price of individual assistance when it is needed, that is unacceptable. Inclusive education is preferable to leaving children out of the system but the quality of the teaching will be the key factor that determines whether children with disabilities are given the opportunity to achieve quality learning outcomes as well.

### **Quality and contents of teacher training in inclusive education**

Confusion regarding the concepts of “special education” and “inclusive education” is an issue that needs to be further clarified in many countries. The concept of “inclusive education” needs to be more fully explored so that the misconceptions are not accidentally promoted. Examples of what inclusive education practices might look like may assist those who are supportive but possibly uninformed. Teachers and others should realize, first, that inclusive education, in its simplest form, is simply the belief that all children have the right to an education. Schools need to be “child-friendly” but also “disability aware”. Inclusive Education training should incorporate principles and practices that begin with Early Intervention and proceed through to tertiary level education. Methodologies for assessment, curriculum adaptation, realistic programmes, cooperative teaching and learning techniques are some of the key skills that need to be taught to all teachers. Assessment skills should cover not only the learner but the learning environment and learner activities and progress. The practical component of teacher training should be a major part of their learning experience. This reinforces the concept of learning as an “active” pursuit that involves a wide range of activities and skills. The “teacher rote” model needs to be replaced with a much broader range of methods and skills that teachers can use to include all children within the school setting. This should include opportunities for teachers to “specialize”. However, specialization does not mean segregation and it must be shown how “specialist” teachers can be utilized to assist children with disabilities as well as their classmates, their teachers and even the wider community.

Another issue is the need for more practical, not theoretical, training. While most countries have some kind of formal teacher training programmes, both pre-service and in-service, these do not always provide sufficient practical training to mainstream teachers about inclusive education. While the need is great to have many more teachers with multiple year degrees, policies should address continual training needs and include possibilities for practical assistance, in the classroom when feasible, which would allow teachers to address the specific needs immediately.

## A comprehensive teacher training plan

As one recent UNESCO report stated: “If inclusive education is to be sustainable, training must be planned, systematic and long term.”<sup>59</sup> A teacher-training plan must be realistic and based on the country’s current profile, including how many teachers are needed, how many have already received training and how many more should be trained. One should take account of the distribution of teacher-training resources, the options for training in different geographic areas of the country and current pre-service and in-service programmes available. One excellent rule is to reach all schools in the country as quickly as possible so that no school has been left out of training on inclusive education. More in-depth training should be given to develop expertise, again on a broad geographic scale. The implementation of inclusive education programmes will only be as successful as training efforts. Attempts should be made to share knowledge on inclusive education to gain greater advantage from training and experience already undertaken by some teachers and administrators.

Funding for teacher training is not always a part of the annual education funding. Funding and support for on-going, in-service training efforts outside of the formal teacher-training system must be considered. Plans for training of teachers should address the needs of all students. Some countries provide teacher-training courses on an ad hoc basis only, and are dependent upon outside funding for this essential need.

## Barriers in teacher training and professional development

- ▶ Teachers from mainstream classes may not have any introduction at all to inclusive education. They may believe they do not have the “special skills” needed to teach children of all levels of ability.
- ▶ Pre-service teacher education programmes may not provide training which prepares teachers to teach in inclusive schools and classrooms, with the appropriate attitudes, knowledge and skills to teach effectively a wide range of children with diverse abilities.
- ▶ Teachers in mainstream schools may not receive sufficient practical, in-classroom training in inclusive schools or classes.
- ▶ Expertise which may exist within schools is frequently not shared - barriers in terms of distance, time, administrative procedures and funding may prevent greater interaction.
- ▶ Expert support teachers with specialized training may have limited time to spend with teachers in mainstream schools, and may not respond to requests for specific assistance within an acceptable time-frame. They may also have limited experience in inclusive education.
- ▶ Resource and support teachers may work with individual children on a withdrawal basis, thus denying the opportunity for the class teacher to benefit by involvement in the decision-making and teaching strategies used with particular children.
- ▶ Inclusive education is still sometimes perceived to be a ‘special’ field that requires many years of studies and is only accessible to ‘experts’. Teachers may not realize there are also simpler, practical steps they can take to learn to work with students with special needs.

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59 UNESCO, Open File on Inclusive Education, UNESCO, 2003, p. 6.

- ▶ School administrators and the school community may undervalue students with disabilities and the experts in special education who work with these students. They may put inclusive education low on their list of priorities and not respect the assignment of special teachers to these classrooms or work to improve the level of expertise of teachers within their school.
- ▶ Teachers may not be able to be dedicated to teaching full-time in countries where salaries are low. Teachers have many demands on their time and may not be compensated for their time in training or for other additional efforts.
- ▶ Teacher training colleges may lack expertise in inclusive education and may not teach the attitudes, skills and competencies necessary for teachers who will work in inclusive settings.
- ▶ There may be no programme of short courses or in-school training provided to schools when they begin to implement inclusive education.

#### ***Thailand: Changes needed in content of teacher-training programmes***

In Thailand, Khun Prayat, a school director in Khon Kaen, reported that universities offering courses in special education do not always follow the recommendations for necessary curriculum changes to provide teachers with the skills required in an integrated, let alone inclusive, education system. University lecturers do not have a good concept of inclusive education and continue to teach “categorical” methods of teaching. The teaching strategies that are taught do not always keep up with successful methodologies that will enhance responsiveness to diverse learning needs; such as active small group teaching, setting objectives at different levels for individual students, peer support and curriculum adaptation to individual needs. Resource teachers are trained on a “withdrawal model” in which they take a child from a class to give them more assistance; they do not learn to work with classroom teachers in the regular classroom. Therefore, they do not transfer their skills to regular class teachers and miss the opportunity to upgrade their capacity. Teacher-training courses for all teachers in regular schools should provide teachers with the skills and techniques to teach children with diverse characteristics and ability levels in their integrated classes. This would move the system towards an inclusive education model. Khun Prayat also expressed the need for participatory training to change attitudes, by allowing school personnel at all levels to experience what it is like to have a disability. Passive training and lecturing does not achieve this emotional engagement with the issue.

Professor Wiriya, the first Thai blind professor in Thailand, at Thammasat University, Faculty of Law, said that one of the most effective means of achieving attitude change in the community is to demonstrate the capabilities of children and youth with disabilities. This can be achieved by introducing work training into special and regular schools, or in the community, to demonstrate their capacity. Products made or grown can be sold in the community, demonstrating the hard work and worth of these young people.

## Teacher education in Case Study countries

### Brunei

The Ministry of Education of Brunei has been fortunate in developing their teacher-training programme in partnership with the state University of Brunei Darussalam. While the inclusive education programme in Brunei is only about a decade old, the teacher-training programme has reached teachers in close to 100 per cent of schools. The first courses offered were “upgrading” or in-service three-semester certificate courses, begun in 1995. Teachers chosen by the Ministry of Education are sent to upgrading courses; most continue teaching during their studies. These teachers then become Special Educational Needs Assistance (SENA) teachers upon completion of their studies and work within the formal education system as resource teachers in their own classrooms, withdrawing students from their other classes to work in their classes. Teachers from all districts and almost all schools in the country have been trained in these courses. The Special Education Unit of the Ministry of Education holds monthly meetings for all Special Education Needs Assistance teachers across the country. Periodic training for principals and head-teachers is also held. In addition, a course on inclusive education is now required for *all* new teacher certification studies. The course contains an overview of the Brunei system, consultation models, screening and diagnosis, characteristics of different types of learners and adaptation methods, data collection, Individualised Education Plan development and other topics. Other courses teach about specific learning difficulties, adaptive teaching methods, identification, screening and independent learning. Degrees up to the bachelor and master levels are available.

### Thailand

Teacher training has been an important area of focus for the Ministry of Education and significant developments in the training of teachers to teach children with disabilities in special and integrated educational settings have taken place during the 1990s, following the enactment of the 1991 Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act. Teacher training is the responsibility of the Commission for Higher Education within the ministry. There are more than 600 universities, approximately 80 of them run by the government.

Basic qualifications for Thai teachers are:

- ▶ Primary school teacher in an integrated setting must complete a four year university degree, with entry level set at school completion or year 12;
- ▶ Secondary school teachers in integrated settings must complete a basic three year degree plus one year of additional training;

No untrained teachers are employed in Thai schools. All teacher trainees receive one course on teaching children with special needs within their basic teacher training course.

Regular teachers who wish to become special education trained teachers can undertake:

- ▶ Short training courses of one, three and 15 days, which are offered at 19 universities;
- ▶ One year Special Education Teaching Certificates are offered at seven universities;
- ▶ Two year Master’s degrees, offered at four universities. Students can specialize in Learning Disabilities and Emotional Problems.

Teachers for special education centres, village child health centres and hospital teaching service undertake one year additional training for specialist teachers.

### *Short courses*

- ▶ 390 regular school teacher trainees completed in-service teacher training to teach children with disabilities in regular schools.
- ▶ Week-end, vacation and summers school courses cater for working teachers.
- ▶ Short courses in computer skills for Braille technology and production.
- ▶ Short training courses are offered at special education centres for regular teachers in their districts and communities.

In 1994 a new curriculum was introduced into the four year special education training degree. It included curriculum for deaf, blind and mentally retarded students but did not include autism. There was a common curriculum in first year studies, cross-disability studies in second year and the opportunity to specialize in the third year. Educational reform of 2003 led to teacher training of teachers for children with disabilities being moved to a higher priority. Policy on personnel training and learning reform to focus on child-centred learning strategies were developed. This was the result of a finding that teachers with a BA degree in education were unable to cope with the problems of teaching children with disabilities and special needs.

Six universities have a bachelor's degree teacher training programme in Special Education. Five universities offer master degree courses and one offers a doctoral programme, in special education and related fields such as early intervention. It is anticipated that the number of universities offering these courses will grow.

Scholarships are provided to 30 students for study at masters degree level and 30 at graduate level. Scholarships are also provided to University faculty to study overseas in the field of Special Education. The areas of study for university staff are:

- ▶ Learning disabilities;
- ▶ Autism;
- ▶ Down Syndrome;
- ▶ Blind and visual impairment.

Courses offered in Thai universities include:

- ▶ Early Intervention;
- ▶ Early childhood Education;
- ▶ Special Education Administration;
- ▶ General Special Education;
- ▶ Community level Special Education;
- ▶ Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR) and counselling.

In 1993, Rajasuda College was established under Mahidol University as an institution of higher learning for persons with disabilities. It is an integrated university and the College offers a master's programme in rehabilitation counselling, open to all students as well as courses specifically offered to deaf, blind and physically disabled students. Thirty scholarships are provided for sign-language interpreters at Rajasuda College.

A member of the Advisory Committee on Disability to the prime minister commented that, although there were many programmes offered at the university, with compulsory courses included in training courses for regular teachers, and short-term and in-service courses available, teacher training is not well coordinated or organized. A second member saw the recent improvements and expansion of training opportunities as positive and would help lay a progressive foundation for a better quality of education. Both viewpoints have validity.

## Samoa

In Samoa, the Faculty of Education of the National University of Samoa began many new courses in the year 2000 to meet the needs of the government's inclusive education policies. One change was the addition of a special needs specialty to the three-year Diploma for Primary Education. In addition, elective special needs education courses were introduced and include: Introduction and Understanding Special Needs Education (SNE); the Individual Education Programme; Assessment Techniques and Teaching Strategies; Special Education: Barriers to Learning and People with Special Needs in Samoa. In 2005, a course on inclusive education became mandatory for *all* teacher trainees. Teacher trainees have a practicum during their studies at special education schools and centres run by NGOs. In 2000, the first six teachers who had finished their studies in special education were hired for the six new special education units, established in six primary schools. However, due to a teacher shortage, these teachers have since been reassigned to mainstream classes. University staff are hopeful that increased enrolments in teacher-training courses will lead to a resolution of the shortage of teachers. All in-service training is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, at times held with the participation of the university faculty. All seemed to agree that the teacher shortage is a major contribution to the difficulties concerning the special needs education teachers and units. Other issues related to teacher training in Samoa include pay levels, placement and expectations, which, according to several people included in the study, needed to be urgently addressed if problems are to be resolved. The teacher training at the National University of Samoa was seen as "on track" with current developments in the area of education for children with disabilities. However, once teachers graduate, their placement as well as supervision is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and these teachers may not be appropriately assigned. The roles, responsibilities, and interrelations of the special needs education coordinator, the special education needs teachers and the special education needs units must be analyzed and clarified in order to ensure that they are meeting the needs of children with disabilities. Approximately 30 teachers have graduated with a special needs education qualification but have not had their expertise utilised within the school system.

## Viet Nam

Teacher training in Viet Nam has also received a considerable amount of attention over the past decade and indeed, has been a crucial element in establishing an inclusive education system in Viet Nam. There are short courses as well as one, two and three year courses. An estimated 30,000 pre-school and primary school teachers, as well as teacher trainers, from 81 colleges have had short courses on Inclusive Education. In-service or upgrading courses have been essential for implementing inclusive education. These courses, designed for teachers with some teaching experience, result in either a teaching certificate for teachers with a 12-year high school diploma plus two years of teaching experience, or a university-level degree for teachers who already have their teaching certificate. Teacher training has two goals: practical classroom adaptation, including learning about and modifying individualised education and lesson plans, and secondly the acquisition of disability-specific knowledge. Key resource persons in a given district will train other teachers after receiving training. In-service training is a two-year, full-time course with three areas of specialization based on impairments related to hearing, vision or learning and intellectual skills. Courses, "sponsored" by international NGOs, have not yet become fully autonomous. Courses are available in five teacher-training colleges and within the new Special Education faculties in Hanoi, Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City. Teaching for early intervention instructors is available in Ho Chi Minh City, primarily for teacher trainers. Teaching in children's rights has been conducted for several years, supported by Save the Children (Sweden). This element has received positive feedback from all trainees who appreciated the new perspective of a child-friendly classroom and has now become part of the mainstream primary teacher-training curriculum. The World Bank and Ministry of Education and Training teacher-training project, is part of the Project for Education of Disadvantaged Children and also includes these skills. The Centre for Education of Children with Exceptionalities, the focal point for special education for all categories of disability, includes gifted and talented children. It has a mandate to develop curricula, perform strategic planning, and conduct research and training on special education and counselling and supervision of the special education system.

## Recommendations for action by stakeholders

### Ministries of Education

Ministries of education, working in coordination with ministries of higher education, must develop comprehensive plans for teacher education and training. This must include pre-service training for all teacher trainees entering the school system. All teacher trainees must receive appropriate training to enable them to teach children with a wide range of abilities within the regular classroom.

A comprehensive system of in-service training must be developed and implemented to meet the needs of teachers already in the system. All practicing teachers will require training to enable them to adapt their teaching for inclusive schools, with a wide range of diversity in the classrooms.

In-service training should take many forms. Long courses should be provided, which can be studied in various modes, with distance learning, week-end and evening courses and very short courses of one to three days.

In-school training should be encouraged, with experienced teachers providing practical training to their less experienced peers. This model can be extended to cross-school training, where teachers from a well developed inclusive school can assist in the preparation of teachers in a school just embarking on the changes necessary to enable them to include children with diverse abilities. Training should be very practical focusing on specific skills which will help teachers adopt appropriate teaching strategies for the children with disabilities that they are including in their classrooms.

In-service training should include a variety of training models, with a focus on practical experience and creative problem-solving approaches. Team-teaching is very effective. Teams may include a parent, teacher and administrator who work together to create an inclusive education programme for one or more children. This intense learning experience builds confidence and skills in a non-threatening environment.

Master teachers and teacher mentors can be utilized in schools to strengthen in-service training and provide on-going support to inexperienced teachers as they gain new skills and confidence. It is important to build a cooperative atmosphere and environment within the school, with all teachers working towards the same aim and communicating openly, to facilitate the movement towards a fully inclusive system.

Ministries of education should ensure that *all* general pre-service and in-service training courses for teachers at *all* levels (i.e. early intervention and pre-school through tertiary levels) include components that develop teachers' knowledge of specific disability issues, as well as general skills related to the practical adaptations for inclusive education.

Ministries of education must ensure that training includes extensive *practical* support and experience with instruction in realistic teaching situations, preferably within classroom settings to help teachers to bridge the theory-practice gap. Guidelines regarding teacher trainees' practicum experiences should assure agreements on assignments, supervision, assessment and feedback. Ministries of education should ensure that good practice classrooms are available for practical teaching experience for student teachers with supervision and reinforcement by experienced practicing teachers.

Ministries of education must ensure that teachers have the support to succeed in efforts to follow policies on inclusion for children with disabilities. Ministries of education and local educational authorities should ensure that each district has a support network—a team of key specialized teachers with expertise on the main types of disabilities and teaching strategies applicable to teach them in inclusive classrooms, available to provide support for classroom teachers when needed. This team will receive more in-depth training and will have some time allocated to respond to requests for support from classroom teachers.

Ministries of education should institute a mentoring programme for teachers from one school to visit other schools in their own or other districts and provinces to see good practice to exchange ideas and to learn from them. This programme could be extended to local, regional and international levels. Sharing good practices should be institutionalized both within and between schools. Itinerant training with non-formal aspects, including village volunteers, should be encouraged.

Ministries of education should create incentive programmes to encourage continuous professional education and training, through links to promotions, salary increases and/or awards or other forms of recognition. Ministries of education should require a minimum number of training hours per year. Training departments of ministries of education should ensure that all teachers have opportunities to participate in in-service training. Information about training opportunities should be shared with all schools and teachers.

Ministries of education should encourage persons with disabilities to become teachers. Any obstacles to the achievement of this goal should be removed.

Ministries of education should have a teacher-training plan for human resources development for inclusive education. This plan should take account of the national action plan for inclusive education and targets in the National Education Development Strategy and aid in monitoring training activities in inclusive education nation-wide, assuring equal and broad coverage geographically and in terms of specific disability training. This plan could greatly benefit from data on the types and numbers of children with disabilities both in and out of school. National coordinating councils should be responsible for advocating for and monitoring of availability of teachers in sufficient quantity to meet needs of all students. Regional and local governmental bodies may also have a role to play in developing and assuring the implementation of such a plan. Ministries of education should use successes in inclusion (statistics on numbers of students with disabilities included etc.) as indicators of quality of the school system.

Budgets should be assured to finance the training plan. The ministry of education should continue providing scholarships for the teachers, both general and special education teachers, on an incremental basis until human resource requirements are adequately met. The ministry of education should consider providing training with some teaching replacements and day or full-time release. The ministry of education should support training activities through scholarships and other forms of financial aid.

Ministries of education, in partnership with any other ministries and any national coordinating bodies, must ensure that any personnel delivering education services in all settings have adequate training to meet the needs of children with disabilities. Trained personnel must be appropriately placed and not reallocated to other positions where their special skills will not be used. Ministries of education should recognize and seek to utilize the expertise currently residing in staff of special schools and other providers of education services to children with disabilities. These staff can be developed to assume teacher training roles and advisory roles to teacher training departments and to in-service training in schools.

Ministries should ensure that job descriptions for the school administration (*i.e.* head teachers or principals) as well as those of *all* teachers mention their responsibilities for inclusive education and their obligation to accept all students who wish to attend school. Regular opportunities for professional development *for all* education employees in the area of inclusive education concepts and practices should be provided. Ministries of education should plan and budget for regular training for education inspectors on inclusive education. Ministries of education should include a module on inclusive education in the in-service training programme for education managers. The ministry of education should provide in-service training for education managers (*i.e.* principals or education officers).

Ministries should prepare interim solutions if highly qualified specialists are not available for all schools. Trainers at the central level could prepare short courses for in-school teachers and assistants while teachers are also being prepared in longer in-service and pre-service courses.

Teacher training must include a strong component on the most current information internationally including on technology and assistive devices for the success of education. Government and ministries should support teachers to have international and national study visits to share experiences and to see best practices in teaching children with disabilities.

## Universities and teacher training colleges

University and teacher training colleges should teach about the entire school environment when preparing training courses for teachers and others. Inclusive education demands that other students, other teachers and school principals and even parents of all children be made aware of the importance of education for children with disabilities.

Every teacher-training practicum in formal teacher-training courses should include a special education component for all teachers. Students majoring in special education should have a more in-depth practicum. Specific courses addressing the needs of children with disabilities in more detail should be developed and delivered to all teachers, on a phased basis, through a variety of channels (e.g. self-study, school/staff development, school vacations).

Applicants for specialist training courses should be thoroughly assessed for their motivation and commitment to inclusive education. Faculties of education should include training for secondary teachers of students with disabilities.

Teacher training departments should ensure that there is a practical component to pre-service teacher training through an appropriate teaching practice placement. This component should be mandatory with a practical assessment that students must pass before certification. Teacher training for all regular teachers, (pre-service and in-service) needs to have a very practical skills component to ensure teachers have the skills and competencies to teach children with diverse abilities in their classes.

Teacher training facilities and institutions should use competency-based training. The contents of the training should be based on the actual skills the teachers will need and they must be required to demonstrate their practical skills and knowledge.

Teacher training programmes should use examples of good practice on video, CD and other technologies, so that students may get a clear understanding of inclusive education, which is still a relatively new concept in many countries. People with disabilities and family members could be used as resources, guest speakers or contributors to discussions or publications for inclusive education courses. Teacher training colleges and education support centres should actively collect reference materials from all sources. International documents should be translated and adapted to the local context. Teachers and schools should support faculties of education in developing practical training courses. These resources could be used in training events as well as in public education campaigns and awareness campaigns.

Teacher training institutions should collect regular feedback on the quality and outcome of the training from institutions that employ teachers. A performance appraisal system or performance measurement programme must be developed for all teachers as a way of providing regular feedback and learning opportunities for the teacher. This process should include the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the teacher, the principal, the family and other relevant partners.

Teachers' associations should be advocates on behalf of teachers for adequate training, greater resources in the classroom, smaller class size and for volunteers.

## Teachers and schools

Schools should ensure that teachers are fully qualified if posted to teach children with different disabilities. Schools should also assure that all teachers have received some training on disability-specific topics and on teaching in an inclusive setting.

Teachers or schools could organize informal sharing of best practices among teachers and others. A mentoring system could also be put into place through specific pairing of more experienced teachers and newer trainees or graduates. Support and advice can be given on teaching methods, curriculum, materials, or other topics. In-service training can take place in schools and in the classroom and should include teaching support and on-the-job coaching for new or less experienced teachers.

Special education teachers, mainstream teachers and guidance counsellors should be responsible for family counselling and support. Encouragement and positive feedback for families should replace discipline and coercion.

Teachers and assistants should be competent to use grouping strategies that enable stronger students to work on their own while small group for individual attention from teachers can be given as needed. Teachers should choose student helpers to assist other students and reward or motivate their participation.

Schools should have access to teacher-training college resource libraries, available for students on special education topics. In-service teachers should also be welcome to visit this library.

## Lessons learned: Moving forward towards inclusive education for children with disabilities

In a well-developed inclusive education system, all teachers will have training and awareness about disability issues and will be both willing and able to accept students with disabilities into their classes. Schools and school administrators will be aware of and welcoming to students with disabilities. Support networks within and between schools will allow expertise to be developed and shared. Practical training will encourage success of special and mainstream teachers and teachers would be able to partner with one another and train one another during their careers. In order to achieve this ideal, a comprehensive and continuing programme of teacher training is imperative. Without training and education for teachers and experts, the situation will remain unchanged. A national teacher-training plan for the country is essential, with records maintained of teachers who have been trained and their career paths. A training plan should include the following elements: extent of geographic coverage, numbers of teachers already trained and those needing training in the future, assignment of responsibility within a geographic area for tracking and publicizing training opportunities.

A comprehensive teacher education programme should include pre-service education which prepares all teachers for inclusive education, with attitudes and skills which enable them to teach all children, irrespective of their characteristics, abilities and disabilities. Extensive programmes of in-service training are needed to achieve a rapid increase in teacher attitudes and competencies that are the pre-requisites for successful inclusive education. Mechanisms should be established for the sharing of expertise both within schools, and beyond. An inclusive education system requires a network of support provided by teachers with additional levels of expertise.

A national teacher education programme should be developed with close collaboration between the ministry of education and the ministry responsible for tertiary or higher education. It is essential that teacher training courses are designed to meet the needs of the changing education system. This will often require a long preparation phase with close consultation to ensure the courses contain the approaches and content necessary to prepare regular teachers for their role in inclusive schools. All teachers should expect to teach children with a range of abilities and diverse characteristics. They should be prepared to play an active role in developing close relationships between the school and the community, in seeking to find children who may not be attending school, and to develop positive attitudes in the community towards inclusive education.

### ***The Municipal Primary School in Roi-Et province, Thailand***

The Municipal Primary School in Roi-Et Province in Thailand started integrating children with disabilities in 2002 and has steadily increased the numbers enrolled each year. The school had previously accepted occasional blind students from the Khon Kaen School for the Blind. The school for the blind had prepared the students for integration and on-going support was provided by the local CBR Centre. The success of this approach had altered the attitude of the principal, who had previously firmly believed that children with disabilities should be educated separately. He confessed to being nervous as he embarked on the path toward integration and inclusion. Some of the steps he took included:

- Creating awareness for his teachers with an in-school simulation experience so that they would understand what it is like to have a disability;
- Staff and students conducted a survey in the local area to find out-of-school students;
- Encouraged parents of children with disabilities to approach the school;
- Undertook a systematic approach to increasing the competency of his teaching staff. He sent seven teachers to Bangkok for 200 hours of training and organized University input to his in-school training programme. He sent teachers to gain experience at the School for the Blind and on their return these teachers then trained other teachers in the school. All teachers were trained to develop IEPs, as required in the Thai education system

The head teacher worked in close collaboration and consultation with his staff, discussed how to provide the necessary services, acknowledged that it would be more work, and planned to send teachers for certificate level training. It was his intention to increase the capacity of his school and teachers, to find disabled children and enrol them when they are young and to provide increased services to and closer links with the community. He stated that they would like a full time resource teacher, specialist input from the special education centre and provision of assistive devices. Teachers in the school were enthusiastic and felt a great sense of satisfaction with what they were doing and had a well-developed sense of working as a team. Non-disabled children acted as “buddies” to the children with disabilities and reported that they were proud of the achievements of their disabled friends and liked their role as “helpers”. The children with disabilities said they preferred the regular school because they have more friends and a better social life outside school.

## Checklist

### Planning for the future — ministries, national coordinating bodies and training institutions

1. Is there a plan on how many teachers need to be trained in the future to meet the demand for teachers throughout the country? Does the ministry have statistics on how many children with disabilities will be in schools in the next year? Does the ministry have a contact person in charge of keeping track of the numbers of teachers trained? Are there ways of determining the career paths of these teachers? Is funding provided on an annual basis for training? Do all teachers have the opportunity to study?

### Teacher-training systems — ministries of education and other training providers

2. Do teacher-training plans include many different forms of training, including pre-service and in-service training, which may include peer training, practical training, periodic “check-ups”?) Do teacher-training programmes have a variety of different lengths of study available to all? Are possibilities for training courses widely publicized and evenly shared?

### Teacher training programmes in universities and colleges

3. Does the national teacher education plan prepare teachers for different levels of the inclusive education system? This would include:
  - ▶ Regular classroom teachers capable of teaching children with a diverse range of abilities
  - ▶ Support teachers with additional levels of experience and training to be placed in the regular school to assist classroom teachers
  - ▶ Highly trained specialist teachers who will work in special support centres or units, assisting in assessing and placing children with disabilities, supporting regular classroom teachers, and providing in-service and on-going training to them both in the centres and in the school. They would also provide support to families.
4. Do teacher training colleges follow agreed principles in developing their courses, laid down by the coordinating body for teacher education, to ensure that training meets the needs of a school system committed to educating all children in regular schools, including those with diverse abilities?
5. Do all pre-service teacher trainees receive a training course which prepares them to teach children with a wide range of abilities in their regular classes, including the development of positive attitudes and commitment to inclusive school principles. Is there open discussion and verification of levels of understanding about inclusive education for all new trainees? Is there a strong practical training component linked to theory?

### In-service programmes and recognition for current teachers

6. Is there an extensive programme of in-service training for teachers in schools where changes are taking place towards including children with disabilities? Are teachers awarded or recognized for additional training courses that they undertake?

### Support Networks — teachers, schools and regional institutions

7. Are there special education centres or units established to support teachers in the school and to upgrade their skills and expertise? Are there support networks within schools between more and less experienced teachers? Are there networks between special schools and institutions and mainstream schools? Do teachers have experts upon whom they can call with questions and to assist with problem situations? Can teachers request in-class assistance on a regular basis or periodically for assistance?

## Chapter 6

# Definitions, data, monitoring and evaluation

To develop quality educational programmes at the government and school level, information is essential for effective planning, monitoring and assessment. Many countries have some data, but this may be collected only through infrequent surveys, or may lack depth in relation to the kinds of teaching habits, resources available or even details about students themselves. General population censuses rarely collect detailed information on disability; this may be true even in wealthier countries. Studies done in the same country over time may use different methodologies and can show widely varying results.

Educational policies are frequently developed without a good understanding of the needs of children with disabilities, their parents and families, and without understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the current school system. This situation diminishes the possibility of meeting these needs appropriately. In addition, policies and plans are made without knowing which kinds of training are most appropriate for quality teaching, or even without knowing how many teachers and experts are available. If policy makers, schools and other service providers had access to how many children with disabilities there were in the country, how many went to school and how many did not, and, of course, why this is the case, much better policies could be written and implemented in the future.

Data is essential as a means of measuring outcomes of education, such as the number of children with disabilities who enter the school system? How many graduate? And with what levels of achievement in critical skill areas such as literacy and numeracy?

## A. Defining persons with disabilities

### The challenge

Defining disability has been a difficult and contentious process, with definitions changing over time, and little consensus reached between international organizations or countries. It is hoped that this situation will change when the drafting of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is completed. The current draft-in-progress emphasizes that disability is the result of “interaction between persons with impairments, conditions, health needs or related situations, and environmental, social and attitudinal barriers” and may include impairments that are physical, sensory, psychosocial, neurological, medical or intellectual.<sup>60</sup> Several attempts over past decades have been made to develop internationally valid classifications and have met with varied success. The most recent classification system developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) is the ICF, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, adopted in May 2001.<sup>61</sup> This system has attempted to incorporate the viewpoints of various disability organizations and attempts to address the social and environmental components of disability. It defines health conditions in terms of functioning of the body (and mind) and identifies the impact on the capacity to perform activities and the effect on levels of participation in a wide range of areas of daily living.

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60 UN Convention. Draft text. IDC Working Group personal communication.

61 <http://www.who.int/entity/classifications/icf/en>

However, at the country level this definition may be known by “experts” alone and is very infrequently translated into questions for use in actual data collection. The World Health Organization was compiling a classification system for children which may have more applicability to education systems but the international disability organizations are not unanimously supportive of the WHO classification systems. Many countries use definitions that relate to the kind of disability experienced, such as the list of impairments listed above. A recent paper on education for students with disabilities and the role of data, points out the complexities of definitions in developing countries.<sup>62</sup>

Defining disability is complex and controversial. Though arising from physical, sensory, mental or other impairments, disability has social as well as health implications. A full understanding of disability recognizes that it has a powerful human rights dimension and is often associated with social exclusion, and increased exposure and vulnerability to poverty. Disability is the outcome of complex interactions between the functional limitations arising from a person’s physical, intellectual, or mental condition and the social and physical environment. It has multiple dimensions and is far more than an individual health or medical problem. The working definition adopted by the Department for International Development (DFID) of the government of the United Kingdom reflects this view, when it states that disability is the “long term impairment leading to social and economic disadvantages, denial of rights, and limited opportunities to play an equal part in the life of the community”.<sup>63</sup>

### Overly general or inconsistent definitions

A more recent trend in the field of education, as mentioned in this paper, is the inclusion of children with disabilities as a part of larger groups of “disadvantaged children”, “children in especially difficult circumstances” or “children with special educational needs”. This approach could risk the confusion of very different phenomena.<sup>64</sup> In addition, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) presents three cross-national categories derived from educational statistics: disabilities, learning and behaviour difficulties and social disadvantages. These three categories are related to different groups which need additional resources for their education. However, they are primarily relevant in the industrialized nations that collect greater quantities of data than do developing countries.

Definitions used and the level of detail must depend on the purpose of the data collection. Service provision requires very detailed information which cannot be obtained by standard survey information alone. However, information needed for prevalence rates or to track attendance and retention rates of children with disabilities does not have to be as detailed. Survey and administrative data needs could differ substantially.

It is important to understand that it is harder to measure disability in children than it is in adults. One approach that has proved effective and is being tried in some countries of the region is to use a two stage approach that combines a series of screening questions, followed up by a clinical assessment.<sup>65</sup> Many countries do not have the resources to adopt this approach.

### Barriers for children with disabilities

- ▶ There is no accepted definition of disability, commonly used across countries within and beyond the Asian and Pacific region.
- ▶ Definitions of persons with disabilities may only cover children with moderate to severe disabilities that are easy to identify, such as those with physical or sensory disabilities.
- ▶ Children with learning difficulties or learning disabilities are frequently not included in systems of identification of children with disabilities in developing countries.

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62 Robson, Colin and Peter Evans, “Educating Children with Disabilities in Developing Countries: The Role of Datasets”. World Bank, 2003.

63 DFID. [http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/disabilitypoverty\\_development.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/disabilitypoverty_development.pdf)

64 Ibid., p. 4.

65 OECD. Personal communication from Dan Mont, World Bank.

- ▶ Children with hidden or mental disabilities are frequently not identified or catered for in the education system in developing countries.
- ▶ Definitions and categories developed by international agencies such as the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development have been developed within the context of developed countries, and will not necessarily translate into useful approaches within developing countries.
- ▶ Even when experts within a country are “familiar” with the definitions of disability available from the WHO, this type of classification is not widely used in developing questions for collecting data, although some steps are being taken to formulate census and survey questions on the basis of the International Classification of Functioning and Health classification system.
- ▶ If definitions are not consistent across ministries and types of surveys, valuable efforts to collect data will be less effective. No way of comparing data from one part of the country to another or over time will be available and less information will be gleaned from the survey results.
- ▶ Inconsistent definitions in census and survey instruments prevent cross-country comparisons.
- ▶ Definitions that focus on the types of impairments, physical, sensory, mental or psychosocial, may not include enough information to accurately predict the kinds of needs the person may have, preventing the best possible planning for meetings needs. Equally, overly broad definitions may also leave out some important information that would help to better prepare teachers for teaching.

## Defining children with disabilities in case study countries

### Brunei

Definitions used in Brunei include actual medical diagnoses in files related to individual students. These are listed in the table below. Brunei is attempting to develop a more formal system of categories and data collection, but this is not yet complete. One expert involved in the developing of statistics, based within the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, is familiar with the WHO classification system, but it is not yet being used in relation to their official definitions.

### Samoa

In Samoa, definitions and classifications have varied slightly in recent studies and the WHO classification system, ICF, does not appear to have been used. Population statistics do not include a definition of disability or statistics of this kind. There is still evidence of inappropriate terms and definition of people disability and in particular the confusion between intellectual disability and mental illness; such as the case of offences against “women with disabilities” and defences on the grounds of “insanity”. However two disability surveys have been carried out in Samoa. The first identified all children with disabilities in 2002, and this was followed by a survey of all adults with disabilities.

### Thailand

In Thailand, the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act of 1991 determined the official definition of disability and the classification system was fully described in Ministerial Regulation No. 2 (1994). A “person with disabilities” means an individual who is limited by function and /or ability to conduct activities in daily living and to participate in society through methods used by persons without disabilities due to visual, hearing, mobility, communication, psychological, emotional, behavioural, intellectual or learning impairment, and has special needs in order to live and participate in society as to others. Specific criteria for the five categories as listed in the table below have also been outlined.

### Viet Nam

In Viet Nam, there are a number of definitions of disability in formal documents, although categories of disability tend to follow those outlined in the table below (Table 2). The WHO (2001) definition was

referred to in a recent speech by Mr. Dang Tu An, the deputy head of the section on educating children with disabilities of the Ministry of Education. The following definition is excerpted from Article One of the Ordinance on Disabled Persons from 1998:

*Disabled persons by definition of this Ordinance, irrespective of the causes of the disability, are defective of one or many parts of the body or functions which are shown in different forms of disability, and which reduce the capability of activity and cause many difficulties to work, life and studies.*

The 2001 WHO classification system, ICF, has not yet been used for the development of questions for census-taking or other data collection activities, but the next version of the Vietnamese Household Survey will have a series of questions based on the ICF. There is a perception by some that the WHO definitions are “medically inclined”, complicated for people without specific medical training. A study undertaken by UNICEF in 1997 stated that “definitions and criteria were not consistent at the grassroots level”, which, of course, leads to discrepancies in different studies. A visit to the Ministry of Education’s statistics department in Viet Nam showed that, while data is collected from schools by the district-level education departments, who require administrators and teachers to fill out forms; there is no training on identifying types of disabilities or definitions used in classifications. School staff simply provided total numbers of students with disabilities in each class.

**Table 2.** Types of disability categories mentioned in case study country reports

Brunei	Samoa	Thailand	Viet Nam
Visual impairment	Visually impairment (or blind)	Impairment of seeing (Blind and Visually impaired)	Visual impairment (same)
Hearing impairment	Hearing impairment (or deaf)	Impairment of hearing (Deaf and Hearing Impaired)	Hearing impairment (same)
Physical disability including neurological impairment	Physical impairment	Impairment of physical or locomotion (Physical and Health Impairments)	Motor disabled children (Mobility impairments)
Mild, moderate and severe mental retardation	Intellectual impairment	Impairment of mentality or behaviour	Mental retardation (Intellectual Disability)
Students with learning disabilities	Learning Impairment (Specific learning disability)	Impairment of intellectual or learning ability (Intellectual Disability) (Learning Disabilities)	
Speech and language impairment	(Speech/language impaired) (Mental Illness)	(Speech and language impairments and Speech and communication)	Language and communication (Language disorder)
Multiple disabilities	Multi-impairment	(Multiple disabilities)	Multiple disabilities
Emotional or behavioural disorders	(Emotional or behavioural disorders) (Autistic) (Epileptic) Other	(Autism)	Strange behaviour (Mental disorder) Autism or auto-suggestion (Loss of sensation-leprosy) (Epilepsy) (Other)
Gifted and talented students			

Note: Brunei categories are from the Special Education Unit’s classification of students. Samoa categories are from the Child Survey of 2002, conducted by New Zealand’s aid agency (NZ AID) and the Department of Statistics. Additional categories (in italics) were included in the recent adult survey. Thailand categories are those from the registration procedure defined in detail by the Ministerial Regulation No. 2 (1994) with additional categories (in italics) from the Ministry of Education statistics. The categories in Viet Nam are from official speech of Dang Tu An, Deputy Head of Management Section of Educating Children with Disabilities; additional categories (in italics) are from the UNICEF study from 2003.

## Recommendations for action by stakeholders

### Government

Ministries of education should develop standards for definitions useful for teachers and easily understood and applied by their statistical departments. These definitions should take account levels of difficulty with learning and types of special assistance required by the learner. In addition, experts in educational statistics and in medical and health statistics should agree on mutually useful definitions and plan for the training of persons to assess and validate the types of disabilities experienced by persons in the country.

Definitions of disability should be formulated and used in the birth registration process and any additional simple registration procedure at the local district or village level. There should be strong coordination procedures to ensure sharing of information between ministries of education and health and other service providers.

The purposes and uses of the data should be considered when creating definitions to be used for educational statistics.

Over time, governments should adopt the internationally valid definitions of disability in order to create a greater understanding of the nature of disability across countries. This would help to draw attention and funding to the issue of disability and also to allow periodic checks on which countries are successfully improving their educational systems.

International agencies working to develop more widely acceptable definitions should ensure that their work is well disseminated to ministries of education and ministries responsible for data and statistics.

## Lessons learned: Moving forward towards inclusive education for children with disabilities

### Statistics taking into account education needs

The essential question should be how best to improve the quality and quantity of education for children with disabilities. Therefore, definitions of disability should include the most important aspects of learning potential and learning needs in order to better prepare schools and teachers to teach their students effectively.

### Definitions of disability across ministries and including all types of schooling

Definitions of disability that are consistent across ministries would allow for cross-verification within a country. For instance, if birth registrations showed that a certain number of infants were born with a given disability, the schools should be able to predict that these children will begin early intervention and kindergarten and they would already have the information needed to plan for this event in the future.

Ministries of education and other relevant ministries should be aware of regional and international work taking place to develop uniform definitions of persons, including children, with disabilities. United Nations agencies such as UNICEF and UNESCAP have been undertaking work in this area, and UNESCAP has held a series of training workshops for personnel from national bureau of statistics to assist them in improving questions for use in household surveys and census to identify persons with disabilities. This work is very important and will make a difference over time to developing definitions and collecting data that is useful internally in each country but also contributes to cross-country comparability.

***Biwako Millennium Framework, Strategy C. Disability statistics, common definition of disabilities for planning***

Lack of adequate data has been one of the most significant factors leading to the neglect of disability issues, including the development of policy and measures to monitor and evaluate its implementation in the region. In many developing countries, the data collected does not reflect the full extent of disability prevalence. This limitation results in part from the conceptual framework adopted, the scope and coverage of the surveys undertaken, as well as the definitions, classifications and the methodology used for the collection of data on disability. It is also recognized that a common system of defining and classifying disability is not uniformly applied in the region. In this connection, a wider usage of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health in countries of the region will be expected to provide a base for the development of such a common system of defining and classifying disability.

Strategy 8. Governments are encouraged to develop, by 2005, their system for disability related data collection and analysis and to produce relevant statistics disaggregated by disability to support policy-making and programme planning.

Strategy 9. Governments are encouraged to adopt, by 2005, definitions on disability based on the Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics which will allow inter-country comparison in the region.

## Checklist

### Definitions used in education

1. Does the department of educational statistics at the ministry of education have a specific definition of disability? Are all students with learning difficulties grouped together as one category?
2. What categories of disability are included in your definition of disability for the purposes of access to education?

### Definitions used by government agencies

3. What are the definitions in your country of disability? Do all ministries use the same definitions?
4. Is the WHO International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) used by any ministry as the basis for generating questions for household surveys, or a census for any other purposes?

### Definition awareness

5. Are experts in data accustomed to the definitions used internationally? Have they developed guidelines explaining how to classify someone? Who does the assessment of students with disabilities? Are these persons trained in recognizing certain kinds of disabilities?

### Usefulness of definitions and categories

6. Are definitions created with an idea of acquiring information on the needs of students? Do teacher-training programmes or other strategic planning departments of the ministry of education have some familiarity with the definitions used for students with disabilities?

## **B. Designing data collection processes: disability statistics, data collection and databases**

### **The challenge**

Collecting data on persons with disabilities, after a definition is in place, will help in providing a framework for developing quality educational services. The breadth and depth of the information provided will allow the educational system to plan and to better prepare for the future of the education system. Data collection in most countries remains extremely simple, with some data on the types of disabilities of certain parts of the population, but very little consistent, year-to-year data on how many students are in schools, what kinds of programmes are available for them and how well they succeed. Statistical data collection in education is not coherent or systematized in any of the countries involved in the case studies conducted for this project.

The lack of data in many countries is evidence of the lack of understanding and appreciation for the issue of disability. Governments may lack the incentive to accurately count the number of children with disabilities and the number of out-of-school children. Both statistics could show that the government programmes are not sufficiently effective or that they do not cover a large part of the population.

### **Lack of cooperation between ministries on data collection**

As noted elsewhere, ministries of health, education, community development and welfare and others involved with various aspects of services for children and adults with disabilities are frequently in competition with one another or otherwise lacking evidence of cooperation and positive relationships. This unfortunate state of affairs is very common and is found in many countries. In the case of data collection, the lack of consistent definitions hampers efforts to understand the true nature of disability in a given country. This is compounded by a lack of willingness to share information across ministries and may give rise to a sense of competition over the schools that are under one or another ministry. Children with disabilities are denied the best opportunities that could be provided because of lack of commitment, coordination and cooperation.

### **Data deficits: mainstream schools, out-of-school children and types of learning needs**

All countries collect some school data but this frequently does not include any in-depth data on students with disabilities. When students with disabilities are counted, this data is not frequently compared with numbers of out-of-school children to determine a regularly published statistic on the extent of education provision for children with disabilities on a yearly basis. Indeed, many countries do not have data on what factors will allow a child to learn, such as a supporting family, a particularly dedicated teacher, or a particular mentoring or assistance programme. In mainstream schools, there is seldom data on students with disabilities included in mainstream classrooms. Furthermore, very few countries have developed systems that would allow counting of how many children are not in school. While special schools, segregated from other mainstream schools, do have enrolment data, they often do not have specific profiles of the students such as the kind of disability and types of support needed.

### **Barriers for children with disabilities**

- ▶ Data is very seldom collected and when collected, remains very “weak” including only a statement of numbers of children with disabilities, without useful information on educational needs.
- ▶ Many countries count only children within special education classes and not children within mainstream classes who need additional support.
- ▶ Poor data collection prevents good planning and appropriate resource allocation as well as feelings of success with awareness of progress.

- ▶ Lack of data on numbers of children with special needs and the level of services provided, prevents advocates both within and outside of government from illustrating their cases.
- ▶ Data may be collected yearly without identifying individuals, preventing any complex understanding of progress in a given case.
- ▶ Data may not be compared and analysed, preventing educational policy planners from accurately planning for the future.
- ▶ No system is available for collecting data on all children with disabilities from birth, which would enable data to be collected on out-of-school children.

## Data collection processes in case study countries

### Brunei

Brunei's various disability service providers keep formal records on all persons who receive services at their centres. Brunei's Ministry of Education does not collect additional statistics on persons with disabilities throughout the educational system other than the data collected on an ad hoc basis by the various service providers and collated with the help of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. The birth registration process does not contain information on disability; however, this information is contained in medical records. A database is planned for the near future that would collate these various sources of data. No additional statistics are available on out-of-school children, nor on longitudinal outcomes of various cases. Of 1,947 registered children with disabilities; 45 are members registered at the Association of the Blind, 357 at KACA (an NGO), 253 at PAPDA (the association of physically disabled persons), 49 at SMARTER (the group of parents of children with autism) and 363 high-support needs students were registered at the Special Education Unit of the Ministry of Education. Another 218 students were registered at other regional centres. These totals add up to 1,285 registered persons accounted for through these various centres.

### Samoa

In Samoa, statistics on children with disabilities have been collected through various studies, but are not collected by the country's Ministry of Education on a regular basis. School censuses do not include information on children with disabilities. The main special needs education coordinator has not been trained to use the one database that does exist on children with disabilities. Samoa's general population census, undertaken by the Department of Statistics within the Ministry of Finance has only one disability-related question, that asks to define whether or not a person is disabled but without including any further information or a precise definition. Annual school censuses also do not include information related to disability. Various studies have been conducted on an ad hoc basis over the past few years. A 1995 study identified 302 children under the age of 14 years.

In 1999, a UNESCO-commissioned study; found 578 children with disabilities from birth to 14 years of age. In 2000, another disability study on this same age group was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the United Nations Development Programme. An adult disability study was conducted in 2002, initiated by Inclusion International with funding from NZAID in cooperation with the Department of Statistics of the Ministry of Finance as directed by the Prime Minister. The adult disability survey will be conducted every five years following the national population census; the next will take place in 2007. The Early Intervention programme of Loto Taumafai collects data and is hoping to coordinate efforts with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and other organizations. The birth registration process does not include information on disability.

### Thailand

Thailand's Ministry of Education collects statistics on children and youth with disabilities at all levels of the education system. There are nine categories used by the Ministry of Education, five in addition to

those identified in the Rehabilitation Act. There are not clear identification criteria. Children are identified within special schools and also by the Special Education Centres when they prepare individualised education plans and assess children. Problems with this system include the absence of data on children who are not included in the educational system; and that the registration process requires a visit to a hospital to register and obtain identification papers. Awareness-raising on this issue could increase the numbers of children enrolled. Some schools also submit individualised education plans to the special education centres but may not receive a response. Another report stated that of 900 IEPs submitted, just 225 were approved. These factors could clearly distort data. Another potential problem would be deliberate inflation of numbers of children with disabilities in order to request additional resources.

Estimates of children with disabilities attending school range from 10-23 per cent as mentioned earlier. Numbers are set to rise dramatically with many more integrated schools opening their doors to children with disabilities. A database is planned on all children from birth to five years of age, eligible for early intervention services. A pilot survey to perfect methodology of identification is planned to verify the Ministry of Education classifications. A computerized data system should be in place in 2005 at the ministry.

In Thailand, several surveys have been conducted to collect statistics on persons with disabilities including household health and welfare surveys conducted by the National Statistical Office in 1991, 1996 and 2001; Household Survey of the Thai Public Health Research Institute, National Public Health Foundation, Ministry of Public Health, 1996; the Japan International Cooperation Agency, (JICA) Questionnaire 1999. In addition a database has been maintained by the Committee for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons, under the Department of Social Development and Human Security, and the Office for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities since 1994. Results of the 1991, 1996 and 2001 surveys suggest that the percentage of the population with disabilities as a proportion of the population as a whole were: 1.8 per cent, 1.7 per cent and 1.8 per cent respectively; the 2001 survey found 1,100,761 persons with disabilities. The northeast region, Issan, had the highest numbers of persons with disabilities, 38.6 per cent of the total, followed by the north with 23.5 per cent. These regions are also the poorest of Thailand. The 2001 Public Health Research Institute survey found six million persons with disabilities; but just 344,526 persons are registered with the Office of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities as of early 2003. Data discrepancies arise from differing methodologies, definitions and varying levels of willingness to provide information and lack of knowledge about registration procedures (*e.g.* just 26 per cent of those persons identified in the 1991 survey had registered). Data is available by age, gender, rural/urban location and disability category. Tables are available from the Asian and Pacific Centre on Disability (APCD) website<sup>66</sup> and other summary data are in recent publications. Plans to improve data collection are being considered. The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security will collect all statistics on persons with disabilities including data on health, education and labour. A budget will be provided for the development of a database and the use of smartcards to improve accuracy is possible. The National Statistical Office is also considering the best ways to include questions on disability in the national census in light of recent UNESCAP training on WHO International Classification and Functioning concepts. The Ministry of Interior will also undertake a survey in the future.

## Viet Nam

The Ministry of Education Statistics Department in Viet Nam collects data on numbers of students with disabilities in each class through the District-level Education Departments. This data from regular schools is not tallied with data from special schools, nor are there attempts to arrive at a nationwide total number of children with disabilities in and out of school. Individuals are not specifically identified in this process, so that data cannot determine school successes and failures. School registration forms do not include information on disability; they have general biographical data only. Private nursery schools are also included in this data collection. The European Commission has funded the development of an information system; however most consider this project overly expensive with few evident results. There is a working group on statistics in the Ministry of Education that includes the Centre for Education of Children with Exceptionalities, the group responsible for children with disabilities. On an annual

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66 [www.apcdproject.com](http://www.apcdproject.com)

census, there is a “yes” or “no” question related to having a family member who is disabled, but no further information is collected. The birth registration process does not include data on disability, furthermore, this process is not free and many poor families would not be able to afford this fee or could avoid registration for fear of recriminations for having more children than the government recommends.

A 1998 MOLISA/UNICEF child disability study stated that almost half of children with disabilities were illiterate, 33 per cent had never attended school and 16 per cent had dropped out. The most recent UNICEF study from 2003 states that 2.4 per cent of children from birth-18 years have disabilities or 662,000 people. This UNICEF survey included three different methods, the National Statistical Data Collection (NSDC), household surveys and Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice (KAPs) surveys.

The NSDC survey reported that 35-38 per cent of children with disabilities in rural and urban areas were in school and 51-52 per cent were not in school. Similar rates were seen in rural and urban areas. Significant variation in levels of school attendance was evident by types of disability with 84 per cent of students with “strange behaviour” out-of-school, followed by children with intellectual impairments (76 per cent), hearing impairments (68 per cent), children with epilepsy (64 per cent), and those children with mobility impairments (60 per cent). Children with visual impairments had the lowest rate of school non-attendance with just 38 per cent out of school. The household survey also revealed that, in general, boys received more education than girls. This survey also contained information by age, gender and the urban/rural divide. Rural prevalence rates are thought to be higher, roughly 2.57 per cent (2.56 per cent for males and 2.58 per cent for females) than urban rates 1.42 per cent overall, with 1.75 per cent for males and 1.12 per cent for females.

According to a World Bank source, a new system of data collection for children with disabilities is going to be piloted that will involve collecting data from commune health workers and teachers.

## Recommendations for action by stakeholders

### Data should be collected on the child’s social, familial and economic environment:

Ministries of statistics or ministries working on community development, family or social welfare should collect data on the following:

- ▶ Family situation (economic situation and family structure, employment of parents and whether they have additional financial, government or medical benefits, parental education level, level of parental involvement and availability of parents to support the child.)
- ▶ Services and other opportunities for the child through supporting agencies (resources available such as transportation, telecommunication and assistive technologies).
- ▶ Friends in school and in the community. Data on the network of friends of a child at school will show how much the child is integrated and could be an indicator of levels of satisfaction with and support in school.
- ▶ Participation in after-school activities.
- ▶ In some countries, it may be important to assess the power structure within the family to determine who has the ultimate decision to send the child to school in the extended family.

### Specific data on children

Ministries of education should collect data about children’s full educational background such as:

- ▶ Previous school experiences (number of years and hours per week in school, date of referral to present school, basic literacy and numeracy skills, technological skills, subjects/curriculum areas studied, type of schools attended *i.e.* home-based, hospital-based, school-based, non-formal, formal and any other culturally valued skills such as weaving, making crafts or dancing).

In addition the child's educational profile should include:

- ▶ Strengths and weaknesses of children in order to have a full awareness of how children can be motivated and how they can learn.
- ▶ Difficulties of the child, specific learning obstacles or other factors inhibiting child's success at school and support needs of the student.
- ▶ Functional Skills including the "potential" of students as well as any indication of self-awareness and self-esteem.

Ministries of Health or health services should collect health-related details such as:

- ▶ The age of diagnosis, age of first intervention
- ▶ Participation in early intervention programmes and health issues that might affect participation and learning of the child and access to health facilities.
- ▶ Other data on the cause, severity, type, diagnosis of the child should also be collected.

Ministries of Health should also note if their patients are attending school when of school age.

Schools should also collect data on:

- ▶ Biographic information of children attending school (address, village, gender, ethnicity and/or citizenship, age, first and second languages).
- ▶ Location of home and distance from school
- ▶ Learning outcomes in relation to individualised education plans, targets and goals
- ▶ Date and reason for leaving school
- ▶ Employment status after school
- ▶ Examination results, qualifications, certifications achieved

Children with disabilities should be registered from birth, or from the age at which a disability is identified. This information should be linked to data in the education ministry to determine the percentage of children with disabilities both in and out of school, and also for planning deployment of teachers with specialist qualifications where they will be most needed.

## Data on teachers

Ministries of education should collect data on all teachers including information about:

- ▶ Teacher qualification (BA, certificate, MA, short term, etc)
- ▶ Skills and type of experience (teaching specialty, general classroom teacher or specialized disability training), number of years of teaching experience and length of likely career.
- ▶ Disability-related training or training related to inclusive education
- ▶ Teacher effectiveness (attitude, experience, background)
- ▶ Teacher awareness and attitude
- ▶ Motivation for continued professional development such as in a setting which assesses: Qualification, Experiences, Merits, Seniority and Suitability (QEMSS) of each teacher
- ▶ Teachers' performance measurements (external school inspections)
- ▶ Salary scale and awards
- ▶ Provision of in-service training/exchange for teachers and parents

- ▶ Number of hours of up-dating and in-service training (professional development record) and the types and length of experience in disability-related teaching
- ▶ Frequency of contact with parents and openness to outside volunteers.

Ministry of education strategy and planning department, in coordination with national disability councils, should collect data on:

- ▶ Number of teachers by specialty (subject area) nationwide
- ▶ Training needs for teachers, numbers of teachers and needs of specialization (how many teachers have not been trained)
- ▶ Percent of teachers trained and involved in education for children with disabilities. This should include teachers in regular classroom and support teachers
- ▶ Sufficient supply of teachers per school/centre/classroom teaching conditions to perform required tasks (teaching hours, roles/tasks undertaken, teacher/student ratio and subjects taught).
- ▶ Availability of specialists as well as other helpers for classroom assistance (*i.e.* family members or others)
- ▶ Attrition rate of teachers (for general and for special education) as well as retention or drop-out rates of students within a given teacher's classroom for special education teachers and for mainstream classroom teachers
- ▶ Resource-related information: funds provided per student, hours spent on each child on an individual basis, number of hours spent on each child in an inclusive setting. Contributions by parents and support for parents who are not able to contribute.
- ▶ Availability and use of government support for families of students with disabilities including average school fees and textbook and uniform prices.

## **Recommendations on teaching and learning methods and materials and resources**

In addition, schools, principals, local and national representatives of the ministries of education should collect data on:

- ▶ Teaching methods used by the teacher: (how lessons are planned)
- ▶ Teaching aids (including their production, use, maintenance, appropriateness and quantity). Are materials locally produced, sustainable, and used in their proper context?
- ▶ Teaching methods related to disability (individual or group teaching) as well as any other information on disability-specific courses.
- ▶ Availability of individualised education plans and level of involvement of parents in development and implementation of the IEP.
- ▶ Availability of ICT technology (accessibility of websites, availability of computers, etc.) Computers, photocopiers, videos or tape recorders.
- ▶ Physical accessibility of school environment (toilets, ramps, facilities, grounds, transportation etc.)
- ▶ Class size and percentage of children with disabilities in each classroom.
- ▶ Availability of learning materials of children with special needs, library and textbook availability and cost. Resources available for purchase of materials suitable for the specific disability.
- ▶ Individual education plans should include data on educational progress, behaviour and social interaction, academic achievements of student, parent attendance at IEP meetings.

## **Data on policies on school admissions, special schools, special classes, inclusive schools**

Local village leaders, community groups and national disability advocacy groups should continue to encourage awareness-raising for parents and community to encourage sending children to school and awareness of policy and rights.

Schools should be required to have an acceptance policy in accordance with national laws, and consistent in implementation. National policy should also include enforcement mechanisms.

Ministries of education and other ministries of community development, in coordination with other service providers should collect data on:

- ▶ Numbers of special schools, inclusive schools and NGO and private schools.
- ▶ Out-of-school students
- ▶ Number of students with disabilities completing each level of schooling and retention and progression of students.
- ▶ Number of referrals from special education units according to disabilities (i.e. Numbers of physically handicapped, slow learners etc).
- ▶ Numbers of students transitioning from one system to another (either in terms of levels of schooling or inclusive and special schools).
- ▶ Percent of children with disabilities accepted or referred/rejected from schools; percent of refusal to inclusive education from special schools.
- ▶ Time spent by students within mainstream classes in an inclusive school and percent of students with disabilities to the total school population.

Schools should also be assessed by education officials at the central level with such indicators as:

- ▶ School success indicators including graduation rates of students with disabilities per regular school/ per special school.
- ▶ Record of frequency and outcomes of efforts made to find out-of-school children.

## **Recommendations on how to collect data**

Simplification of the registration procedure would assist in more accurate data collection on the population of persons with disabilities, particularly for children and students of school age.

Disabled persons' organizations should be included in planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. All parties should continue to share information.

Ministries of education should include students with disabilities within mainstream school data collection efforts. Data available on children should be continually broadened.

Ministries of education should continue to improve collection of data on out-of-school children.

Ministries of education should cooperate with other ministries to determine profiles of students with disability in the society and to identify factors that lead to success.

Ministries of education should track success and failures of teachers and reward teachers for successful efforts in inclusion.

## Lessons learned: Moving towards inclusive education for children with disabilities

All of the following groups and others may be included in data collection processes: parents, teachers, doctors, school principals, specialists, social welfare officers, national, provincial and district level education officers. Different types of data collection instruments are: annual school surveys, birth registration data, hospital records, centres for diagnosis or classification and general population statistics. Ministries involved can be any of the following: the ministry of statistics, ministry of education, ministry of health, or ministries of social welfare.

A commitment to fulfilling the rights of persons with disabilities by national government is a necessary first step. This will require re-design of all data collection processes to ensure that persons with disabilities are included at every level and in the activities of every ministry. Data will be needed at census and household survey level, in birth registration procedures, and in health and education. Education policy will require information on those children who require early intervention services and on their transition from this service into the school system. There will be a need for measures to identify children of school age who are not in school, and for monitoring of their transition into the school system. Data on children with disabilities in school, and their progress and outcomes must be collected. Data will be necessary on teacher training, deployment and achievement, the structure of the system and the links between special and regular schools, as well as special support units. Data will be needed on families and their needs for support, and their involvement in the education of their children.

Data is needed at every level of the system and there must be procedures in place for coordination of this data and for making it accessible in different ways for different purposes by different people. None of the case study countries have taken all these steps but Thailand is moving towards a comprehensive system of data, but with a need to ensure coordination and sharing across ministries and at different levels of the system. The changes have been driven by the commitment made to people with disabilities, including children with disabilities, in the Constitutional changes of 1997 and the Education Act of 1999. It will take time to develop and achieve all the data collection procedures that are necessary in a comprehensive system. The first step is the most important.

### ***Biwako Millennium Framework, Priority Area C. Early detection, early intervention and education***

Strengthen national capacity in data collection and analysis concerning disability statistics to support policy formulation and programme implementation. Governments, in collaboration with others, should collect comprehensive data on children with disabilities, from birth to 16 years old, which should be used for planning appropriate early intervention and educational provision, resources and support services, from birth through school age.

Five year targets should be set for the enrolment of children with disabilities in early intervention, pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary (post-school) education. Progress towards meeting these targets should be closely monitored with a view to achieving the goal of 75 per cent of children with disabilities in school by 2012.

## Checklist

### Regularity and sustainability of data collection procedures

Is data collected on all persons with disabilities by means of specific questions included in census and household surveys?

1. Does the ministry of education have a separate statistics section and does this include disaggregated data on children with disabilities and possibly children from other minority or disadvantaged groups? Is data disaggregated on the basis of category of disability, age, gender, urban/rural status?
2. Is there a mechanism for ensuring that all data on persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, is available for use in a common database, accessible to all relevant ministries?
3. Are there systematic procedures for collecting data at the school level on children with disabilities, type of disability, age on school entry, progress and achievements, family status and need for support? Is there a system to ensure regular transmission of school-based data to the Statistics section of the Ministry?
4. Is there a birth registration process, with special measures to include children with disabilities? Is this data readily available to the Ministry of Education?
5. Are there any non-government sources of data on children with disabilities and is this information integrated into a comprehensive data base?
6. Do schools and other authorities collect data on children, children's environments, teachers and their expertise, and do they track how well children succeed in school? Do schools keep information about students over many years to see how they progress? Is there a school registration form and does this form identify children with disabilities?

### School-level to national data collection

7. Do schools collect data on all enrolled children with disabilities? How in-depth are the statistics collected? Do schools have information on the qualifications of teachers and teaching success?
8. Does the ministry of education have data on children who are not in school?
9. What percentage of children, of school age and below school age have a disability? What percentage of children with disability attend school? If this information is not available what steps would need to be put in place to obtain this information?
10. What suggestions do you have for improving data collection processes on children with disabilities at:
  - ▶ National or central level
  - ▶ School level

## C. Monitoring and evaluating progress

### The challenge

How many countries can state with authority, how many students with disabilities are not in school, or how many students are in school and how many more will be entering school in the next year? Few countries know with certainty the numbers of children over the next years that will enter the school system with special needs, and whether or not the school system is prepared to assist them appropriately. Many countries have developed Education for All (EFA) plans, but many do not specifically include children with disabilities and the diverse needs of this group in their planning processes.

Data collection should not be seen as an end in itself as is sometimes the case. As stated in Robson and Evans,<sup>67</sup> data collection may be viewed as “an end in itself” and “an inordinate amount of effort [could be] devoted to devising complex, intellectually satisfying, collection instruments.” It is therefore necessary to ensure that data collection is conducted regularly, with the aim of useful data in order to use directly in monitoring of the quality of educational efforts and in improvement of educational outcomes.

The challenge is to ensure that children with disabilities are included in educational policy and planning with appropriate teaching and support. Once this decision has been taken it is imperative that progress is monitored both in terms of entry into the school system and in terms of progress through the school system in terms of learning outcomes. Data on qualitative aspects is important for evaluating changes needed to improve the way in which schools provide for these children.

### Barriers for children with disabilities

- ▶ Mainstream education plans such as EFA plans, may not contain specific action plans to include children with disabilities in the education system.
- ▶ Data available often lacks sufficient depth and detail to allow identification of successful programmes and policies. Data often does not track individual students over time in order to know the outcomes of their educational and work careers.
- ▶ A lack of monitoring of inclusive education programmes prevents policy makers, schools and administrators from identifying, addressing and correcting problems.
- ▶ Departments of educational strategy and planning may lack data that will allow them to specifically plan for improvements in educational provision in a specific time frame.
- ▶ Departments of teacher-training and special education development may also lack information on teacher’s careers, the frequency of in-service training of individual teachers and the retention rates of teachers, thereby leaving them without sufficient information on how to plan for future teacher provision.
- ▶ Lack of data on children with disabilities, both in and out of school, makes it impossible to monitor progress in including children with disabilities in the school system.
- ▶ Lack of data on the progress of children with disabilities in schools makes it impossible to measure the quality of educational outcomes of these children.
- ▶ Data on children who drop out of school is often not disaggregated by category of child, minority group or any other useful defining characteristic.
- ▶ Data on the numbers of children with disabilities from birth, and within the educational system may make it impossible to measure progress in terms of increased access for children with disabilities.

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67 Robson and Evans, *ibid.*

## Monitoring and evaluating progress in case study countries

### Brunei

Data was not available from Brunei.

### Samoa

Children with disabilities are mentioned specifically in the Samoan EFA plan, however there was no effort made to monitor progress related to their access to, and inclusion in the school system, or of their attainments within it. It is widely acknowledged that there was very little enforcement of compulsory education in practice. This can be evidenced by the numbers of children with disability who were identified on the 2000 survey<sup>68</sup> who were not in any educational setting as well as those children “working” in Apia, or care giving in the family home.

### Thailand

Thailand’s EFA policy identifies children with disabilities as a separate category for EFA monitoring. At present, while monitoring includes only special schools, guidelines are being prepared to include the Special Education Centres in the monitoring system. The system could have difficulty in correctly identifying the numbers of children with disabilities due to problems mentioned above with the approval of individualised educational plans and coordination between the Ministry of Education and the country’s special education centres. Core EFA indicators do not include references to children with disabilities in the 18 categories. This is a problem beyond the EFA process in Thailand alone. Children with disabilities should receive special attention from both UNESCO and the international community in relation to these indicators in the next phase of EFA plans (in Thailand from 2002-2016). The EFA plan in Thailand does include the objectives of developing a proper care system for autistic children, establishing pre-school education for disadvantaged and disabled children in special and regular schools, providing rehabilitation for children with physical and mental disabilities, providing early intervention and preparing disabled children for special schools; and providing a guidebook for parents. The “Review Report” from 2004 included other strategies related to researching the country situation to assess barriers to disadvantaged and out-of-school groups. These strategies included promoting education service area offices in locations with many vulnerable children. All strategies should include explicit references to children with disabilities. The monitoring system, within the Thai Ministry of Education, is seated in the Office of Special Education within the Office of Basic Education Commission and monitoring visits are made from Bangkok throughout Thailand. Provincial teams undertake monitoring of special schools and integrated schools from the District Office. District Special Education Centres are involved in the monitoring process to evaluate progress in integrated schools. Schools also conduct self-evaluations. There is some concern on the part of disability advocates about the lack of formality in the monitoring process, the failure of special education centres to transfer skills, monitor progress and support schools and personnel.

### Viet Nam

Viet Nam has developed “Strategies for Educational Development” (2001-2010) to provide access to 50 per cent of disabled children by 2005 and 70 per cent by 2010. However, children with disabilities are not identified as a separate category for EFA monitoring though this could occur in the future. The system of inclusive education was too fractured and data was not available to verify enrolments. The EFA Steering Committee includes the Ministries of Finance; Planning and Investment; Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs; and the Ministry of Personnel. In addition, mass organizations (government supported civil society organizations) such as the Women’s Union, the Youth Union and the Fatherland Front

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68 R. McCullough – Special Needs Education Survey Project; Report & Recommendations, 2000.

are also members. Recent efforts in developing “targeted-budget support” throughout the country underlined the focus on excluded and disabled students that is essential to assist in the government policy of equity in education. A report from the Ministry of Finance stated that a disability survey should be undertaken by the government to determine appropriate policy. In addition, a project involving a variety of international NGOs, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, aims to develop nationwide guidelines on implementing inclusive education. As highlighted by Ms. Thao of Save the Children (UK), improving educational achievement for children with disabilities will follow from implementation of measurable guidelines. A comparison was made with the policy on malnutrition which was not measured in Viet Nam for many years, but now with measures in place, support has been established to improve these rates. However, measurable guidelines without careful planning and concrete information and support on how to successfully reach these goals will leave the real end result; quality education for children with disabilities, out of reach.

## Recommendations for action by stakeholders

### Government

The respective governments should develop a monitoring mechanism to follow progress of implementation and develop policy frameworks for target areas of early identification and intervention, inclusive education, community-based rehabilitation and vocational training.

Ministries of education should include opportunities within the general education system to give feedback and recommendations about teacher skills and children’s experiences. In assessing progress towards the achievement of individual education plans there should be an opportunity to underline gaps in the system and problems faced specific to each child’s situation.

The monitoring and evaluation system should be transparent and should provide support and advice to all levels of the system in the early phase of transitional implementation of an integrated or inclusive education programme.

The governments should take into account the reasons that families state for not sending their children to school, and should develop measures to address these problems and provide the necessary support. Common reasons given are the seriousness of disability and weak health, while negative attitudes, financial considerations and embarrassment are also important.

The governments should develop a guidebook to services in provinces, districts and communes for the extent of coverage and the regional actors for all levels of services that aid children with disabilities in accessing schools.

### Schools

Good models of implementation should be identified and mechanisms for sharing this information among a group of schools within a district or sub-district should be developed.

The differences between policy and practice, particularly in the absence of solid data and statistics, must be underlined to more accurately assess the reality of the situation on the ground in the schools.

### Community

Organizations of persons with disabilities should conduct regular “customer satisfaction” surveys on the attitudes of families, parents and children as to successes and failures. These organizations can contribute significantly to debate with this kind of valuable information on the internal workings of schools and from drawing on their own life experiences. Organizations of people with disabilities should be included in monitoring and evaluation efforts.

Organizations of disabled persons should develop effective communication networks that enable information gathered at grassroots levels to be used for feedback into central level systems, processes, policies and practices.

## Lessons Learned: Moving forward towards inclusive education for children with disabilities

A commitment to monitoring and evaluating progress must be made once the policy decision has been taken to include children with disabilities in the education system. All of the steps are linked: it is not possible to monitor progress unless data on children with disabilities who are both in and out of the education system is collected and made available. The capacity to evaluate progress, both in terms of numbers of children included and in terms of the qualitative aspects (such as school commitment, training of teachers, classroom organization, curriculum and teaching practice modifications, student learning outcomes and family/community involvement) is critically important. The data is needed to give a clear picture of the current situation. Then, based on that situation, changes to current procedures can be made to improve the outcomes.

Monitoring and evaluation is an area of difficulty for many national education systems. Thus, technical support from international agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNESCAP, World Bank, Save the Children and others has a very significant role to play in strengthening education systems in developing countries.

### *Biwako Millennium Framework, Priority Area C. Early detection, early intervention and education*

Governments should enact legislation, with enforcement mechanisms, to mandate education for all children, including children with disabilities, to meet the goals of the Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Development Goal of Primary Education for all children by 2015. Children with disabilities need to be explicitly included in all national plans for education, including national plans on EFA – and ensure assessment and monitoring procedures are appropriate for the diverse needs of learners.

## Disability Action Plans within mainstream education plans

While specific target groups within national Education for All plans are occasionally mentioned, children with disabilities do not tend to be specifically discussed in many countries' plans. Given this, students with disabilities may not benefit much from the national action plans because they often fail to address their unique needs. While some countries do have EFA policies that identify children with disabilities as a specific target group, they have not devised action plans to support their policies.

Recognizing this shortfall, the Biwako Millennium Framework (see box) calls on all Asia-Pacific governments to create 5-year national disability action plans based on its recommendations. The Framework stipulates that in creating these plans, government authorities should ensure that people with disabilities and their affiliated organizations are brought into the process, particularly to act as an advisory capacity in the development of educational policy, implementation, data collection, monitoring and evaluation.

Certainly, in order to make significant progress towards implementing inclusive education, governments will need to include persons with disabilities into their educational planning and statistical data collection activities. Only once this step is taken will better monitoring and evaluation take place.

## Sub-national planning

In Viet Nam, training was provided in 2003 on the development of provincial-level Education for All plans, reaching out beyond the nationwide plan. This planning also included recommendations for budgeting and financial provision. One important consequence of moving outside of national plans is

the increased sense of responsibility and proximity to schools and students that this kind of planning can entail; a step that is of particular importance in large countries such as Viet Nam, with a population of over 80 million. Viet Nam has a strategic goal of ensuring effective management and ever better resource utilization. One target group is children early in life, including “disadvantaged children”. Each provincial plan will include a provincial economic and education situation analysis; challenges in the education field in the period of 2006-2010; goals and objectives of provincial education development in the period of 2006-2010; educational activities to be implemented in the period of 2006-2010; funding for the Provincial Education Action Plan and implementation. The Philippines have also undertaken an implementation and review process including actors from schools, divisions, and regions up to the national level. The aim of the Philippines Ministry of Education is to develop continuous school assessment and improvement planning, including input from the entire community. Efforts should be made to not only collect data as an end in itself, but to directly and rapidly link these data collection efforts to improvements in quality of services at the school and community level.

## Checklist

1. Are children with disabilities identified as a separate category in national education and EFA monitoring?
2. What procedures are in place to measure increase or decrease in enrolments of this group of children?
3. What procedures do you have in place to assess the number of school age children who are not attending school? Can you identify the different categories to which these children belong?
4. How can you improve your strategies to ensure that *all* children attend school?  
List the activities needed to ensure this outcome at all levels of the system.
5. What records are required at school level to monitor the progress of children with disabilities, from school entry to school completion?
6. What information is collected on children who drop out of school? Who are these children? Why are they dropping out? What measures can be taken to prevent this situation?
7. How does the information gained during evaluation processes feed into revised policy and planning to improve both quantitative and qualitative outcomes for children with disabilities in the school system?

## Chapter 7

# Participating in the education process: The role of organizations of people with disabilities (DPOs), families of children with disabilities and community members

While governments and schools have the responsibility for providing quality education for children with disabilities, organizations of people with disabilities, families and the community have significant roles to play as well. First, disabled peoples' organizations and families can assist schools and governments in making better decisions in regards to students with disabilities. They have a strong role to play in advocacy to demand that governments uphold their commitment and obligation to provide education for all children, including children with disabilities. Second, these organizations, and families of children with disabilities, have strengths that other parties lack. They have considerable will and personal commitment to move forward with practical efforts, as changes will positively affect their lives and the lives of their children. For example, parents, who are in need of assistance with the raising and education of their children, can give some of their time to help teachers and schools.

In addition, considering other aspects of a child's life outside the school gives a more complete picture of the child's environment, motivation, needs and the changes needed to be able to attend school and to learn successfully. Communities, through health and family services, can play an important role in unifying the diverse offers of services for families of children in need of assistance. In addition, community leaders are often aware of children with disabilities within their area, and can assist in encouraging parents to send their children to school. All these parties have something valuable to contribute to the education system. This chapter will first look at disabled persons' organizations, before considering the role of parents and families, including parent organizations, and finally, the role of the communities themselves.

### A. Organizations of people with disabilities (DPOs)

#### The challenge

##### DPOs are often focused on adult issues

Disabled Persons Organizations, or DPOs, have given persons with disabilities a voice in their own lives, their own destinies and their own countries. These essential organizations have been instrumental in encouraging the shift away from a charity-based perspective and towards a rights-based perspective. As stated in the Biwako Millenium Framework, "Persons with disabilities are the most qualified and best equipped to support, inform and advocate for themselves and other persons with disabilities." Disabled Persons' Organizations are vital advocates for positive changes in many aspects of society, including in education. However, DPOs are not always active in education-related advocacy at the primary and secondary school level. Disabled Person's Organizations are often founded by educated adults with disabilities who are interested in encouraging other advances towards a barrier-free society, such as through advocacy for anti-discrimination and other disability-friendly policies, architectural standards

in urban areas and in public buildings and other support services provided by the government. As mentioned earlier, the first types of programmes that may interest many DPOs are employment, vocational training and other services for adults with disabilities. This is a logical outgrowth of the fact that many adults with disabilities cannot find employment, even though they may be very qualified. Students with disabilities do not often have their own representative organizations as frequently as adults do and young children do not have the benefit of a voice within their own organizations.

## DPOs roles and a formal voice in reform

DPOs are not sufficiently appreciated within formal education systems, nor are the advice and counsel of these “experts” consulted with any regularity in many countries. Representatives of the education system may look upon DPOs as “outsiders” and think of themselves as the sole experts. While more university degrees and other expertise may indeed reside within the universities and government ministries, the real aim of their policies is to improve the educational opportunities and possibilities for citizens in the community. The Biwako Millennium Framework for Action underlines the importance of “supporting the development of persons with disabilities and their organizations and including them in the national policy decision-making process on disability, with special focus on the development of women with disabilities.”

**International Disability Alliance of Disabled Persons’ Organizations (IDA)** An important organization on the international level is the International Disability Alliance (IDA), active throughout the world, in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Western Asia. This alliance includes Disabled Peoples’ International, Inclusion International, International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, Rehabilitation International, World Blind Union, World Federation of the Deaf, World Federation of the Deaf Blind, and the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry. All of these organizations are active on the international level, but all also have regional and country representation in many areas.

Inclusion International (II) is one organization that explicitly includes a focus on education and children. This organization advocates for “the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities and their families worldwide.” Inclusion International advocates for inclusive education, as well as for the rights of children and their families. They also work on other human rights initiatives, the UN disability convention, poverty reduction and self-advocacy. Inclusion International has also developed their own list of Millennium Development Goals, focusing on disability issues. This list of eight goals includes achieving inclusive education.

## Barriers for children with disabilities

- ▶ Organizations of persons with disabilities frequently focus on issues of relevance to adults with disabilities and may not advocate strongly for the rights of children with disabilities to attend school. In many cases members may not have been disabled as children and do not immediately understand the critical importance of strong advocacy in this area. They may overlook the importance of long-term change and their potential role in encouraging this change for young people with disabilities from birth.
- ▶ Organizations of persons with disabilities often lack formal roles in developing policy at the government and school level, leaving these policies without the added insight that disabled persons, their friends and families, can provide.
- ▶ Governments and schools do not always welcome input from disabled persons’ organizations. Their advice is not always valued and they may be viewed as too outspoken, critical and “demanding”. Some governments are not sufficiently aware of the positive, constructive role that these organizations are willing and able to play.

- ▶ Organizations of persons with disabilities may lack formal recognition, funding and institutional capacity. This can prevent them from being able to represent the interests of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities as widely as they would like.
- ▶ Student groups and peer groups of disabled children and students are still rare or non-existent in many countries.

## The role of organizations of persons with disabilities in case study countries

### Brunei

Brunei has only very few, and very new organizations of disabled people, alongside other charity-based organizations. Norali, a university-aged blind student who is the first person to attend university in Brunei, was also one of the six founders of the Brunei National Blind Association, part of the East-Asia Pacific Blind Union and the World Blind Union. There is also an organization for persons with physical disabilities. None of the organizations, at present, has developed formal advocacy programmes in education.

### Samoa

In Samoa, the National Council for People with Disabilities in Samoa (Nuanua O Le Alofa, or NOLA), was established in 2001. It advocates for resources and services for persons with disabilities; promotes the interests of persons with disabilities to government, NGOs and the public. It works in cooperation with other organizations, both nationally and internationally, to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. The government consults the National Council regularly about issues of education, access, work and any other issues that affect persons with disabilities and, if members learn of other issues, meetings, or developments they will ask to participate. The council has formal representation on the government's Special Needs Education Advisory Committee. It has also played a significant role in a recent research project which involved conducting an adult disability survey in Samoa. Many members were involved as interviewers for the survey or ran community-awareness training activities. The president of the organization is chair of the Disability Action Task Force, a collaborative group monitoring the implementation of the Survey recommendations.

### Thailand

Thailand has had significant success in creating organizations of and for persons with disabilities and many regional offices of international organizations (Asia-Pacific Disability Centre, UNESCO, UNICEF, and others) are located in Bangkok. Although Thailand does not have a National Coordinating Committee on Disability (NCCD) other mechanisms exist to encourage input by persons with disabilities and their organizations. These include the Bureau of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities within the Office of Welfare Promotion, Protection and Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups at the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security as well as the Advisory Committee on Disability to the Prime Minister of Thailand. A significant national Disabled Persons Organization is the Council of Disabled People of Thailand (DPI-Thailand) which unites other national self-help organizations with parent groups. These include the Thailand Association of the Blind, Association of the Physically Handicapped of Thailand, National Association of the Deaf of Thailand and Association for the Retarded of Thailand and the Association of Parents for Children with Intellectual Impairment and Persons with Autism.<sup>69</sup> Leaders of the disability organizations represented on the two government committees claim that government policy has been driven by Disabled Peoples' Organizations. Ministry of Education officials have largely acknowledged this as a fact. Before the 1999 National Education Policy was formulated, extensive public forums were held to give government an opportunity to listen to the problems faced by persons with disabilities in acquiring an education, and to receive advice on strategies that would lead to

<sup>69</sup> A complete list of DPOs in Thailand is available on the website of the Asia Pacific Centre on Disability, based in Bangkok, under the Thailand country profile. <http://www.apcdproject.org/countryprofile/thailand/index.html>

vastly improved outcomes in the future. According to one advocate, having launched the campaign to push for the right to education to become national law and policy, it is now the duty of Disabled Peoples' Organizations to continue their action to push the policy into practice and ensure that the government is improving the effective implementation of the policy. The role of these organizations is critical to ensure successful implementation. They also play an important role in promoting education and persuading families of disabled children that they must take advantage of the now compulsory education that the government is committed to providing. They have also advocated strongly for access to tertiary education.

## Viet Nam

Viet Nam's disability organizations are relatively new. Only the National Blind Association qualified as a "mass organization" and was officially permitted, until recent changes allowed other associations to form. The Disability Forum groups together both international NGOs and local organizations of persons with disabilities, and includes members from over twenty disabled peoples' organizations at present. These organizations perform various activities, such as assistance to other persons with disabilities, vocational training programmes and other support, primarily focused on adults with disabilities. Several youth organizations do exist. However, these are also primarily focused on vocational training and employment for adolescents and young persons. These organizations also provide awareness activities such as sports days, cultural activities, sharing and peer-counselling and encourage positive attitudes and participation. There are some Disabled Persons' Organizations which have formal input into Ministry of Education planning. Collaborative planning events for inclusive education have taken place with the support of international funding agencies.

### *Feedback from a university age student in Viet Nam*

*A significant frustration was evident in an interview with Van, a member of the National Blind Association of Viet Nam. Van complained of the lack of technological supports for education of people with disabilities, particularly, more software and other technical supports should be available and should not be expensive. He felt that the government should create more opportunities that are not based on the individual's ability to pay. Support had come from overseas organizations for Braille materials but not for tools that are more sophisticated. Furthermore, he added that very few blind individuals are able to attend regular schools, only "excellent" students are able to attend and there seems to be greater possibilities in the South of Viet Nam than the North. Students who are able to attend secondary school often studied in special schools beforehand, then they were transferred to regular inclusive schools at higher grade levels. In computer science, there was a significant difference in support available for mainstream students and that for special students. He wondered why technological advances were not arriving in Viet Nam. Chances for tertiary schooling were slim for all students, not just for students with disabilities who have added difficulties with entrance exams. Some universities have, however, been "directed" by the government to accept blind students.*

In addition, Van explained that some administrators do not want to create inclusive schools, but to emphasize the "charity" aspect of all-disabled special schools to increase reception of funds from abroad. Van still feels immense discrimination in his personal life and great barriers between himself and the outside world. He feels "weak" and "empty". Fortunately, he was able to meet many volunteers in his years in school and has been able to be involved in a movement towards greater possibilities for people with disabilities. He was refused entry to many high schools whose officials stated that no law exists requiring them to accept blind people. He has since opted for a distance-learning programme, however, he claimed that it was not entirely appropriate for him, that it was not sufficiently difficult. He feels that the most important issue is to amend laws so that people with disabilities can more easily access secondary and university education. Van suggested that all "excellent" students should "gather together" to present their demands to the government and have a common voice to authorities in overcoming obstacles. He recommended a meeting between the Ministry of Education and people with disabilities to discuss plans of action.

## Recommendations for action by stakeholders

### Government

All stakeholders agreed that governments should consult with organizations of persons with disabilities, in addition to parents, parent organizations and families, regarding any developments in education, development and overall welfare of children with disabilities at the policy, ministry and school level. Consultation aims to make schools and ministries responsive to the needs of children with disabilities. Government legislation and policy should consider people with disabilities and their organizations as an integral part of the education community.

Governments should provide funds for disability-related activities that specifically increase collaboration between NGOs, disabled peoples' organizations and other community-based parties.

Governments should encourage schools to be open to participation from disabled peoples' organizations and others.

### Organizations of persons with disabilities

Disabled peoples' organizations should seek to strengthen their advocacy role with regard to the education of children with disabilities. This might include having a designated person responsible for change in this area. Representation should be encouraged of disabled persons at relevant education meetings, education committees, etc.

Disabled peoples' organizations should collaborate and cooperate with schools, to support the family and children with disabilities and to facilitate acceptance in school.

Disabled peoples' organizations should encourage establishment of peer support groups or the development of programmes for younger persons with disabilities.

Disabled peoples' organizations should organize public awareness and advocacy programmes to secure more support for student needs in schools. Older persons with disabilities should act as role models, sharing their experiences at schools and with teachers and administrators.

Disabled Peoples' organizations should consider developing and supporting self-advocacy groups for children and youth with disabilities, and establishing mentoring programmes between youth and adults with disabilities.

***Biwako Millennium Framework, Priority Area A.***

***Self-help organizations of persons with disabilities and related family and parent associations.***

*Target 1.* Governments, international funding agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should, by 2004, establish policies with the requisite resource allocations to support the development and formation of self-help organizations of persons with disabilities in all areas, and with a specific focus on slum and rural dwellers. Governments should take steps to ensure the formation of parents associations at local levels by the year 2005 and federate them at the national level by year 2010.

*Target 2.* Governments and civil society organizations should, by 2005, fully include organizations of persons with disabilities in their decision-making processes involving planning and programme implementation which directly and indirectly affect their lives.

*Action required to achieve targets*

1. Governments should implement measures under the direction of the national coordination committee on disability to increase the level of consultations between self-help organizations of persons with disabilities and diverse sectoral ministries, as well as with civil society and the private sector. These measures should include training of persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities, on how to participate effectively in the various decision-making processes. Governments should establish guidelines for the conduct of consultations and the process should be periodically reviewed and evaluated by representatives of self-help organizations of persons with diverse disabilities.
2. Governments should establish a policy review panel within the national coordination committee on disability consisting of representatives of persons with diverse disabilities. The panel should review all policies and their implementation which directly or indirectly affect persons with disabilities.
3. Governments should take action to increase the representation of persons with disabilities in all areas of public life, including government, at all levels from national to local, as well as the legislature and judicial bodies. This should be promoted by means of affirmative action and anti-discrimination legislation.
4. Self-help organizations should develop programmes for capacity-building to empower their members, including youth and women with disabilities, to take consultative and leadership roles in the community at large as well as in their own organizations and enable them to serve as trainers in the development of leadership and management skills of members of self-help organizations.

## **Lessons learned: Moving forward towards inclusive education for children with disabilities**

Disabled peoples' organizations have a critical role to play in advising government on policy and on implementation strategy. Their network of organizations and contact at grassroots level with the disability community puts them in a powerful position to influence families and the community and persuade families to send their children to school. They can act as one link between stakeholders. They can also broaden their membership beyond adults and encourage other, younger membership in their own organization or act as an umbrella group with other organizations.

The Biwako Millennium Framework places organizations of persons with disabilities at the forefront of action to be taken to achieve an inclusive, rights-based and barrier-free society by 2012. Achievements in Thailand demonstrate the significant contribution that can be made when strong organizations are

formed, and advocacy to government is received in a constructive and cooperative manner. Formal consultative status is the goal towards which all national organizations of persons with disabilities should work. This requires willingness to form cross-disability organizations, and for the disability community to work together.

In relation to education the voice of parents and families of children with disabilities is very important. Some parents of children with disabilities face frustration at the unwillingness of disabled peoples' organizations to include them as members. In other cases parents may be unaware of the rights of their children, lack the confidence to send them to school, or fear how they will be treated. Organizations of persons with disabilities have a responsibility to address both these issues.

## Checklist

1. How active are disabled peoples' organizations in the field of education in your country? Do they have chapters or subgroups for students with disabilities of all ages? Do they also support parents of children with disabilities?
2. Do disabled peoples' organizations have a voice in creating policy in the country? Are they accepted partners at the national and school level?
3. Are disabled peoples' organizations widespread in your country? Do they have representation at the community, regional and national levels? Do they reach out to rural areas?
4. Do disabled peoples' organizations share information on a regular basis on their own members' experiences and/or conduct research into schools' openness and success in teaching students with disabilities?
5. Does the government or the ministry of education consult with organizations of persons with disabilities in a formal manner in the formulation of policy to include children with disabilities in the educational system?
6. Has the government established an advisory council of persons with disabilities to inform it on all policy decisions concerning persons with disabilities, including children?
7. Are members of organizations of persons with disabilities represented on any national coordination council on disabilities?
8. What steps would you need to take to establish a formal consultation mechanism with organizations of persons with disabilities?

## B. Parents, families and caregivers of children with disabilities

### The challenge

#### Lack of parental education or awareness and external support

Parents, caretakers of their children, often have the most decisive role in the success of their children in attending school. While some parents may be over-protective and fear sending their children to school, others are convinced their children can succeed in a mainstream school. Even when schools are accepting of children and provide the support necessary for their education and growth, parents must overcome the everyday challenges that confront them in order to ensure that their children can continue schooling. Parents may not be formally educated, or may lack the knowledge, at the birth of their child, to help them cope with their difficulties. Parents may also not know how to access outside help to overcome these difficulties. Parents and teachers may also not have positive interactions related to the child.

As stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the family is “the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children” and “should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community.” Furthermore, all children, “for their full and harmonious development”, should be raised “in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.” These two ideas go hand-in-hand with the concept of inclusive education. Sending children to special schools can remove them from their families and take them away from a supportive environment at home. Secondly, services and support for parents are essential for them to maintain this role over time.

## Economic situation of the family

Parents and families of children with disabilities are faced with many obstacles. Studies about poverty and disability show that the added costs of meeting the healthcare, rehabilitation and other needs of children can overburden family resources. Parents, therefore, are doubly challenged in their efforts to raise and educate their children. Not only must they meet the additional needs of their children, often at great expense, but they must also attempt to overcome resistance on the part of schools and teachers in accepting their children in school. Sending their children to school may require payment of school fees, but certainly demands extra affiliated costs such as for books and materials, transportation and perhaps for meals at school. However, not sending children to school is even more costly in the long term:

“For children with disabilities the risk of poverty due to lack of education may be even higher than for children without disabilities. Children with disabilities who are excluded from education are virtually certain to be long-term, life-long poor. They almost inevitably become an economic burden on society and on their families.”<sup>70</sup>

However, this problem is a vicious circle, as “evidence suggests that those carers who become involved in the education of their children often are people with more resources.”<sup>71</sup> Extra efforts to assist the families of the most marginalized students are therefore essential to break this cycle.

## Barriers for children with disabilities

- ▶ Parents are not specialists with expertise in educating their children.
- ▶ Parents may be ill informed about who may be able to help their children.
- ▶ Families and teachers do not always have positive, constructive relationships, therefore losing the opportunity to use resources, expertise and willpower wisely.
- ▶ Teachers may resist cooperation with parents, finding them too “demanding” or overly intrusive.
- ▶ Financial and other factors may prevent parents from sending their children to school. Parents have to find and pay caretakers if they themselves must work outside of the home.
- ▶ Parents may lack means of communication and mutual support with other parents.
- ▶ Parents may be ignorant of the rights of their children to attend school.

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70 Ture Jonsson, Ronald Wiman, “Education, Poverty and Disability: A Technical Note prepared for the Poverty Reduction Sourcebook” 21 June 2001, p. 1.

71 UNESCO 2003, *Overcoming Exclusion*, p. 24.

## Parents, families and care-givers in Case Study countries

### Brunei

In Brunei, SMARTER is a parent's group for those with autistic children. A parent's group for Down's Syndrome is also being formed. In all schools, parents meet with teachers, throughout the year, for news about their child's learning and formation and progress on their individual education plans. The early intervention and support programmes that exist throughout the country also provide excellent opportunities for parents and families to be involved in their child's care, under the eyes of experts.

### Samoa

In Samoa, the care of children with disabilities was and still is primarily the responsibility of parents and family members. Education in Samoa for children with disabilities had, since the late 1970s, been primarily the domain of two NGOs. Although the government of Samoa passed the Compulsory Education Act<sup>72</sup> in 1992, the NGOs remain the main providers of support to children with disabilities. From 1993-1994, the government of Samoa reviewed all aspects of education in Samoa and this resulted in the Western Samoa Education Policies and Education Strategies 1995-2005.<sup>73</sup>

#### *Comments from parents in Samoa*

Ana, parent of Harry, reported that when Harry was small she could tell he was slow but that he was well behaved, quiet and did not get into trouble. Sometimes, if he was angry, he would cry but he did not hit other children. Her daughter, Luisa, was also labelled as "slow" but is in the regular class at the same school. Harry had attended another primary school at the age of five but it was very difficult for him; the lessons were very hard and he could not keep up. In 2003, his mother transferred him to another school because there was a Special Needs Education teacher with her own class where some of his school work began to improve. Ana preferred him to be with an SNE teacher, which is why she wanted him at the new school. She said he gets along with the other students but he doesn't have any friends. She was not aware of any parent groups but thought it would be a good idea and she would go along if anything was started.

Faiupu, mother of Kiwi, reported that Kiwi was born normal and then became totally blind at five months of age. He was not sick and she did not know what caused this. The doctor told her to take him overseas when he was older but she was not able to afford to do this. He went to the Marist Brothers school first as they would accept him as a blind student. Then he attended his village school, which has a Special Needs Education teacher. She liked him to be with "normal" students so he could learn from them. She said she would like to meet other parents but was not aware of any parent support groups.

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72 Western Samoa Compulsory Education Act 1992.

73 Western Samoa Education Policies & Education Strategies 1995-2005.

## Thailand

In Thailand, persons with disabilities and organizations of parents of disabled children have participated in the drafting of ministerial regulations concerning the provision of education by the family. Families and community organizations have also been encouraged to take part in educational management. Families may approach a regular school directly to inquire about admission and, when this occurs, the school must complete an Individual Education Plan (IEP), or request the special education centre to do so. Special funding of 2,000 baht per child will only be provided when the special education centre approves the individualised education plan. Community members and the school communities are encouraged to take parents of children with disabilities to the special education centres. The centres run 15-day parent training programmes and provide on-going support to families. Many families in rural villages and poor urban slum communities do not take their disabled infants and children to be registered. The registration process requires the family or disabled person, with their identification papers, to go to a hospital to register. The CBR centres in Thailand have encouraged formation of family and parent support groups. The Parents Association for Mental Retardation expressed extreme concern about the conditions for the education of children with mental retardation, claiming that teachers in regular schools have negative attitudes and do not have the training and expertise necessary to teach these children. The preferred option is sometimes to place them in special schools even though the parents would prefer the regular school option.

## Viet Nam

In Viet Nam, daily struggles for financial survival of all members of the family still impact the ability of children to attend school. Family is the key for aiding children with disabilities in rural areas and siblings can aid the child in their work at home. However, the great difficulty is often having enough money to feed everyone in the family. On the question of parental involvement in the disability education process, the Viet Nam Veterans of America Foundation (VAAF) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) have both undertaken advocacy programmes for parents in the 2003/2004. Parents associations are also part of the Ministry of Education and Training/World Bank Primary Education for Disadvantaged Children project on community awareness. Some parent groups already exist to do volunteer work with schools, such as cleaning and other tasks.

## Recommendations for action by stakeholders

### Government

Governments should recognize the important role of families of children with disabilities and the heavy responsibility they carry. Funds should be available to families in difficulty to help with fees, uniforms, books, transportation and any other associated costs. Support for families of children with disabilities, both financial and through services, should be a priority for government policy.

Governments and other donors should support the establishment of parent groups in addition to other support systems for children without parents. Financial support should be offered in addition to other capacity building and strengthening efforts.

Any special disability boards should include representatives of parents of children with disabilities and their families.

### Parents and families

Families must be willing to follow the school's programme at home and work to have a positive relationship with the teacher and school. Parents and families could assist the school in various ways, such as developing teaching materials required by the child. Parents could stand in as teacher's assistants or volunteers. Parents could also encourage other volunteers to help out, guided by the teacher.

Parents should request regular meetings with teachers to include their viewpoints in the decision making process and parents should develop a positive relationship with the teacher.

Parents should seek out support for parent exchanges both locally, regionally and internationally to share ideas and ways of strengthening the capacity of their support groups. For example, the PRIDE (Pacific Region Initiative for the Development of Basic Education) project develops a local parent exchange under their guidance. Parents should also participate in regional and international workshops.

## Schools and teachers

Schools should collaborate directly with parents, on both an individual-case basis and in groups in order to inform teachers about the children and allow parents to learn from teachers. Schools/teachers and parents should have regular meetings throughout the school term, to discuss issues with regards to the child's progress, plans of action, any problems arising at home or in the community.

Schools should institute parent clubs to promote the involvement of parents in learning and other school community activities (e.g. sports days, open days, culture days, etc.). School boards and other groups should include representatives from parents of children with disabilities individually or as members of groups. If parents' organizations already exist, a sub-group should be formed for parents of children with disabilities and outreach should be encouraged.

Teachers and schools must be responsible for the safety of the child. As one expert has written, "Schools may cause exclusion when they are not able to deal with violence, bullying and abuse between learners, between learners and teachers and between the school staff. Care givers are not likely to send their children to a centre of learning which they do not perceive as being safe, and learners and teachers cannot be expected to work in such an environment".<sup>74</sup>

Schools should welcome parents in training or workshops organised by the ministry of education and /or NGOs in the education of children with disabilities. Special courses could be developed on parent-teacher interaction and cooperation.

Schools should have peer support groups to allow children, adolescents and adults with disabilities to share their ideas and concerns with one another.

Schools should provide information for parents about what resources are available for their child and which organizations can help them. Schools should encourage volunteerism and keep a database of volunteers.

## Communities

Poorer urban communities and rural provinces need to persuade parents of disabled children that they must view education as a right for their children and take advantage of the opportunities offered by many governments' mandatory system of free and compulsory education.

Health staff should inform parents about other children in the village or community and encourage parents to meet.

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74 UNESCO, *Overcoming Exclusion*, p. 22.

## Lessons learned: Moving forward towards inclusive education for children with disabilities

Investing time in helping the educational system to improve is one way parents can feel effectively involved and feel that they are contributing to a solution that can help both their own children and others in the future. Developing parent support groups will allow informal information sharing and provide emotional support.

The special education centres, schools and the community organizations need to take steps to find families with children with disabilities, to provide them with support and encourage them to send their children to school. They need to ensure that parents are welcome and fully involved in decisions about their children's schooling. A close relationship is needed so that the family and school work in partnership to best assist and promote the development of children with disabilities.

It is important to find out the reasons why families with children with disabilities do not send them to school, when school attendance is available or compulsory. School and the community can play an important role in contacting families, assisting them to take the first step and providing support in the early stages. Systems of peer support can make a big difference to the experience a child with a disability has in their early years at school. In Thailand, both children with disabilities and their non-disabled peers spoke in very positive terms about their relationships and enjoyment in sharing their school experiences.

Support given to families in the years before school entry are very important and contribute greatly to the likely success when the children enter school. Careful planning or transition from one stage to the next is important, with full consultation with families at every step of the way. Encouraging children with disabilities to attend pre-school is an important step in breaking down the barriers to inclusion in mainstream educational settings.

The issue of poverty is a very important issue and government needs to take measures to provide education for children living in poverty without disadvantaging parents and families who are unable to meet the additional costs. This issue extends beyond children with disabilities to many other groups of out-of-school children who may be living in extreme poverty. If the cycle is to be broken support must be provided to these families to enable their children to attain an education which should provide a pathway to a better life.

### Checklist

1. How much do schools and ministries cooperate with parents? What activities could be conducted to mutually benefit both schools and families?
2. Is any financial support available to help parents of children with disabilities? Either in paying for school fees or other additional costs?
3. Are the schools and teachers set up to include parents' input? Are there regular parent-teacher meetings? Do parents have sufficient information about their role in assisting their child at home?
4. Do parents have information about how to contact other parents for mutual help and information on how to proceed? Does the school offer to share information between parents?
5. What do parents and children need the most? What are the key factors preventing parents from sending their children to school?
6. Do schools welcome parents as partners and encourage them to play an active role in their child's education?
7. Are their systems of peer-support set up within the school? Do these networks continue into community activities?

## C. Community members

### The challenge

The community can play an important role in the development of children with disabilities. It can create a positive and encouraging environment, conducive to learning. Many factors outside of the school influence the child's life and capability to grow and flourish. As with many children, positive attitudes among the adults in whose care they are raised is essential if children are to develop a sense of their own self worth. This community of adults and others can extend far beyond the immediate family of the child, to include neighbours and friends, relatives such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, or older siblings and even the employers of their parents and the administrators of the schools and hospitals with whom they come into contact. This community may not be welcoming or may not sufficiently value education for children with disabilities.

### Public education and the force of attitudes: positive and negative

Civil society, including citizens who work within the government, and extending to any religious or other community organizations, must be encouraged to comprehend the importance of inclusion. Inclusion should be "well understood and not seen as a threat or something that only applies to a few children".<sup>75</sup> Negative attitudes towards differences, discrimination and prejudice are significant roadblocks to including children in school.<sup>76</sup> In Romania, a study revealed that negative attitudes of teachers and adults are the major barrier to inclusion – other children do not have prejudice unless adults around them act as negative examples.<sup>77</sup>

### Students' social and community environments

Besides all of the other challenges that face a child with disabilities, structural difficulties in the form of transportation, the payment of fees and the purchase of supplies could be those that can rely the most on external assistance to be overcome. It is therefore necessary to consider the causes and effects of having a disabled child in the family, including poverty, limited ability for the caregiver to travel to work and leave the child at home and other socio-economic variables depending on the country and level of development. It is necessary to understand the reasons that children do not go to school to help to overcome these specific obstacles. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may be lacking more than finances, their parents are likely to have less education, they may be from a linguistic or cultural minority; they may be already excluded for these other reasons.

### Barriers for children with disabilities

Parents of children *without* disabilities often discriminate against children and their parents in need of help. Other parents can influence teachers and schools to reject children with disabilities. They may be afraid that their children will receive less attention and resources.

Many communities have traditionally rejected children with disabilities from schools. Inclusive education is "new" for most countries and this approach requires considerable community education and awareness-raising in order to achieve acceptance.

Government services at the community level may or may not be integrated, leaving parents on their own to find all the possible sources of assistance throughout the community.

Families of children with disabilities may not be encouraged to participate in community groups and activities, thus limiting the opportunities for the children to be included.

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75 UNESCO, *Overcoming Exclusion*, p. 24.

76 UNESCO, *Overcoming Exclusion*, p. 10.

77 UNESCO (2001a) *Including the Excluded: Meeting diversity in education. Example from Romania*. Paris: UNESCO.

## The role of the community in case study countries

### Brunei

Brunei has developed a well-known series of services for children with disabilities beginning with pre-natal care in maternal and child health clinics. The early intervention centres then facilitate other interactions related to placing children in school when they are older. The Child Development Centre has direct contact with the Special Education Unit of the Ministry of Education, which is in charge of inclusive education for the entire country. In Brunei, creative partnerships exist between disabled peoples' organizations and the private sector, encouraging fund-raising from corporate and private sources. The small size of the country works in favour of cooperation, but centralization leads to a situation where services are better developed in the capital city than elsewhere. Schools have held public awareness events such as music and sports events have included students with disabilities and their families.

### Samoa

The Samoan culture has always highly valued education. The combination of influences from the local family and community and the global community continue to develop a stronger and more inclusive understanding of the right to education for ALL children. In Samoa, anecdotal information credits the growing awareness of parents and staff at the NGO schools as one of the key catalysts for inclusion of children with disabilities into the policy and strategy documents. A teacher's manual was developed in 2002 on including children with disabilities into village schools. The national organization of people with disabilities has been very active in developing awareness through community workshops, sports days, the media, family support workshops, public speaking, and guest lectures at the National University of Samoa.

### Thailand

The Guidelines for the Educational Service Area (ESA) offices throughout the country, state that one of their responsibilities is to raise awareness of parents, community and local authorities to understand clearly that Thais, of all ages and gender, have equal access and opportunity to a quality education service. The 1999 National Education Act clearly mandates that this applies to all persons with disabilities. Special education centres in each province facilitate the process of finding out-of-school children and assist families when their children are identified, by providing early intervention and assisted access to school. The extent to which the search for out-of-school children is implemented depends on the resources and determination of specific special education centre personnel, the level of community awareness, cooperation with community-based disability field workers, awareness and willingness of parents to send their children to school, and the willingness of schools to accept them. The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security is also engaged in the process of trying to find out-of-school children and conducts awareness activities at the village level to encourage the registration of children with disabilities. There is an intensive awareness raising programme undertaken by special education centre staff and in areas where there are community-based disability initiatives, such as in the Roi-Et area,<sup>78</sup> to encourage families to register their disabled children and family members.

### Viet Nam

In Viet Nam, one of the strategic goals of the Education for All Action Plan for 2003-2015 is "Mobilizing Full Community Participation for Education." Indeed, all provinces were involved in a pilot project to encourage the preparation of EFA plans across the nation.

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78 Sathaporn, 2004, op. cit.

## Recommendations for action by stakeholders

### Government

The government, the local or central education administration should develop more low-cost, high distribution documents to share how and why children with disabilities should go to school.

Governments should support the development of ancillary services that enable children with disabilities to access education such as early intervention, physical rehabilitation, medical treatment and support for families.

### Schools

Schools should hold events, including teachers, other children and community leaders, which encourage positive attitudes towards children with disabilities and publicize their right to education.

Schools should act as points of contact and share information with the community about education for children with disabilities.

Heads of schools and local government officials should approach religious and community leaders and ask them to take an active role in persuading parents to send their children to school.

### Community

Community leaders, families, parents, women's organizations, religious and disabled persons' organizations should create greater awareness, understanding and acceptance of children with disabilities. All parties should advocate for the right to inclusion in all aspects of society. All levels of the system, from high-ranking bureaucrats to provincial, area and district officials, schools, community and villages must be included in awareness programmes about the rights to education of persons with disabilities.

Local authorities should ensure that additional stakeholders, besides teachers, are involved in the provision of education for children with disabilities to emphasize life skills and vocational training.

Inclusive education efforts should be made in areas where community-based rehabilitation programmes (CBR) are in place. CBR programmes should be encouraged for the full support and empowering of persons with disabilities in communities, and encouraging their full inclusion in all aspects of community life.

The private sector, through local businesses, should be encouraged to sponsor schools and events that support inclusive education of children with disabilities.

Community organizations should play a main role in the formation of parent groups at the village or commune level.

Representatives of disabled peoples' organizations and parent associations should be invited by community leaders to attend commune and local government meetings. In addition, community leaders should be invited to attend meetings of disabled peoples' organizations and parent associations when the topics are relevant and community involvement and support is sought.

Any rights-based training programmes such as those advocating implementation of the convention on the rights of the child should include the rights of children with disabilities in both village and national campaigns.

Community leaders can assist in awareness-raising at the community-level for the education of children with disabilities, using the necessary information and strategies to convince the parents to send their children to school.

## Organizations of persons with disabilities

Disabled peoples' organizations should conduct awareness training in rural and remote areas and at the village level on education. They should reach out more to remote areas and to disadvantaged communities. Urban branches of these organizations could hold training for rural branches of their organizations or with rural communities to encourage the formation of new organizations.

Disabled peoples organizations should strengthen their representation at community level, linking parents with community, schools and other relevant organizations and activities for children.

## Health professionals and institutions

Hospitals should be included as another outreach point to find and aid parents of children with disabilities. Parents will often contact medical authorities to address their children's problems. The ministry of health could play an important role.

Other community organizations should also stimulate the formulation of clubs and regular meetings and ensure that children and families of people with disabilities are included in all community activities. Parent clubs could meet at each other's homes, schools or community centres.

Hospitals, special education centres, disabled peoples' organizations, parent support groups and social workers should visit families as soon as possible after the child is diagnosed with a disability. They should be able to give support and advice to families.

Education and health staff should offer training on children's rights, disability, inclusive education, community-based rehabilitation and how to support the children with disabilities at home.

### *Biwako Millennium Framework for Action*

Strengthened community-based approaches to the prevention of causes of disability, rehabilitation and empowerment of persons with disabilities

Many developing countries in the region are now beginning to augment and replace traditional institutional and centralized rehabilitation programmes and projects with approaches better suited to their social and economic environments of poverty, high unemployment and limited resources for social services. Community-based rehabilitation programmes form the hub of such strategies. The community-based approach is particularly appropriate for the prevention of causes of disability, early identification and intervention of children with disabilities, reaching out to persons with disabilities in rural areas and raising awareness and advocacy for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all activities in the community, including social, cultural and religious activities. Education, training and employment needs could also be met by this approach. It is essential that persons with disabilities exercise choice and control over initiatives for community-based rehabilitation.

## Lessons learned: Moving forward towards inclusive Education for children with disabilities

Indeed, while the community can be a part of the problem, they can also be a part of the solution. It is clear that community-based solutions can be very effective and put into place faster, in some cases, than government policy. The Biwako Millennium Framework for Action stresses the importance of strengthening community-based approaches as one principle in the prevention of causes of disability, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Interaction between the DPOs, communities and families should work towards fostering positive attitudes within schools, among teachers and other children, as well as towards encouraging an increase in expertise about this issue. Over time, governments, especially ministries of education, need to include plans and programmes for increasing their capacity to teach children with disabilities. In addition, parents and community leaders can help to facilitate this longer-term process, by contributing advice and direction to the government and to schools, both formally and informally.

A method of ensuring that key stakeholders are well networked and collaborative is crucial. The use of databases, hospital birth registrations, DPOs, parent groups, early intervention programmes, school census, and community health worker visits must be coordinated so that all are sharing information in order to plan, develop and monitor support and services. When these groups are linked and taught how to share information, how to problem-solve together, how to plan together, the outcomes are realistic, creative, practical and one of the best ways to safeguard the practices of "inclusion." Models for networks should be presented to promote the cross-sectoral effects of disability issues and the need for all stakeholders to work cooperatively and collaboratively.

According to a recent e-discussion on poverty and disability, participants stated that: "local solutions based in local communities will be more effective for disabled people than those funds channelled through governments." While the government holds enormous responsibility for providing education, the local community can be sure that the specific needs of their community members are met, through local government and school administration and volunteer activities.

### Checklist

1. Are communities actively involved in encouraging out-of-school children to attend school?
2. Are all service providers in the local community aware and encouraging of the inclusion of children with disabilities in schools? (i.e. doctors, hospitals, maternal health centres, social support centres, social workers, family and child protection services) Are there any community members who oppose inclusion of children with disabilities in school?
3. Are any counselling and support services available in the community for families of children with disabilities? Are community services for persons with disabilities coordinated in any way?
4. Are community actors such as other community development NGOs aware of disability as an issue? Have they been approached to include families of children with disabilities in their programmes?
5. How can CBR programmes support children with disabilities, with particular attention on including them in schools?
6. What actions can be taken at community level to encourage community groups to take special steps to include children with disabilities in all their activities?
7. Are any meetings held in the community to raise awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities in general, and of the particular right of children with disabilities to attend school?

# Listening to children: Consultations in Thailand and Viet Nam

## The challenge

In some situations parents of children with disabilities have acted as advocates for their children and contributed to achieving changes in school systems and improved opportunities for their children to receive an appropriate education in the regular school system. More often than not, however, parents are ill-informed about the right their children have to education and their obligation to send them to school. They are frequently reluctant to do so, fearing that their child will be subjected to ridicule and bullying.

It is even more uncommon for children with disabilities to be consulted about their own education, or to be asked what their needs are and how they can best be met.

In some developed countries, children with disabilities are active participants in setting their own learning goals and targets, within the framework of an individualized educational plan (IEP).

Within the context of the UNESCO case studies, Plan International, Plan Thailand and Plan in Viet Nam, worked in cooperation with the UNESCO project to conduct consultations with children with disabilities in both Thailand and Viet Nam. Approximately 40 children were involved, in age groups from 11-14 and from 15-18 years. In Thailand children were from a rural province.

The barriers, recommendations and aspirations for the future of the children who took part in these consultations are presented below.

## Barriers for children with disabilities

- ▶ Teachers lack the professional training and experience necessary to teach children with disabilities, and have difficulty developing individual teaching plans for children with disabilities.
- ▶ Families do not always encourage their children with disabilities to attend school, and do not provide the support needed when they are there.
- ▶ Children with disabilities are not always welcome in the local school and the special schools are often located far from the villages and involve the children leaving home.
- ▶ Children and youth in the villages, and sometimes in schools, make fun of children with disabilities and bully and persecute them.
- ▶ Children with disabilities have very limited opportunities to attend pre-school.
- ▶ In secondary school in particular, teachers do not have any special training and have so many students to teach that they find it difficult to teach children with disabilities adequately.
- ▶ School buildings are often inaccessible, with long distances between classrooms, which makes it difficult for children with physical disabilities.
- ▶ Health services and physiotherapy can be expensive and not always available at the village level.

- ▶ There is no financial support to families who have extra costs in caring for children with disabilities.
- ▶ There are few scholarships for children with disabilities to help them attend high school or university.
- ▶ There are very limited opportunities for vocational training for children and youth with disabilities who are out of school.
- ▶ Organizations of disabled persons are not active in all areas and villages and children with disabilities and their families are not given any information about government education policy, the fact that it is compulsory for children with disabilities to attend school and that all schools must accept them.
- ▶ Local council does not provide any information to families of children with disabilities about services and entitlements for which they may be eligible.
- ▶ When disability surveys are conducted in the villages no information is provided on the purpose of the survey and there is no follow-up action to improve the situation of children with disabilities.

## Children in Thailand

- ▶ The children with disabilities in the Thailand consultation were from the same rural province in which the case study was conducted. They ranged in age from 11 to 18 years. Two children had never attended school. Three children who completed grade six did not continue their studies because they were unable to travel the distance to school. Most of the children had attended school from grade one at seven years of age, encouraged by their parents or grand-parents who wanted them to be educated.
- ▶ Some of the statements made by the children are presented below.
- ▶ Children in the younger age group, 11-14 years, said that they were happy at school and enjoyed learning and playing and liked the teachers and their friends. Some of the older children reported feeling shy and embarrassed, that some students made fun of them and teachers did not pay them much attention. Some students found it difficult to walk the distances necessary to attend all their classes in high school.
- ▶ Most children said they had the full support of their parents but there were some cases where this was not the case.
- ▶ Most of the children who were in school wanted to continue their studies to grade 12, and some wanted to go on to study at the college level. The children who had left school early wanted to attend vocational training courses and be employed in the village doing something like hair-dressing or motor mechanics.
- ▶ Most children felt that the majority of people in the community are helpful to people with disabilities, but some reported that some people laughed at them.
- ▶ The children knew nothing about the Education Act or educational policy which gave children with disabilities the specific right to attend school from 1999 in Thailand. They said that surveys on persons with disabilities had been conducted in their villages but they never knew what the surveys were for and there was no follow-up action.
- ▶ The children said that there was no disabled peoples' organization in their village or at sub-district or district level, as far as they knew. The community leaders, local council and government officials never give them any information about educational provisions or welfare budgets for persons with disabilities.

## Children in Viet Nam

Twenty two children participated in the consultation, held in Hanoi. There were 16 children with a variety of disabilities, five at primary school, seven at lower secondary school level and two at higher secondary school. Two children attended separate Blind Association schools. Six non-disabled peers attended as facilitators.

At the end of the consultation children completed personal questionnaires reflecting on the discussions.

- ▶ Seventy eight per cent of the children said they preferred to learn in inclusive education classes. The others preferred to learn in special classes due to their specific learning needs and the wish to learn with other children who shared the same disability.
- ▶ Forty four per cent of children said that their teachers often provided them with opportunity to participate in class activities. The others reported that this was less frequent in their situation.
- ▶ Ninety one per cent of children reported that they usually shared their concerns with close friends because their friends are always available, easy to talk to, that they listen to them and do not tease them, always supporting them in their study and encouraging them , and help taking them to and from school.
- ▶ Forty one per cent of the children reported that local organizations in the communities and/or their neighbours usually support them. The others reported a lesser degree of support.
- ▶ Most of the children acknowledged that their parents love them the most and often give them priority as compared with other children in the family because they are the most vulnerable child. There were exceptions who reported that parents did not support the children going to school and did not help them with their studies.
- ▶ Most of the children wanted their parents to give them more support and encouragement for their education and spend more time helping them with their homework and taking them to and from school.

In terms of their short and long term dreams, in the current situation most of the children wished to be treated “so that they become normal” and are able to study well. In the longer term a third of the children wanted to become doctors and another third wanted to become teachers.

## Recommendations for action by stakeholders

### Governments

- ▶ Governments should make sure all teachers are trained in teaching methodology and skills to enable them to teach children with disabilities.
- ▶ Governments should consult more with children with disabilities to understand their views so that their concerns and suggested solutions to challenges are reflected in the strategy and interventions for including children with disabilities in school.
- ▶ Governments should establish a system for keeping a record of all children with disabilities, and there should be a monitoring and evaluation process to make sure that the quality of services to children with disabilities is high, and that all their rights are protected.
- ▶ Governments should make sure that village health services pay more attention to “small” children with disabilities.
- ▶ Governments should protect and uphold the rights of children with disabilities to ensure that they are given equal opportunities to receive education and develop their potential.

- ▶ Governments should ensure that children with disabilities have equal rights to those of non-disabled children, with full access to free education, including uniforms, educational materials and transportation.
- ▶ Governments should ensure that children with disabilities are able to attend their local community school so that they can be educated with their friends, with understanding and care from their teachers.
- ▶ Governments should provide special learning or education centres for children who cannot learn in the regular school. These centres should be available in rural as well as urban areas.
- ▶ Governments should adopt proactive policies for children and young people with disabilities, providing an education fund and scholarships and extra points for entrance exams to universities and colleges.
- ▶ Governments should provide financial support to families of children with disabilities and assist with transportation to health facilities as well as to school.
- ▶ Governments should provide particular assistance to young people with disabilities to make sure that they can attend vocational training and attain employment. Alternative training and employment should be provided if youth with disabilities are not able to access regular training programmes and employment.
- ▶ Governments should make sure that there are good facilities for children with disabilities, including sports and playgrounds, computers, wheelchairs, hearing aids and learning aids and devices.

### **Schools and teachers**

- ▶ Teachers should have the skills and understanding to make good practical decisions in their class teaching, such as placing children with disabilities in front rows in class, giving clear explanations and responding to signals and communication from disabled children. Additional teaching time should be made available when necessary.
- ▶ Awareness raising and preparation for including children with disabilities in regular schools should be carried out for teachers, students and the whole school community.
- ▶ Appropriate teaching aids should be available for all kinds of children with disabilities.
- ▶ The curriculum should be modified and some exemptions granted, as in gymnastics for children with physical disabilities, but more suitable activities should be planned that are accessible for children with disabilities.
- ▶ Teachers should trust children with disabilities and provide them with equal opportunities, with more opportunity to participate in suitable class activities.
- ▶ Teachers should hold frequent discussions with parents and families on the progress of children with disabilities, and there should be a reduction in school fees when families do not have the capacity to pay.
- ▶ The school and teachers should assign capable children to support children with disabilities in their study, games and play and in everyday life in general.

### **Families**

- ▶ All family members, including grandparents, parents, siblings and other relatives, should give support and encouragement to children with disabilities, in their daily life and in their studies, so that they should have less house work and more time for study, receiving help with difficult homework and transport to and from school.

- ▶ Parents especially should be aware of the rights of children with disabilities.
- ▶ Parents and other family members should be provided with training to help them care for their disabled children at home.

### **Community, NGOs and Self-Help Organizations**

- ▶ Schools and the community should hold awareness raising sessions for classmates, teachers, parents and other community members so that they understand the rights and capabilities of children with disabilities, so they will work actively to implement the rights.
- ▶ Awareness campaigns should be held throughout the community using a variety of forms of mass media.
- ▶ The community should help to take care of their health and other needs.
- ▶ The community should assist with support for equipment and special learning aids, devices and materials, hearing aids, vision aids and wheel-chairs.
- ▶ Information and consulting centres should be established in the community where children, parents and the community can come for advice.
- ▶ The community should hold exchange forums and games and activities where children with disabilities can participate so that they become more confident in social activities.
- ▶ Support should be provided from schools, teachers, classmates, communities, local leaders, donor agencies and the local and international organizations working with them, and especially from the families so that children with disabilities are integrated into the schools and the community.
- ▶ Overall, the community should provide more consideration for children with disabilities and more support and resources to include them in all aspects of life, possibly with the establishment of a special fund within local village councils for children with disabilities.
- ▶ Local village councils should encourage and support the establishment of organizations of persons with disabilities at the community or sub-district level to work with councils to ensure that children with disabilities are included in all village council planning and all community activities. There should be a special development plan, with a budget, for children with disabilities and they should be invited to provide input into the plan and the organization of activities.
- ▶ The community in partnership with non-government agencies should provide suitable vocational training and job placement opportunities for children and young people with disabilities.

### **Lessons learned: Moving forward towards inclusive education for children with disabilities**

Clearly children with disabilities have an invaluable contribution to make to any discussion of their rights and of solutions to the challenges that they face.

Not only did they articulate actions that need to be taken by government, schools and communities in relation to ensuring that they have equal access to good quality education. They also identified the need for providing services to children with disabilities at the youngest age, to make sure that they can benefit from educational opportunities at the next stage in their lives.

They also identified the need to provide support and training to their families, to give them the best chance in life, and they observed that families may need to be educated and informed on the rights of their disabled children to education and equal opportunities in all aspects of community life.

The Bwako Millennium Framework has stated that persons with disabilities are the most qualified and best equipped to support, inform and advocate for themselves and other persons with disabilities. This

statement applies to children with disabilities as well, and consultations with children with disabilities would benefit all levels of decision-making, in education and in relation to all matters concerning children.

## Conclusion

### Moving forward towards inclusive education for all children with disabilities

Inclusive education is the means by which Education for All can be achieved. Significant progress is being made towards the development of more inclusive processes in many education systems. Expertise has been generated and is being shared on a regional basis. Leadership has been displayed by many agencies with effective partnerships formed between civil society organizations and United Nations agencies, working together with governments at national and local level.

There is an increasing understanding of the concept of inclusive education, its relationship to special needs or special education. The importance of increased support to schools and teachers is appreciated as their roles and methods of teaching are transformed during the early stages of a transition which involves moving towards more inclusive school and classroom practices. It is being recognized that there is no one perfect model of inclusive education but that the basic principles underpinning it will give rise to a range of patterns and procedures which are appropriate in each local context. In some systems some children will be individually identified, assessed and funded. In others all children will be accepted directly into the school. The key to successful learning outcomes for all children, and a satisfying professional experience for all school personnel, will be clear policy and implementation guidelines and carefully planned comprehensive and appropriate teacher training at pre-service, in-service and on-going levels. Support systems must be in place. Data collection systems, monitoring and evaluation procedures must be carefully linked to inform progress and the on-going planning process.

The gap between the ideal of inclusive education and the current provision for children with disabilities in most countries of the region is still too great. This is true even in countries like Thailand, where policy and legislation mandate the right to education for every child with a disability in Thailand. Achieving equity in educational opportunity takes time and a sustained commitment from every person involved. Inclusive education for children with disabilities will not be achieved unless proactive steps are taken at every level of the education system, and in the community. We need to reach a point where our concern is with finding the last five per cent of children with disabilities, not wondering how we can achieve an enrolment rate of between 10 and 20 per cent for this group of children that is still the subject of so much discrimination and rejection. While we are in this transitional stage of working to find the majority of children with disabilities in our societies, and to include them in our school systems, we need to specifically target this minority group of children, and ensure that our education systems are well prepared to meet their unique and specific needs.

#### ***Role of the state:***

The role of the state is central if good-quality basic education is to become both a right and a reality for every citizen. Education for All requires enforceable legislation, equitable long-term investments and well-managed technically sound education strategies. Non-governmental and community provision and private-sector investment have their place in education but they cannot provide a long-term substitute for state action and responsibility.

EFA Global Monitoring Report 2002/3.  
Gender and Education For All. The Leap to Equality. p. 271.

## Annexes



# Six goals of the Dakar Framework for Action

## **The Dakar Framework for Action<sup>80</sup>**

### **Education For All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments**

Text adopted by the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000.

#### **Article 7:**

We hereby collectively commit ourselves to the attainment of the following goals:

- (1) expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- (2) ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- (3) ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
- (4) achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- (5) eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
- (6) improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

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80 <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/en-conf/dakframeng.shtm>

# Biwako Millennium Framework for Action: Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific

## Priority Area C: Early detection, early intervention and education

### 1. Critical issues

24. Available evidence suggests that less than 10 per cent of children and youth with disabilities have access to any form of education. This compares with an enrolment rate of over 70 per cent for non-disabled children and youth in primary education in the Asia-Pacific region. This situation exists despite international mandates declaring that education is a basic right for all children and calling for the inclusion of all children in primary education by 2015. Governments should ensure the provision of appropriate education which responds to the needs of children with all types of disabilities in the next decade. It is recognized that there is wide variation in the response which governments in the Asian-Pacific region have made in providing education for children with disabilities, and that children are currently educated in a variety of formal and informal educational settings and in separate and inclusive schools.
25. The exclusion of children and youth with disabilities from education results in their exclusion from opportunities for further development, particularly diminishing their access to vocational training, employment, income generation and business development. Failure to access education and training prevents the achievement of economic and social independence and increases vulnerability to poverty in what can become a self-perpetuating, inter-generational cycle.
26. Infants and young children with disabilities require access to early intervention services, including early detection and identification (birth to four years old), with support and training to parents and families to facilitate the maximum development of the full potential of their disabled children. Failure to provide early detection, identification and intervention to infants and young children with disabilities and support to their parents and caretakers results in secondary disabling conditions which further limit their capacity to benefit from educational opportunities. Provision of early intervention should be a combined effort of education, health and/or social services.
27. Currently education for children and youth with disabilities is predominantly provided in special schools in urban centres and is available to limited numbers of children in many countries of the Asia-Pacific region. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education recommended that inclusive education, with access to education in regular local neighbourhood or community schools provides the best opportunity for the majority of children and youth with disabilities to receive an education, including those in rural areas.

Exceptions to this rule should be considered on a case-by-case basis where only education in a special school or establishment can be shown to meet the needs of the individual child. It is acknowledged that in some instances special education may be considered to be the most

appropriate form of education for some children with disabilities.<sup>81</sup> The education of all children, including children with disabilities, in local or community schools assists in breaking down barriers and negative attitudes and facilitates social integration and cohesion within communities. The involvement of parents and the local community in community schools further strengthens this process.

28. Major barriers to the provision of quality education for children with disabilities in all educational contexts include the lack of early identification and intervention services, negative attitudes, exclusionary policies and practices, inadequate teacher training, particularly training of all regular teachers to teach children with diverse abilities, inflexible curriculum and assessment procedures, inadequate specialist support staff to assist teachers of special and regular classes, lack of appropriate teaching equipment and devices and failure to make modifications to the school environment to make it fully accessible. These barriers can be overcome through policy, planning, implementation of strategies and allocation of resources to include children and youth with disabilities in all national health and education development initiatives available to non-disabled children and youth.
29. Governments, in collaboration with other stakeholders, need to provide sport, leisure and recreational activities and facilities for persons with disabilities, as the fulfilment of their basic rights to the improvement of life.

## 2. Millennium Development Goal

30. In this priority area the Millennium Development Goal is to ensure that by the year 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and boys and girls will have equal access to all levels of education.

## 3. Targets

- Target 6.* Children and youth with disabilities will be an integral part of the population targeted by the Millennium Development Goal of ensuring that by 2015 all boys and girls will complete a full course of primary schooling.
- Target 7.* At least 75 per cent of children and youth with disabilities of school age will, by 2010, be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.
- Target 8.* By 2012, all infants and young children (birth to four years old) will have access to and receive community-based early intervention services, which ensure survival, with support and training for their families.
- Target 9.* Governments should ensure detection of disabilities as early as possible.

## 4. Action required to achieve targets

1. Governments should enact legislation, with enforcement mechanisms, to mandate education for all children, including children with disabilities, to meet the goals of the Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Development Goal of Primary Education for All Children by 2015. Children with disabilities need to be explicitly included in all national plans for education, including national plans on education for all of the Dakar Framework for Action.
2. Ministries of education should formulate educational policy and planning in consultation with families and organizations of persons with disabilities and develop programmes of education which enable children with disabilities to attend their local primary schools. Policy implementation needs to prepare the school system for inclusive education, where appropriate, with the clear understanding that all children have the right to attend school and that it is the responsibility of the school to accommodate differences in learners.

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<sup>81</sup> See General Assembly resolution 48/96 of 20 December 1993 on Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, Annex, rule 6. Education, para. 8.

3. A range of educational options should be available to allow the selection of a school that will best cater for individual learning needs.
4. Adequate public budgetary allocation specifically for the education of children with disabilities should be provided within the education budget.
5. Governments, in collaboration with others, should collect comprehensive data on children with disabilities, from birth to 16 years old, which should be used for planning appropriate early intervention and educational provision, resources and support services, from birth through school age.
6. Five-year targets should be set for the enrolment of children with disabilities in early intervention, pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary (post-school) education. Progress towards meeting these targets should be closely monitored with a view to achieving the goal of 75 per cent of children with disabilities in school by 2012.
7. Ministries of health and other concerned ministries should establish adequate early detection and identification services in hospitals, primary health care, centre and community-based health care services, with referral systems to early intervention services for all disabled infants and children (birth to four years old). Governments should routinely screen high-risk pregnancies and high-risk newborn babies for early detection of disabilities at birth, or soon thereafter.
8. Ministries of health and education should establish early intervention services, in collaboration with other concerned ministries, self-help organizations, NGO and community-based agencies, to provide early intervention, support and training to all disabled infants and children with disabilities (birth to four years old) and their families.
9. Governments, including ministries of education, should work in partnership with NGOs at the national and local level to conduct public awareness campaigns to inform families of children with disabilities, schools and local communities of the right of children and youth with disabilities to participate in education at all levels, in urban and rural areas, and with particular emphasis on the inclusion of girls with disabilities where there is a gender imbalance in school attendance.
10. The following measures should be taken, where appropriate, by governments in the region to improve the quality of education in all schools, for all children, including children with disabilities, in special and inclusive educational contexts: (a) conduct education and training for raising the awareness of public officials, including educational and school administrators and teachers, to promote positive attitudes to the education of children with disabilities, increase sensitivity to the rights of children with disabilities to be educated in local schools and on practical strategies for including children and youth with disabilities in regular schools; (b) provide comprehensive pre-and in-service teacher training for all teachers, with methodology and techniques for teaching children with diverse abilities, the development of flexible curriculum, teaching and assessment strategies; (c) encourage suitable candidates with disabilities to enter the teaching profession; (d) establish procedures for child screening, identification and placement, child-centred and individualized teaching strategies and full systems of learning and teaching support, including resource centres and specialist teachers, in rural and urban areas; (e) ensure the availability of appropriate and accessible teaching materials, equipment and devices, unencumbered by copyright restriction; (f) ensure flexible and adaptable curriculum, appropriate to the abilities of individual children and relevant in the local context; (g) ensure assessment and monitoring procedures are appropriate for the diverse needs of learners.
11. Governments should implement a progressive programme towards achieving barrier-free and accessible schools and accessible school transport by 2012.
12. Governments should encourage programmes of research at tertiary institutions to develop further effective methodologies for teaching children and youth with diverse abilities.
13. Organizations of, and for disabled persons should place advocacy for the education of children with disabilities as a high priority item on their agenda.
14. Regional cooperation needs to be strengthened to facilitate the sharing of experiences and good practices and to support the development of inclusive education initiatives.

# UNESCO and UNESCO Bangkok publications on inclusive education and the education of children with disabilities

## UNESCO Resources

### Case Studies

UNESCO, *First Steps: Stories on Inclusion in Early Childhood Education*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001102/110238eo.pdf>

A compilation of 13 case studies, examples where children with special educational needs are included in regular early childhood programmes.

UNESCO, *Including the Excluded: Meeting Diversity in Education. Example from Romania*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001231/123165eo.pdf>

This case study provides an account of the efforts to address marginalization in and exclusion from education.

UNESCO, *Including the Excluded: Meeting Diversity in Education. Example from Uganda*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001226/122613eo.pdf>

This case study provides an account of the efforts to address marginalization in and exclusion from education.

UNESCO, *Making It Happen*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000968/096884ev.pdf>

A compilation of twelve country stories, examples of good practice in integrated education and community-based programmes.

### Consultation on Groups of Learners

*Consultation on Alternative Approaches for the Education of the Deaf*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0006/000632/063211eo.pdf>

Summary of trends and principles in the field of education of the deaf and suggestions for enhancing developments at the national and international level.

*Deafness – A Guide for Parents, Teachers and Community Workers*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001255/125541e.pdf>

This guide provides basic information on the identification of deafness, importance of sign language and the need of education for deaf children.

### *Guides for Special Needs Education*

- No.2: Working Together – Guidelines for partnership between professionals and parents of children and young people with disabilities.  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0006/000694/069420eo.pdf>
- No.4: Education of Deaf Children and Young People  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0007/000745/074536eo.pdf>
- No. 6: Education of Visually Impaired Pupils in the Ordinary Classroom  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0008/000828/082892eo.pdf>
- No. 7: Children with Severe Cerebral Palsy: An Educational Guide  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0008/000850/085085eo.pdf>
- No. 8: Guide to Community-Based Rehabilitation Services (Free, only hard copies available.)
- No.9: Children and Young People with Specific Learning Disabilities  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000963/096357e.pdf>
- No.10: Education of Children and Young People with Autism  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001120/112089eo.pdf>

## **Policies**

### *International Consultation on Early Childhood Education and Special Educational Needs*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001120/112094eo.pdf>

The consultation examined the nature of services that should be provided for young children, guided by the principle of inclusion.

### *Legislation Pertaining to Special Needs Education*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001055/105593e.pdf>

A review of legislative provision concerning education of children and young people with special educational needs, based on data compiled from 52 countries.

### *Review of the Present Situation in Special Needs Education*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001026/102688e.pdf>

Based on replies from 62 countries, the review consists of two parts, presenting country entries followed by a summarized analysis.

### *Salamanca Five Years On*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001181/118118eo.pdf>

A review of UNESCO activities in the light of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality

## **Principles and Practices**

### *Educating Children and Young People with Disabilities: Principles and the Review of Practice*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000955/095511eo.pdf>

The document consists of two distinct parts. Part A sets out the basic principles governing the education of children and young people with disabilities and Part B provides a working framework for reviewing education provision.

### *Inclusive Schools & Community Support Programmes , First Phase*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001176/117625eo.pdf>

A report of the first phase of the project "Inclusive Schools and Community Support Programmes" with country reports from eleven countries.

*Inclusive Schools and Community Support Programmes – Phase Two*

<http://dit-fs1.hq.int.unesco.org/ulis/docs/0012/001252/125235eo.pdf>

A report of the second phase of the project “Inclusive Schools and Community Support Programmes” with country reports from eleven countries.

*Open File on Inclusive Education – Support Materials for Managers and Administrators*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001252/125237eo.pdf>

The Open File is intended to support all those who are concerned with promoting inclusive education. In particular, it offers a means whereby administrators and decision-makers in different countries can draw on international experience in guiding their own countries’ systems towards inclusion. 2001.

*Open File on Inclusive Education – Support Materials for Managers and Administrators (Brochure)*

<http://dit-fs1.hq.int.unesco.org/ulis/docs/0013/001321/132164ev.pdf>

The booklet is an introduction to inclusive education for policy-makers and managers who have an important role to play in bringing about the change needed to make inclusive education a reality. 2001

*Overcoming Exclusion through Inclusive Approaches in Education*

A Challenge and Vision – Conceptual Paper. (Available in Arabic, Chinese; French Spanish, Russian) 2003.

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001347/134785e.pdf>

*Provision for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001287/128761eo.pdf>

A brief overview prepared for the World Conference in Higher Education (1998). Examples from 40 universities in different world regions of the provision for university students with disabilities.

## Professional Development

*Understanding and Responding to Children's Needs in Inclusive Classrooms*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001243/124394e.pdf>

A teacher’s job is not easy. You may have big classes of 40 and more pupils – all of them individuals! Having children with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds in your class often requires more work but it need not be so: you can manage differences among the children. 2001.

*Welcoming Schools*

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001184/118455eo.pdf>

The training material illustrates characteristics, competencies, skills and teaching and learning practices used by teachers who are working to promote the inclusion and participation of children with disabilities in the classroom. 1999.

*Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments*

[http://www2.unescobkk.org/ips/ebooks/documents/Embracing\\_Diversity/index.htm](http://www2.unescobkk.org/ips/ebooks/documents/Embracing_Diversity/index.htm)

This toolkit offers a holistic, practical perspective on how schools and classrooms can become more inclusive and learning-friendly. 2004

*Regional Workshop on Inclusive Education. Final Report. UNESCO Bangkok, 2005.*

<http://www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=2950>

The theme of the workshop was “Getting All Children into School and helping Them Learn”. The Workshop provided an opportunity to share experiences of inclusive education practices in the Asia-Pacific region and explored future strategies and actions to promote inclusive education within the framework of Education for All.

*EENET Asia Newsletter #1, June 2005*

Enabling Education Network (EENET) Asia is a network established in, and focusing on inclusive education developments in South, Central and South-East Asia with the objective to share experience and expertise, discuss and learn, inspire and support closer collaboration and information exchange between policy makers, programmers and practitioners who are concerned with inclusive education for all. In June 2005, the first inaugural newsletters was published and printed. This will be followed by quarterly issues. EENET Asia is part of the global EENET Network which was created in 1997 and is based at the University of Manchester, UK as a response to the information gap on the issue of inclusive, diversity responsive education in the South. For more information, please visit: [www.eenet.org.uk](http://www.eenet.org.uk)



*Review study of EFA National Plans of Action in Asia and the Pacific and Country plan annexes*

UNESCO Bangkok commissioned a study in May 2004 to review and analyze the status of inclusive education in 17 national EFA action plans in the Asia-Pacific region, with a special focus on disadvantaged and marginalized groups. The study served as the key background document for the regional workshop on inclusive education held in October 2004 in Bangkok. This document is a synthesis report of the study, whereof the first section includes the highlights from the study that were shared in the regional workshop and the second section includes the summary reports. Written by Anupam Ahuja and published June 2005.



*Strengthening Inclusive Education by Applying a Rights-based Approach to Education Programming*  
By Olof Sandkull, UNESCO Bangkok. Published April 2005.

**Video:**

*Inclusive education – welcoming schools* (19 mins, 46 MB)

*Inclusive education – welcoming schools texted in Bahasa*

Click to watch, right-click and choose "save target as" to download. The files are in compressed, lower quality format, contact [appeal@unesco-bkk.org](mailto:appeal@unesco-bkk.org) if you need the video on VCD or VHS in original quality.



*Leading the way: Child-centred learning in Laamu, Maldives* – (15 min, 36MB)

This video is published by UNICEF and shows an excellent example of how a child-centred approach can greatly improve the quality of education.



*Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education For All.* UNESCO, Paris. Draft 2005.

*Educating Children and Young People with Disabilities: Principles and the Review of Practice* –

The document consists of two distinct parts. Part A sets out the basic principles governing the education of children and young people with disabilities. Part B provides a working framework for reviewing education provision. Written by Seamus Hegarty.

*Street Children, Juvenile Justice and Mental Disability*  
Report from the Consortium for Street Children (CSC)

# United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

## Article 24: Education

1. States parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels, and life-long learning, directed to:
  - (a) The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
  - (b) The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
  - (c) Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.
2. In realizing this right, States parties shall ensure that:
  - (a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary and secondary education on the basis of disability;
  - (b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
  - (c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
  - (d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
  - (e) Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.
3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:
  - (a) Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;
  - (b) Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;
  - (c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deaf/blind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.

4. In order to help ensure the realization of this right, States parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.
5. States parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

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